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**Subscriptions (2000 rates):**

*Australia and New Zealand:* A$12 per issue (postage included)  
Back copies: A$5.00

*Other countries:* A$20 per issue (postage included)  
Back copies: A$8.00

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It's a (Two-)Culture Thing: The Lateral Shift to Liberation

Barry Kew

From an acute and, some will argue, a harsh, a harsh, fantastic or even tactically naive perspective, this article examines animal liberation, vegetarianism and veganism in relation to a bloodless culture ideal. It suggests that the movement's repeated anomalies, denial of heritage, privileging of vegetarianism, and other concessions to bloody culture, restrict rather than liberate the full subversionary and revelatory potential of liberationist discourse, and with representation and strategy implications.

‘Only the profoundest cultural needs ... initially caused adult man [sic] to continue to drink cow milk through life’.1

In The Social Construction of Nature, Klaus Eder develops a useful concept of two cultures - the bloody and the bloodless. He understands the ambivalence of modernity and the relationship to nature as resulting from the perpetuation of a precarious equilibrium between the ‘bloodless’ tradition from within Judaism and the ‘bloody’ tradition of ancient Greece.

In Genesis, killing entered the world after the fall from grace and initiated a complex and hierarchically-patterned system of food taboos regulating distance between nature and culture. But, for Eder, it is in Israel that the reverse process also begins, in the taboo on killing. This ‘civilizing’ process replaces the prevalent ancient world practice of

human sacrifice by animal sacrifice, this by sacrifices of the field, and these by money paid to the sacrificial priests.²

Modern society retains only a very broken connection to the Jewish tradition of the bloodless sacrifice. It continues instead a different traditional evolutionary line which emerges from the Greek polis. This ritual ‘civilized’ the earlier blood sacrifices in a different way to the Jewish tradition. It did not abolish them but retained them instead as a sacrificial feast in Delphi against the resistance of Pythagorean and other groups who attempted to call this central symbol of the polis into question.³ The dominant modern cultural code continues this older tradition, the bloody culture of Hellenistic antiquity, and symbolizes the fundamental distance from the state of nature.⁴ It is the co-existence of these, developing into carnivorous and vegetarian cultures, that opens two fundamentally different evolutionary options to modern society.⁵

We shall borrow the two culture concept and use it as a structuring device for our own purposes and, although we shall not be clinging to Eder’s thesis, we shall draw upon it.⁶ Here we shall be assuming that animal liberation both constitutes and aims at the transformation of bloody into bloodless culture, at least in the most propitious conditions of the Western world initially. As representative of animal liberation we shall take first the most often quoted works of three of the movement's foremost philosophers - Peter Singer, Stephen Clark and Tom Regan - but we shall not offer critiques of their use of the philosophical traditions out of which they come, or indeed of the traditions themselves.⁷ Instead, and in a rather severe textual reading, we shall question animal liberation in relation to the two cultures. To start, we shall measure the canonical works against the slavery analogy, drawn by animal

³ Ibid., p.126.
⁴ Ibid., pp.129-130.
⁵ Ibid., p.132.
⁶ Indeed, we cannot continue with Eder’s bloody-carnivorous and bloodless-vegetarian cultures throughout, for Eder depicts ecological reason as vegetarian culture when the ecology movement is not necessarily vegetarian at all (in practice) whilst animal liberation has become so (in theory and in practice). Eder also tends to run animals and nature together, and views animal liberation almost wholly in utilitarianist terms. Further, although Eder pictures carnivorous culture as a development of bloody culture, and similarly with vegetarian and bloodless, we shall use carnivorous and bloody interchangeably and similarly with vegetarian and bloodless.
advocates for centuries, which will allow us to explore statements of animal liberation intent and therefore gain clues as to its ‘culture’ status, which will then be examined against a different model. We shall finally be able to suggest certain implications of the findings.

The Slavery Analogy

In an attempt to make animal liberation more credible and to awaken public consciousness to the scale, nature and values of animal use, the animal liberation movement uses several parallels, and abolitionism seems to be the most pertinent. Black peoples and other Others under slavery, like nonhumans now and in the past, were used as renewable (and expendable rather than exterminable) natural resources in a respectable economic system. The systematic atrocities of human slavery bear striking resemblance to the concept and practices of institutionalized animal use and continuities are identifiable. Moreover, both animal use and human slavery have been considered at various times synonymous with the process of civilizing and the progress of civilization.

Let us assume the case then, acknowledging that there will always be exceptional, extraordinary and non-representative situations to which no philosophy can hope to extend with consistency (and this is not to assume, as the philosophies themselves do not assume, an absolute inviolability of all animal life). Let us assume that an animal liberation case could be made out, declaring that, à la the abolitionist case, humans should not deliberately use nonhumans for any non-symbolic purpose (except perhaps in non-invasive ethological studies in the wild) or in any material way in order to utilize their symbolic power. The aim of the abolitionists was abolition, not kinder treatment, better conditions, longer chains, fewer slaves, gentle usage or a different kind of slavery. Slavery was wrong, according to the campaigners, and the world (or most of it) came to agree or to see the wrong and put an end to it. How do the philosophers’ prescriptions stand in relation to this abolitionism? Not full square.

Clark’s promotion of anti-vivisection, for instance, is qualified by talk of abolishing ‘most’ biomedical research on animals, without saying what

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should be left to continue and on what basis, and although Regan appears to be quite straightforward in his demands - for vegetarianism, anti-vivisection and an end to hunting and trapping - his idea that it is ‘commercial’ animal agriculture which should be abolished leaves one considering what ‘non-commercial’ animal agriculture is envisaged as acceptable within his rights theory. As he implies, no animal-product system is viable in the long term without routine mutilation and slaughter, a similar point made in relation to suffering by Singer who calls for an end to the use of animals in trivial experiments whilst the suffering in non-trivial research can continue until alternative methods are found.

None of the three cases actually makes out a clear, unambiguous case for an end to all animal-using practices and, of an activity such as horse riding for instance, a classic master/slave relationship, there is no mention. Understandably, Singer, Clark and Regan concentrated on the areas in which vast numbers of animals are used and/or where institutionalized cruelties are more readily detectable, and did not set out to establish in detail the ‘proper’, or ‘better’ constructed behaviour in regard to all human/nonhuman practices and relations. Instead they establish principles from which we may be able to assume it in most if not all areas. But although we may extrapolate in order to get a grip on how we should look upon, say, animal circuses - obviously unacceptable to Singer, Clark and Regan albeit on different grounds - what guidance is there for something as innocuous to the orthodox as horse riding?

It is in this relationship that we can recognize: a human pastime presented and widely perceived as respectable; the combination of animals and war-victory - the hunting field as a preparation for battle and the use of animals for human warring purposes; animals considered as resources; the exercise of power and the domination of ‘nature’; the animal use=civilization equation; and the hidden stories of slavery which in different ways lie behind the use of animals - horses ‘broken’, family groups separated, animals not up to it or beyond it cast off. Moreover, once broken and separated it is still looked upon as a kindness to find them ‘work’, to keep them active, a practical example of

12 This is not to enter into the crass area of objection-query - eg what about locusts, mosquitoes and rabid dogs, and should amoebae get the vote? - in which animal liberation is commonly bogged down.
culture passing itself off as benign nature (welfarism notably obscuring their confinement in barren fields deprived of cover and denied shelter).

Now horse riding is possibly too complex for preference utilitarianism to condemn easily and it is not at all clear from Clark's work how it stands in relation to the ancient virtues of his neo-Platonist earth household. From Regan's *Case* we can get the idea that horse riding *may* be anathema to at least rights theory, which can accommodate the objection, although it is only an informed guess: Regan's 'not all harms hurt' and his dissident reality of 'animals are not our resources' are shown to us in the contexts of more obvious harmful or hurtful use.\(^\text{13}\)

As we have seen them so far then, these philosophies do not actually spell out what some of them may imply and what they imply could be spelled out, and especially in a case such as horse riding. Indeed, precisely because of its 'innocuity', a condemnation of horse riding - or 'riding' as its practitioners prefer it to be known: again the invisible animal - may be a classic statement of animal liberation from which a position on virtually every topic within the project could be then confidently assumed. Perhaps this could help liberate animal liberation from the confusion or seemingly endless and generally welfarist-(and therefore bloody culture-) framed, cruelty-suffering-grounded debate to which the liberation issue is popularly and politically relocated and by the terms of which even vivisection and factory farming can be and are easily defended.\(^\text{14}\)

Taking the foremost philosophers' seminal works, we find discrepancies between the human and animal slavery abolitionisms. We have to look elsewhere for the kind of consistency\(^\text{15}\) we may require and get closer to a best existing model of and for animal liberation as an abolitionist, bloodless culture.

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\(^{13}\) Bryant condemns horse riding but from an anti-cruelty perspective, albeit within an animal 'rights' framework. John Bryant, *Fettered Kingdoms: An Examination of a Changing Ethic* (J. M. Bryant, Chard, 1982).

\(^{14}\) The liberationist fear may be of abolitionism being too easily equated with absolutism, 'fundamentalism' and 'extremism' (as it is by Jasper and Nelkin) or even 'purism', a fate from which other abolitionisms and emancipations are saved by the ability of new rights-holders to negotiate their own 'working' roles in society. On that score, animal liberation is a threat to the work ethic. J. M. Jasper, and D. Nelkin, *The Animal Rights Crusade: The Growth of a Moral Protest* (The Free Press, New York, 1992), p.96, p.178.

\(^{15}\) This is not to question the internal consistency or coherence of the adopted or adapted philosophies.
Veganism: A Neglected Model

Shortly after the Vegan Society was formed in 1944, and the word ‘vegan’ coined by co-founder and first Secretary Donald Watson, it issued a Manifesto which included the following aims:

To advocate that man's food should be derived from fruit, nuts, vegetables, grains and other wholesome non-animal products and that it should exclude flesh, fish, fowl, eggs, honey, and animals' milk, butter and cheese.

The Vegan Society is eager that it should be realised how closely the meat and dairy produce industries are related. The atrocities of dairy farming are, in some ways, greater than those of the meat industry but they are more obscured by ignorance.16

Further, it was proclaimed in 1951, that:

The object of the Vegan Movement (“to end the exploitation of animals by man”) is clarified as to the meaning of exploitation by Rule 4(a), which pledges the Society to “seek to end the use of animals by man for food, commodities, work, hunting, vivisection, and by all other uses involving exploitation of animal life by man”. By the adoption of this rule, the Society has clearly come out on the side of the liberators; it is not so much welfare that we seek, as freedom. Our aim is not to make the present relationship between man and animal (which if honestly viewed is mostly one of master and slave) more tolerable, but to abolish it and replace it by something more worthy of man’s high estate. In short, our aim is to set the creatures free - to return them to the balance and sanity of nature, which is their rightful place, and so end the historic wrong perpetrated when man first decided he had the right to exploit and enslave them.17

Now this throws up much we could discuss and which many would criticize - the perhaps primary concern about who ‘Man’ is; the take on a pure ‘nature’; the appeal to design; and so on (these being characteristic of the early Vegan Society stance) - but our point is that Leslie Cross

went on to claim that this new constitution marked the ‘true birth’ of the Vegan Society and, if we are to measure animal liberation against the slavery analogy, this surely is the best available (albeit unparticularized) statement of intent. Can the master/slave relationship of horse riding be accommodated here (even if it was beyond the range of contemporary concern)? Only by preternormal sophistry.

The Society, and vegans in general, had already established and were to consolidate a practical underpinning to animal liberation, living with moral consistency and proving the ethic’s firm grounding. So, to what extent do Singer, Clark and Regan build on such codification? The great anomaly is, as we know, that Singer’s Animal Liberation actually promotes the use of animals. That Singer should, some thirty years after the Society’s founding, approach the subject of animal liberation in the following way, is perhaps rather curious, notwithstanding the reasonable pragmatics - a chapter entitled ‘Becoming a Vegetarian’ rather than ‘Becoming a Vegan’; a toleration of mollusc-eating; promotion of egg-eating, where a welfarist-bloody culture stance is openly adopted; the use of inverted commas for vegan; the phrase ‘… some have begun to call themselves vegans’; the adoption, like Salt, of a ‘worst abuses first’ stance; the deliberation over where to draw the line between killing shrimps and oysters whilst considering the sufferings (and suffering is Singer's main concern) of the dairy cow and calf as a lesser issue; and, in a concession to popular rhetoric, the general depiction of veganism as ‘strict’ and somewhat esoteric. Do Clark and Regan also keep veganism at arm's length? Clark makes this claim:

What follows for our obligations? Simply, that if we are to mean what we say in outlawing the unnecessary suffering of animals, we must become, at the least, vegetarians.

With veganism well established - and with the routine chickicide of day-old males, the suffering of the dairy cow and the immediate or delayed slaughter or crated future of her calf exposed (again) by the Vegan Society - Clark did not feel the need to write instead, ‘we must become,

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18 Singer, Animal Liberation, p.163.
19 Ibid., p.179.
21 Singer, Animal Liberation, p.179.
22 Ibid., pp.181-182.
23 Ibid.
at the least, vegans’. Although he refers to veganism several times, as a stage of progression, thus implying as is usual, that veganism is a material development rather than a cognitive transformation (‘… those vegetarians who have not (yet) progressed to veganism’ he says, for instance, in his ‘Notes for Proselytes’ after the main body of the work),25 it is vegetarianism for which he makes the case. However, he does grant veganism greater credibility and probability: ‘There will be less suffering in a vegan world, even in a near-vegan world’.26 But, although declaring in a footnote that ‘veganism is a better project than lacto-vegetarianism’, he goes on to say: ‘we may in the end be able to take some milk from our kin without injustice’.27 But why this concession to the purely cultural (whilst the essentialism of ‘meat’-eating is outlawed)? And is this, along with other backyard images, what Regan had in mind when he condemned only ‘commercial’ animal agriculture?

There is also Regan’s preference for the word ‘vegetarian’ which is used throughout The Case for Animal Rights. Now it had for long been the American practice, somewhat in contrast to English usage since the 1940s-50s, to use the word ‘vegetarian’ as all-embracing (and technically correct it is or, more accurately, was), despite the existence of an American Vegan Society since 1960. So it is reasonable to assume that Regan, in talking of the total dissolution of commercial animal farming, was perhaps thinking veganically, reservations about ‘commercial’ notwithstanding. This is supported, for instance, by Regan's later article with Gary Francione which claims that rights (now seen in vegan terms) and welfare ideologies are morally incompatible, a tacit understanding of bloody and bloodless cultures.28 Nevertheless, ‘vegan’ was not used ten years earlier in the major work which came partly as a response to Singer, who differentiated between vegetarians and vegans.

Is Regan’s whole effect warped by not using the word ‘vegan’? Not using it can lead not least to problems of both spatial and intellectual comprehension as any vegan, considered to be ‘a vegetarian’, has found in hotels, restaurants, on airlines or even as a guest in a private home. The implications are far-reaching, for by it, both here and in Singer and Clark, vegetarianism is typically equated with rights theory and indeed with animal rights and animal liberation. When we can regularly read about celebrities and others being described as ‘vegetarians’ only to find

25 Ibid., p.213.
26 Ibid., p.80.
27 Ibid., p.185.
that they eat fish, the word and concept of veganism, by contrast, constitute a clear and unequivocal statement (or do so when not clouded by vegetarianism).

Vegetarianism's milky dilutions would appear not only to weaken the vegan, animal-free, comprehensive principle but also fail to loosen sufficiently orthodoxy's long established meanings of human/nonhuman relations and definitions of animal liberation. There can still be detected an accommodating vagueness (and tactical tortuousness) which only disappears with veganism's clearing away of shams, fictions and concealments, its lack of concession to orthodox ontology and, see Adams 1994, its determining epistemology.29 There is a world (or world-view) of difference between vegetarianism and veganism. It's a culture thing, as we shall see.

A Repeated Anomaly

The chronology is awry then; momentum appears to have been lost. For whatever reasons or motives (and there is an obvious tension between ethics and tactics), veganism was not or appeared not to be the philosophers' alpha (leaving aside pre-verbal mappings) and omega in the 1970s and '80s. This had happened before: it is a repeated anomaly. In 1892, Henry Salt had claimed in Animals' Rights that assertions of one form of animal exploitation being more or less cruel than any other, were 'irrelevant'30 whilst at the same time advocating egg-eating, milk-drinking and wool-wearing.31 What places Salt, like Singer, Clark and Regan it would seem, within the increasingly identifiable area of bloody and bloodless culture tension are comments which can be juxtaposed thus:

\[
\text{It is little use to claim 'rights' for animals in a vague general way, if with the same breath we explicitly show our determination to subordinate those rights to anything and everything that can be construed into a human 'want'.32}
\]

31 e.g. Ibid., p.43; Henry S. Salt, The Logic of Vegetarianism: Essays and Dialogues (London Vegetarian Society, London, nd (1899)), pp.35-38.
And, perhaps out of a narrow focus on normative cruelty:

What I say will of course have no reference to wool, or any other substance which is obtainable without injury to the animal from which it is taken.33

For Salt, who considered the question of whether man is morally justified in utilizing animal labour at all as ‘abstruse’,34 animals were still resources. Further:

I desire to keep clear also of the extreme contrary contention that man is not morally justified in imposing any sort of subjection on the lower animals.35

He was referring to the contention of Lewis Gompertz who, some seventy years earlier, had written:

at least in the present state of society it is unjust, and considering the unnecessary abuse they suffer from being in the power of man, it is wrong to use them, and to encourage their being placed in his power.36

Lewis Gompertz, second Secretary of the SPCA, champion of the ‘rights’ of women, blacks, the poor and nonhumans, published his Moral Inquiries on the Situation of Man and of Brutes in 1824, a work whose strategic and tactical approaches are reversed by Singer:

in our present speciesist world, it is not easy to keep so strictly to what is morally right [i.e. not using dairy products]. 37

We see from Gompertz that it was not the case, as some have claimed, that Salt left little for his heirs to add, but that he and they left out a lot of Gompertz who, although his work is not fully formulated, being more of an uncertain inclination, outlined most of what was to follow, and more. Recognizing human-nonhuman similitude, animals' personal identity, and promoting equal pleasure and happiness in the cause of

33 Ibid., p.79
34 Ibid., p.43.
36 Cited in Ibid.
37 Singer, Animal Liberation, p.181.
what was moral and just, Gompertz was, like some others, a vegan long before the word was coined, dispensing with wool, leather, silk and eggs and refusing to ride in a horse-drawn carriage. Much of Moral Inquiries is taken up in the form of subversionary ‘arguments’ (with Gompertz as Z):

Y: I understand that you object to the use of milk; what harm can there be in that?
Z: It was evidently provided for the calf, and not for man.
Y: When the calf is taken away from its mother, it is then a kindness to relieve her of her milk.
Z: But the calf should not be taken away.

For both Salt and the philosophers to fall short of overt endorsement of Gompertz and veganism also means not capitalizing on the substantive shift of his revelatory light which, aptly, he shines on horses. His concern with the way they were treated appears foremost in his work but extends beyond questions of cruelty. Asked, ‘How can man do without the aid of horses?’, Gompertz’s reply is, ‘That is his business to find out’, perhaps a typical response from one famed also for a catalogue of technological inventions. He goes on:

It is true that we have adopted the method of employing horses to perform our labour, by which we have most probably only chosen one method out of a great many, and we have remained contented with it … What causes you to think the services of horses so important to man is, that you take things as they are; horses being used.

What is important here is that very ability to see, not only the suffering of horses when most others could not see it (which was Salt’s concern), but that animals, horses, were being used in the first place (which wasn’t Salt’s concern, until later). Gompertz exposes the mythology of animal

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38 One of the earliest recorded vegans in Britain was Roger Crab who died at Bethnal Green in 1680 (see The Vegan, Summer, 1997, p.25) but, as early as 3BC, Porphyry and Claudius Neapolitan wrangled over dispensing with all animal products.
40 Ibid., p.122.
41 Ibid., pp.123-125.
42 Salt came to see it more from Gompertz’s angle: ‘a civilized posterity will shudder at the sight of what we still regard as a legitimate agent of locomotion’. Henry S. Salt, Seventy Years Among Savages (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1921), p.217.
use naturalism and inevitability and, in the milk argument above, of bloody culture's tender mercies.

Regardless of the philosophical position or other grounding, and of interim tactical considerations, espousing animal liberation without affirming and valorizing veganism - as both theoretical starting point and practical aim - when the model(s) already exist, takes animal liberation’s eyes off the prize. Whether Regan and Clark are promoting veganism or not, it is lacto-ovo-vegetarianism which, one hundred and seventy years after Gompertz, is popularly taken as the obligatory stance of animal liberationists. Indeed, the recoil, if that’s what it is, seems endemic. As Leah Leneman has shown us, the vigorous correspondence during 1909-1912 in the Vegetarian Society’s journal *The Vegetarian Messenger and Health Review* had led to the conclusion that the defence of the use of eggs and milk by vegetarians was unsatisfactory and that the only ‘true way’ was to ‘live on cereals, pulse, fruit, nuts and vegetables’. Nevertheless, in what was becoming a familiar pattern, this was reversed in the decades that followed.

The immediate or ultimate disdain, marginalization or even total exclusion have also been contagious, and across the spectrum. Robert Garner’s strategy-minded work, for instance, talks of the vegetarian and vegan societies in Britain and elsewhere all campaigning to end animal cruelty ‘which for them involves the end of the meat industry’ (no mention of dairy or eggs) and even manages to omit the Vegan Society from its listing of the other three organizations which formed the Great British MeatOut coalition in the late 1980s. The ‘manifesto’ edited by Godlovitch, Godlovitch & Harris had few references to veganism which is at best a subtext in the review-and-recommend essays of the Garner-edited *Animal Rights: The Changing Debate*. Richard D Ryder’s chronicle and (notably from ‘outside’ of animal liberation) Keith Tester’s new historicist exaggerations merely acknowledge veganism,

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give the briefest of descriptions and fail to record the foundation or existence of a Vegan Society, despite the latter offering a critique of Bryant for whom, almost uniquely, veganism is *de rigueur* within ‘animal rights’.49 Ted Benton's eco-socialism, which identifies rights theory with an opposition to 'animal agriculture', nevertheless equates it with vegetarianism (thus following the Regan confusion) and not veganism which, again, is Cinderella’d in favour of a ‘high welfare’ model.50 And philosopher-activists Finsen & Finsen51 still refer to Gompertz as a vegetarian (Singer refers to him as a ‘strict’ vegetarian52) and, like Singer, use inverted commas for their reference to vegans. Eder too, in referring to animal liberation never mentions veganism and, although his ‘vegetarian culture’ is seen in terms of negating social order, lacto-ovo-vegetarianism maintains hierarchies in terms of the primacy of animal protein and sustains the negative magic of complex food taboos which normalize animal-dependent diets.53 Indeed, for virtually all the popular and academic literature on or referring to animal liberation, vegetarianism rather than veganism is the common coin.

Moreover, that Donald Watson and Leslie Cross are ignored by Magel54 and Wynne-Tyson,55 the two works which represent the movement's most comprehensive and specific archaeologies of pro-animal thought, would seem to weaken these attempts to help legitimate the tradition and authority of animal liberation heritage through its hallowed value-leaders.56

49 Bryant, *Fettered Kingdoms*
56 Nonetheless, the value of Wynne-Tyson's work here resides not least in illustrating how animal concern has been edited out by mainstream collections, eg the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*. In further defence of Wynne-Tyson we should acknowledge his largely overlooked comment on veganism in *Food for a Future*: ‘The logic of the vegan case is absolute. No one - whether nutritionist, physician, sociologist or layman - can rebut the veganic argument in any important respect. Veganism is part of the most truly civilised concept of life of which the human mind has been capable’. Jon Wynne-Tyson, *Food for a Future: The Complete Case for Vegetarianism*, 1975 (Centaur Press, Fontwell, 1979), p.107
However, there appears to have been a latterday shift towards the vegan nexus by some. In several of the campaigning magazines one notices at the turn of the millennium - as with Regan and Francione - a growing emphasis on veganism in, for instance, the promotion of vegan food items and the publication of vegan rather than vegetarian recipes. And some hitherto hidden agendas have now been willingly revealed. Yet it has all taken a very long time to catch the shirt tails of Watson and Cross, indeed with those of Gompertz.

The delay has served to render animal liberation somewhat confusing and confused as to its aims (important for those outside the movement) and therefore its means (important to the cognoscente). Even now, the Vegetarian Society actively promotes animal products. And, possibly for tactical reasons, many of the (now mainly vegan-staffed) organizations do still tend to promote by name the more ‘user-friendly’ option of vegetarianism, and anti-vivisection organizations have promoted ‘cruelty-free’ products containing animal ingredients (thus failing to redefine cruelty). Moreover, throughout the 1990s, there seems to have been an increasing association of vegetarianism with ‘animal rights’ through female vegetarian-welfarist celebrities, which may sustain the old derogatory representation of sentimental animal concern.

Although there are other factors involved, such as which foods are ‘male’ and which ‘female’ and which are essentialisms and which culturalisms, and all the tactical decisions which will flow from such considerations, this has much to do with the ‘worst abuses first’ stance. What is ‘worst’ is not only arbitrarily decided but appears to depend on the extent of one’s empirical knowledge of animal use (witness Singer's laudable volta-facc on wool after reading Townend). The movement seems to have set in stone the construction that ‘meat’-eating is worse than other forms of animal consumption, establishing a hierarchical scale to be negotiated as one finds out more, even though knowledge of the stories behind all animal products is more readily available now than it was in 1892, or even in 1975 (despite the Vegan Society making available such information for years prior to then and Singer, like Salt, had read Gompertz before laying out his ethics).

59 Singer, Animal Liberation 2nd ed., p.11.
this, the Vegan Society is today reduced to specifically targeting vegetarians rather than the general public(s), and the UK has still not seen concerted anti-animal milk, anti-egg or anti-wool campaigns. (Perhaps there is a linguistic problem: does the inability to name the non-milk-egg-wool-using meat-eater preclude the stance and therefore bar that road? But, conversely, if to be named is to be controlled, maybe here is a seditious advantage to be seized).

Rebuking Vegetarianism

Crucially perhaps, the abiding common association of vegetarianism with ‘animal rights’ associates animal liberation with animal use, and animal use is welfarist, bloody culture, territory. We can pursue this. Carol J Adams offers us the notion of ‘the vegetarian quest’, the first step of which is

experiencing the revelation of the nothingness of meat as an item of food…which arises because one sees that it comes from … someone, and it has been made into … no-body. The revelation involves recognizing the structure of the absent referent.60

The second step is naming the relationships, eg the connection between meat on the table and a living animal; between a sense that animals have rights and that killing them for meat violates those rights; the recognition of the violence of meat eating; and possibly of the continuity between meat eating and war. This stage also enables the reclaiming of appropriate words for meat, from euphemisms, distortions and mis-naming. The third step is rebuking the meat-eating world by proving that an alternative to meat-eating exists and that it works; ‘vegetarians… seek to change the meat eating world’.61

It is the second and third steps in which we are interested here. Regarding the possibility of the second - remembering why the Society had been formed in 1944 while war was still raging, Donald Watson wrote the following (as Leneman62 1999 has reminded us):

Why did we do it then of all times? Perhaps it seemed to us a fitting antidote to the sickening

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61 Ibid.
62 Leneman, ‘No Animal Food’.
experience of the War, and a reminder that we should be doing more about the other holocaust that goes on all the time. 63

But Watson took further Adams' third step, of rebuking the meat-eating world. Although appreciating the efforts of vegetarians, he also rebuked the non-vegan vegetarian world: it was to be demonstrated that veganism works. If the Great War gave rise to a revelation of continuities between warring and animal-eating (as it had for Salt, 64), it was the effect of the second war which, for some, took the process across to re-connect with Gompertz's vision.

Watson's own connection of animals, veganism and peace not only identifies bloody culture rationalism's nadir but also expands the war 'front' (another of Adams' notions 65) to recognize not just all animals but all animal products and, for Leslie Cross and the Society as we saw earlier, all animal use. But Watson goes on, and in the process both disrupts the foster mother symbolism of old world creation myth - the Egyptian Pyramid Texts' cultural-need depiction of the pharaoh suckling from the cow mother of humankind - and reverses the values of sacred and profane:

though nature provides us with lots of examples of carnivores and vegetarians it provides us with no examples of lacto-carnivores or lacto-vegetarians. Such groups are freaks and only made possible by man's capacity to exploit the reproductive functions of other species. This, we thought, could not be right either dietetically or ethically. It was certainly wrong aesthetically, and we could conceive of no

63 Donald Watson, 'Out of the Past', The Vegan, (Summer, 1988). Watson had also grasped what Salt seems to have suspected already at the turn of the century: that the virtually automatic progress inherent in nineteenth century evolutionary concepts shifted into an unspecific 'social change' in the twentieth; that the idea of united, comprehensive progress was replaced by an understanding of uneven and partial change, different aspects of society falling out of step with each other (notably the animals issue being left aside); and that change then had to be forced – one couldn't wait for inevitability or for the ripe time. See Norbert Elias, The Civilising Process (Blackwell, Oxford, 1994), p.184. In the light of this - and Watson had dealt with the 'delaying tactic': 'There is an obvious danger in leaving the fulfilment of our ideals to posterity, for posterity may not have our ideals' - we could ask what 'the plan' is. To wait until an as yet unspecified percentage of the population is vegetarian before veganism dare become the name of the game? Donald Watson The Vegan News, 1, (November, 1994).

64 Salt, Seventy Years Among Savages, pp.219-230.

spectacle more bizarre than that of a grown man attached at his meal-time to the udder of a cow.66

Now, if humans have gone from being pre-hunt, pre-ethical vegan to being animal eaters and then, only with the neolithic revolution, to full-blown lacto-ovo-carnivorism then, in this sense, lacto-ovo-vegetarianism is firmly rooted in animal-based agriculture: it is animal-using culture’s freakish form of veganism just as the animals used have been turned into freakish Forms.

We need to re-assess the two culture concept, as it appears that we now have two different versions. One, extending Eder’s thesis, would perhaps place veganism as the fuller development of bloodless culture. However, if we take our lead from the vegan exemplars, we can suggest that veganism is no such thing but, rather, that it is veganism which is bloodless culture,67 wherever it originates: most plausibly perhaps in an innate alternative potential of both individual and society. We cannot suggest that Watson and Cross are claiming any of this, but we can suggest that they are, in their turn, discovering and connecting with bloodless culture as that very option, one which has been consistently rejected and obscured since the time of cultivation and domestication, efforts being made ever since to reconnect with the primal sympathy. Eder’s bloodless culture starting point in Judaism can be seen as just one effort, and the vegan Eden of the troubled writers of Genesis, torn again between two cultures, may have been another.

Our entire history can be seen in this light.68 Most of history’s ‘bloodless culture’ representatives - including the famous anti-cruelty foxhunters and animal-eating anti-vivisectionists - have been in some half-way house, trying to reach out to a bloodless culture ideal but pulled back by the internalized values of bloody culture, the numbing and blinding

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66 Watson, ‘Out of the Past’.
67 Of course, for humans at least, there is probably no such thing as truly bloodless culture: it remains an ideal, probably an unattainable one. But, rather than using unavoidable bloodletting - eg in the tilling of soil or in defence - as the premiss from which to exploit, veganism is surely bloodless culture in its original and continuing intent, in its deliberate non-use. It is the bloodless culture of which we know humans to be capable. (Gompertz’s own suggestion that we might eat animals which died of natural causes seems to have been inspired by the belief he was encouraged to hold: that his health would suffer without animal products, a familiar story in 1944 and even at the turn of the millennium: bloodless culture spells anaemia for the orthodox).
comforts of its cosmology(ies), and the entirely practical impossibilities which no longer obtain in the Western world.

Vegetarianism itself, seemingly a product of bloody culture, is a cultural ersatz, and appropriation. It may be a ‘further step’ from today's vegetarianism to veganism but on a lateral, cross-culture (cognitive) route, not on a vertical, intra-culture (material) one. Not so much a development or Ederian evolution as an abandonment of one culture for another. In a remarkable testimony proving that conscience is an indispensable factor in the best scientific equation Watson and Cross, like Gompertz and others, in much doubt due to orthodoxy’s command of nutritional knowledge, put bloodless culture in sharper perspective, liberated from the eternalization of animal use, from the mythology of the animal-product dietary and from the power-based ambivalence of human/nonhuman relations, all of which are retained by vegetarianism.

And this has many implications, not least of which are for the effectiveness of the movement’s oppositional discourse and its strategic/tactical dilemmas - which ends are dictating which means, or vice versa, as the movement shifts, in part, from protest to public policy activity - and for normative perceptions and ideological representations of animal liberation, many of which picture it as an extreme of orthodoxy, eg an overidentification with animals, thus of course validating the centre of animal-use, using the ALF as a political synecdoche (strategy and representation having influenced the philosophies in the first place). The equating of animal liberation with vegetarianism affords the extreme label a certain legitimacy, for vegetarianism seems to reside at bloody culture's refined periphery, at its opposite pole to the raw bloody culture of, for example, hunting, Roman and Renaissance periods. (Thus circumscribed it remains, albeit idiosyncratically, within the realm of private lifestyle-menu options. And this relates too to Tester's ability to entrap ‘animal rights’ within the realm of bloody culture's anthropocentric ‘entrapment’ of animals). But it would be illegitimate to view and represent veganism-animal

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69 If there is a sense of development or evolution of bloodless culture it would be, perhaps, to fruitarianism but how practicable that would be for whole societies has yet to be shown, as have hitherto vague notions of non-exploitative symbiotic human-nonhuman relations.

70 The outcome of an animal liberation which does not emulate and unequivocally advocate non-use and uphold veganism as its base line is, ironically, illustrated in a 'state of the cause' comment by Singer himself: ‘What disturbs me is the fact that the thrust for a really radical change in our attitude to animals - in other words, for equal consideration of the interests of animals - keeps getting sidetracked into small increments of progress in animal welfare’. Peter Singer, Interview in Outrage, (June/July, 1993).
liberation as an extreme rather than as, together, a genuine alternative culture, civilization and civilizing process, one which is not defined and shaped by invisible and ‘lesser’ slaveries.\textsuperscript{71}

**Biography**


\textsuperscript{71} None of the foregoing has meant to suggest of course that veganism is itself a strategy.
A Wombat Wake: In Memoriam Birubi

Val Plumwood

My wombat Birubi died after a brief illness sometime around Wednesday August 18th 1999. I miss Birubi greatly and continue to catch his beloved form (or ‘ghost’) out of the corner of my eye, a half-seen image flitting around the corner of a cupboard or across the verandah. Long after his death, my eyes continued to search out his shape on the moonlit grass. He was part of my life for so long – over twelve years – that I found it hard to believe he would no longer wait for me or greet me, that he was finally gone.

We had a wake for him a few days later. The idea of the wake was to focus on his life rather than his death, to honor presence rather than mourn absence, and to celebrate and express gratitude for Birubi’s life and for wombat life more generally. We had a small ceremony for him, and told many Birubi stories and wombat stories generally. Many of the people who helped care for Birubi over the years when I was working overseas or in distant parts of Australia were present with their own experiences and thoughts to contribute. The wake was far from being a dismal occasion. Birubi had a full and whole wombat life and died what seemed to be a dignified and peaceful wombat death. He came to the house for sanctuary in his final months and often rested or slept in front of the fire, but returned to his burrow, snug pouch of mother earth, in his last hours.

Birubi came to me from the wildlife rescue service as a malnourished and very sick orphan. His mother had probably died of the mange, a disease introduced by europeans with their dogs that brings so many wombats to an early and tormented death. Since my own human son had recently died, Birubi and I bonded strongly. Birubi (the name, meaning I believe ‘the drum’, was given him by his first carers in the rescue service) was about a year old, furred but still suckling, when he
took up residence with me. He seemed to have suffered greatly from his mother’s death and was desperate for care.

Birubi had received from his wombat mother a good quality wombat education; she had taught him to defecate outside the burrow (or its equivalent, my house), and the rudiments of survival in the bush. Within a day of arriving he learnt to open the sliding glass doors of the house and could go outside into the bush whenever he wished (which was often). His ability to control the access between his world and mine enabled him to be active in choosing and structuring the balance between us, to enter my world while still fully retaining his wombatness. He was generally wary of humans until he had clearly established their identity, and would exit the house if it was too noisy or unsettling.

Birubi grew to belong to both the world of the house and that of the forest, supposedly exclusive and mutually oppositional. He needed a lot of medical treatment and supplementary feeding for the first year, so he became accustomed to the house and knew something of its comforts. But from the beginning he was based primarily out of doors in various holes he selected or renovated, and always preferred that world. Once established in his own nearby burrows in the forest, he came to the house on a visiting basis on the average for an hour or so most evenings for personal, moral and material support. (At his behest I supplemented his grazing with carrots and rolled oats, which corresponded to the roots and seeds sections of the wombat diet). In the first year he would spend part of the night out of doors, and part in my bed with me. He initiated all these high contact arrangements, and would not easily be turned aside from them, (although since wombats are nocturnal, they often led to me getting inadequate sleep). Sometimes I had to exclude him by locking the doors if he became too demanding of my time or arrived at very unreasonable hours.

To sleep next to me was his ardent desire, but it presented some difficulties. It was wise to get the leeches and ticks off him before letting him into the bed if you wanted a comfortable rest. After I had got into bed, he would come over and start biting its edge furiously until I gave him a hand up. Once in bed, he would usually lie down next to me on his side and drop off like a light. I can attest that during sleep he often ground his teeth and also vocalised in ways that suggested the imaginary encounters of dreaming. Usually he would wake up again about two hours later and go outside to graze (and of course I was then
obliged to get up to close the door he left open in case dangerous or unsuitable animals entered.)

Since he was a skilful door and cupboard opener, Birubi had to be locked out of the house when there was nobody else there. There are many stories about what happened when Birubi got into the house without supervision. He was very skilful with his mouth, which he used for manipulation and encounter, and enjoyed opening and exploring food packages and biting hard furniture and soft stuffed things. His tastes are commemorated around my house on cushions, chairs, stools, hassocks and cupboard doors.

Birubi was a vigorous player of various wombat chasing and hiding games he began to teach me as soon as he recovered his strength. These games seemed to me (there is of course much uncertainty here) to roll together features of play, love and war. He played very rough by human standards, but I do not think that he really intended to hurt - it’s probably just that wombats are tougher, especially around the ankles, his favourite nipping point when he caught you. He was a skilful game player who expected to win, would sulk if he did not, and had learnt the efficacy of feinting. When young, Birubi would have been happy I think to play games all day, but fortunately this desire waned a bit as he grew older. Even as an older wombat though he showed that he liked a game and had a sense of humour.

I was always conscious of a dimension of mystery in my knowledge of Birubi’s mind. The sense of bridging a great gulf of difference was part of the magic of the relationship. I think it was the centrality of the mother-child relationship to both our species and what was shared in its framework of ethics and expectations that made possible intimate contact with a creature so very different. This kind of relationship is necessarily cast in communicative terms that disrupt the severely restricted vocabulary for describing animal behaviour and interaction allowed by reductionist science and its objectivist ideals of non-relationship or its near approximation, subject-object relationship. Although you could entertain a large range of hypotheses about the meaning, complexity and specificity of his responses, that relationship, plus your knowledge of context and past interactions, usually suggested some credible and reasonably lucid tale about the other’s mental processes and attitudes that enabled you to continue relating as co-actors in a partially shared narrative of the world. There were times, especially when he was an adolescent testing out his power, when I felt
my relationship with him was balanced on a knife edge, but as he matured it took on a less precarious form.

Birubi, like other wombats and unlike dogs, was a resilient and determined animal who could not be shaped to human will. He did not recognise human superiority or pretensions to own the world and had a strong sense of his own independent selfhood, his own equal interests and entitlements. This stubbornness and sense of equality is the feature that has brought the wombat so strongly into conflict with the farmer, but to me it was wonderful. It meant that you were dealing with a real other, that contact had to be on his terms and not just on yours. Discipline, punishment and training to accept human will, of the sort we apply to dogs, were out of the question; not only would they be totally ineffective, but they would jeopardise the entire basis of relationship.

Once you had recognised that he would not give way to you, you were motivated to find creative ways to work around conflict or to give way yourself. A corollary of his independence was his anger when thwarted. Birubi tended to get quite angry if shut out of the house or the vegie patch, would snort in a loud disgusted tone and sometimes retaliate destructively, for example by chewing the doormat or digging a big hole in front of the garden gate. As primarily a grass eater, he rarely did much harm in the vegie garden though (except for digging up the carrots). He did not usually hold a grudge for long, although there were a few occasions when he was still angry with me the next day for something I had done the day before.

Wombats, being burrow dwellers, like a few home comforts. Birubi liked to sit (and in his latter days especially sleep) right in front of the wood stove in midwinter. He was fascinated by the fire and used to poke his nose right up against the hot glass until it hurt (something he never learnt not to do). He was very partial to a hot bum rub, and loved to stand in front of the stove rubbing his rear end against the warm corner. Birubi’s sexual expression began while he was still quite young and only subsided in the last few years of his life. He was erotically aroused by cushions, and would attempt to copulate with them after a 15 minute foreplay period of savage biting. He was often absent for considerable periods, especially in the warmer months, and several times I came across him miles away. I speculate that he may have been away visiting wombat lovers. If so I hope he treated them better than he did the cushions.
Because wombats are solitary and do not form family groups, I know little of Birubi’s relationships with other wombats, with the exception of his male rival Clancy. Clancy lived about two kilometers away but would often come over for a feed and a fight. He was openly envious of Birubi’s privileges in relation to humans and wanted them for himself (and himself alone). Birubi had to face up to Clancy’s aggression when he was still a juvenile, and was valiant in the face of Clancy’s superior age, size and fighting skills. Nevertheless when I heard the sounds of warfare between Clancy and Birubi (a high pitched, harsh call), I would run out and try to separate the combatants and bring peace and light, but was sometimes unable to prevent the infliction of some nasty wounds, mainly to Birubi.

The strife between Birubi and Clancy placed me in a painful conflict between wombat ethical systems and human ones. Should I give my favour to the stronger, as Clancy clearly hoped, or use my superior strength to help and sustain the ‘wombat son’ I was so attached to? I found this a difficult moral dilemma, since Clancy was the indigenous occupant, but in the end resolved it in the same way as most human mothers, trying to honor commitment to protect the one near and dear to me while avoiding injustice towards his enemy.

Birubi was wily, wary and tough, but the forest is a dangerous place. Sometimes Birubi’s fear of what lay outside the door was palpable. I could not protect him, and every time he left the house I knew that he might be badly injured or that I might never see him again. So the relationship was painful as well as joyful, just as it is for the many human mothers who are powerless to prevent harm to the children they love. Birubi was in great fear of dogs, the privileged gatekeeper animals who are allowed and even encouraged to terrorise the others, and he would often avoid my company, sometimes for a week or so, if I had been to lunch at the house of someone who owned a dog. (I think if people realised what terror and danger they cause to sensitive wild animals like Birubi and those who care about them they would be much more careful about owning and restraining dogs.) This is an example of the great depth of temporal understanding available to those who possess a well developed olfactory form of knowledge.

Birubi was an intelligent herbivore, a vegetarian, I believe, in the full sense, both through his biological inheritance and through his convictions. As a non meat-eater myself, I had a rare opportunity to observe his opinions on meat eating when a friend came to stay bringing with them a dog they fed normally on fresh mutton on the
bone. I watched Birubi carefully inspecting and sniffing the site where
the dog ate its flesh meals and examining a partly consumed bone. He
gave every sign of horror, and came to the house only infrequently and
with the greatest reluctance while the dog and the meat smell remained
around. On another occasion, when I had fresh minced meat on my
hands from feeding an injured juvenile magpie, he backed away from
me with obvious revulsion and did not return until several days later
when the odour was gone.

Reduced sexual expression was one of a number of signs of aging in
Birubi’s last few years, which included the greying of his beautiful soft
cloth and the general reduction in his energy and vigour as indicated by
his lessened interest in games and play. At age 13 he was one of the
oldest wombats the wildcare people had heard of. I put this down
mainly to my 5 kilometre distance from the nearest road, the automobile
being such a major cause of wombat carnage. Wombats have been
known to live to 25 years in captivity, and if Birubi aged prematurely in
these terms it could reflect an unknown disease process or the extreme
rigours of the early period of his life.

I feel it was an incredible privilege to be allowed to know a free, wary
and basically wild animal so intimately and richly. Our relationship cut
across the usual boundary between the wild and domestic, the forest
and the house, the nonhuman and the human, nature and culture. The
‘culture’ world is understood to be a humanised world in which
identities are assimilated to the human and conformed to human will,
interests and standards. In this world the ‘good dog’ is part of human
culture, trained to accept human dominance and human terms, (terms
made possible by the canine social system to be sure but still set by
humans), rather than to interact as an equal party bringing their own
independent terms. On the other side, the ‘nature’ world is one we in
the west tend now to see mainly through the instrumental and
reductionist framework of ‘detached’ science that tries to delegitimate
the rich personal knowledge of highly developed individual caring
relationships.

It is no coincidence that the more revolutionary forms of ethology
pioneered by women like Jane Goodall have given us new insights
precisely because they have broken these false choices down. Between
them, the ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ frameworks rule out the possibility of
deep personal contact with animals except on our terms. Birubi was a
‘wild familiar’ who established his own terms for contact and
friendship. It was an enormous thrill to explore forms of contact that
transgressed the nature/culture boundary, so constitutive of our civilisation. It was enchanting, the enchantment of childhood imagination and story, to walk side by side with Birubi along a forest track, to look up from my desk to find a forest-dwelling wombat sitting in my armchair by the fire. You had the courage and freedom to cross the boundary, Birubi. But do we?

Ave atque vale, Birubi. We will remember you.

Biography

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Gender and Hybridity: the Significance of Human/Animal Characters in Magic Realist Fiction

Consuelo Rivera-Fuentes

Introduction

In the wake of genetic and tissue engineering, two concepts which are deeply intertwined have acquired new connotations, not only in the field of science but also in the thick fabric of cultural beliefs and expectations which stem from the former and vice-versa; namely hybridity and purification. Discourses around the purity of the human species abound, and they help to maintain the separation between humans and between humans and nonhuman animals. Birke and Michael,1 following Latour,2 call this process of keeping separate the human and nonhuman ‘purification’. This artificial separation perpetuates discourses and practices of colonialism, racism and sexism, which extend to nonhuman animals through the process I call ‘othering’, which is a desperate attempt at keeping the boundaries between ‘the self’ and ‘the other’, intact. However, this constant policing of boundaries, which Latour sees as obsessive in modernity, covers up increasing anxieties over hybridity -- because, as Birke and Michael note: ‘[T]he notion of hybridity implies boundary -- crossing and mixing -- if not literally, then certainly at a conceptual level’.3 This would confuse, they suggest, issues of humanity, animality and even of individuality. We fear becoming part animal (a good example is fears expressed in debates around xenotransplantation) which would make us lose our ‘humanity’, our individuality, our sense of ‘self’.

Bio-medical narratives of human-nonhuman animal hybridisation have played an important role in the raising of awareness about this phenomenon. However, I want to highlight the importance of these discourses in fictional narratives, such as fairy tales, fables and myths or

2 B. Latour, We Have Never Been Modern (Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hemstead, 1993).
legends. This is particularly true of those works of literature classified as magic realism. Many cultures, such as the Greek, Roman and Latin American ones have attempted to make sense of the making of the world through historical accounts of their travels in which such hybridisation is part and parcel of those narratives.4

It is precisely those cultural fears or beliefs about human-animal hybridity as expressed in the various genres of fiction I have mentioned above, that I explore in this article. I examine some of these representations from a feminist standpoint, particularly where they meet in representations of reproduction, a topic central to gender ideologies. Sarah Bakewell, in her analysis of images of bodily transformation, notes that ‘[p]eople have always been fascinated by stories of humans changing into animals, and animals behaving anthropomorphically’.5 She argues that these tales have to do with issues of human identity and that they are often ‘adapted to elicit either laughter or wide-eyed terror from the crowd around the campfire’.6 I could add to her argument that general public consumption of magic realist and science fiction texts suggests that these genres appeal to people precisely because the boundaries between fantasy and reality, humans and animals, are fluid and interchangeable and therefore help maintain cultural beliefs more or less intact. Moreover, I warn of the dangers of ignoring the cultural powers of these representations.

Transgenic aliens, myths and ‘others’

Current public unease about cross species hybridity seems to invoke fictional monsters ranging from the Frankenstein story7 to bestial beings, such as men with dogs’ heads8 present in the collective memory

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4 See, for example, P. Mason, Deconstructing America: Representations of the Other (Routledge, London, 1990).
6 Ibid.
8 In her reference to Pliny the Elder’s descriptions of his encounters with people of other races in his ‘armchair travels’ Sarah Bakewell comments that many of these descriptions invoked a mixture of animal and human. She quotes Pliny’s assertion that he encountered ‘men with dogs’ heads who are covered with wild beasts’ skin; they bark instead of speaking’. Bakewell, ‘Illustrations from the Wellcome Institute’, p.504. Bakewell presents us with a fascinating collection of images of hybridity reprinted with
and imagination of folktales around the world. This fear is part of the public response to recent experiments with transgenic organisms and xenotransplantation, which reflect public fears of science combined with ancient beliefs about the relationship between animals and humans -- especially when boundaries are transgressed in the literal creation of hybrids. If recipients of heart transplants believe that they might acquire characteristics of the donor, then what happens when the heart received is that of a pig? Does the recipient really believe that they will act ‘piggily’, grunt or worse be ‘re-born’ with a pig’s tail? Implicit here is the culturally-laden fear of becoming less human and more animal.

These anxieties, however, may rest on the separation of humans and animals familiar to us in the modern world. But concomitantly, we seem also to have lost our myths, and thus a tool by which we could explain our role in the world around us, and which once helped us to understand incompatibilities between culture and nature. Rather, in Western culture, we have separated ourselves, created ourselves as superior to any other kinds of living organisms. We have become ‘the norm’ and anything else has become ‘the deviant’, ‘the monster’, ‘the other’. As Birke and Michael note, ‘[s]eparation and autonomy are defined against others - be they nonhuman animals, an ill-defined “nature”, or particularly excluded groups of human others’.11

‘Otherness’ extends also to other human beings: the history of colonial conquest in Africa and the Americas relied on treating indigenous peoples as animals, as less than humans. Thus, ‘the savages’ often featured in touring shows in Europe. Edwards illustrates this point with some photographs and pamphlets from 1884 advertising a show of a

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10 See footnote 7 above.


12 See Mason, *Deconstructing America*; E. Edwards (ed), *Anthropology and Photography 1860-1920* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992); and L. Schiebinger, *Nature’s Body: Sexual Politics and the Making of Modern Science* (Pandora, London, 1993). Parallel to this, there was the construction of dichotomies of human/animal, rational/irrational which helped to create the narrative of inferior ‘others’ with respect to women, in which women are the closest to nature, the irrational ones, and men are the rational sentient superior beings. This, of course, allows violence and abuse against women, since they are somehow ‘inferior’ and ‘the others’.
group of Australian Aborigines who had been removed from Queensland and toured for public exhibition. One of these pamphlets has captions such as:

First introduction in England of the band of seven Australian Boomerang Throwers consisting of male and female Queensland Black Trackers and Ranting Man Eaters! Veritable Blood-Thirsty Beasts, Lowest Order of Man.¹³

Note the familiar discourse of animality: Blood-Thirsty Beasts, and so on. The photos feature a man and a woman, both naked from the waist up bearing their cultural ornaments such as tattoos and jewellery, and posing for the ‘white’ lens of R.A. Cunningham early in 1883. The separation from the ‘civilised’, thinking, speaking human is emphasised not only in the language used but also in the photographic representation of ‘race’ and difference. I must emphasise here that separation from animals is centrally part of Judeo-Christian heritage.¹⁴ Modern Christianity demands individual moral responsibility, therefore separation from the collective responsibility for nature. Yet, this is quite recent in history;¹⁵ Christianity in Medieval times up to the nineteenth century held nonhuman animals morally responsible for ‘crimes’ such as thefts, chattering in church and even murder! (cf. Evans’s ‘trials of animals’).

By contrast, hybrid forms, whatever their origins, threaten and unbalance that separation from ‘others’, hence the fears (ie we might become ‘others’) present in popular representations such as folktales, fables and myths. As I stated above, fear of hybrids is often expressed in fiction but especially in the genres of science fiction and magical realism.

Before I launch into the hybrid characters present in fiction, I want to distinguish human-animal hybrids from allegorical, symbolical representations of human societal life through animals with human characteristics. We are all familiar with jokes and advertisements featuring animals dressed in human clothes and performing human activities such as male beavers ‘busy’ reading the newspaper whilst ‘Mrs Beaver’ (a human female) speaks on the phone to some friend and

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says: ‘No, he’s not busy ... in fact, that whole thing is just a myth’. The popularity of Gary Larson’s *Far Side* cartoons illustrates this point.

‘[I]f we meet with imagery that seems to be calling us to look beyond the immediate event and its emotional ramifications, we may suspect we are dealing with symbol or allegory’, writes Alice Landy. Allegory usually carries moral teachings through animal characters with human qualities. Some writers such as George Orwell have gone a step further in their use of allegory in order to denounce how the politics of language ‘may lose its humane meanings under the pressure of political bestiality and falsehood’. His *Animal Farm* is an example, in which pigs, horses, donkeys and farm birds plot revolution against the cruelty of human beings. Pigs in Orwell’s story use their ‘politics of language’ to convince the other animals on the farm that, under their guidance, the world (the farm) will change for the better and that they will all live in a utopian society of equality and respect. But in doing so, they acquire negative human passions, and so the circle starts again. The farm animals attend meetings called by the pigs; these plot against each other and even kill any of their fellow animals who might oppose them. Does this sound disturbingly familiar?

Traditional fairy tales also use animal characters in this way; who can forget the wicked wolf in *Red Riding Hood*, or the cunning cat in *The Cat in Boots*, for example? Mainstream as well as feminist literary critics have analysed allegories and symbols present in these stories in depth, particularly when it comes to warning girls of the dangers of going out alone in the woods or at dark, or of getting pregnant outside marriage. However, they have paid less attention to hybrid characters and their meaning in terms of the cultural fears about becoming less than humans.

Human/animal hybrids in myths, also help justify human dominance over anything that is not human. Ironically, though, some humans create ‘powerful’, mythical hybrids to keep other humans in fear and,
consequently, under control. Take, for example, the familiar mythological -- as well as a Christian character present in the Bible -- hybrid known as Satan, named from an Arabic word meaning adversary. Satan personifies evil. Originally an angel who rebels against the creator, he is punished expelled from heaven, and given animal parts. Satan is usually conceived of as red, the colour of fire and blood, a man with horns, a pointed tail, and cloven hoofs for feet, but older representations emphasise his bestial qualities - showing him as a goat, for example, which is closely associated with lechery and sexual appetite. This, in the folk concept of Satan, would explain his supposedly raping of women and consequently, the reproduction of monstrous beings. Since reproduction is heavily gendered, the fears and the guilt about the reproduction of these ‘monsters’, falls almost always on the shoulders of women. These fears, as well as ideas about motherhood, fatherhood, religion, and the control of reproduction tend to pop up, more often than not, in popular literature, such as magazines, newspaper articles, fairytales, and novels particularly science fiction stories.

By the same token, we can say that the future of reproduction is also about the future of women and therefore of gender. My interest in this topic, as a feminist writer and sociologist, stems from my perception of people’s preoccupation with human-non human animal relationships expressed through folktales and myths, all of which are gendered. These myths then influence not only literature but also science.

It is in the intersection between myth, literature and science, that science fiction writers are able to explore themes of reproduction and hybridity. An example of this is the film *Alien Resurrection*. Here, Ripley, the main protagonist, is impregnated with the alien’s genes to become after several failed attempts at cloning her, a *hybrid*, with all the monstrous

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20 I consider ‘myth’ as a branch of the folktale. If we think that myths usually explore the world as it was in some past age before the present conditions were established, then we can say that they handle creation and origins. When myth deals with adventures of the gods, we might say that they are almost identical with the fairy tale in that human communications happen through women, who become the ‘others’ and the ‘objects’ of economic and kinship exchange. Folktales have an oral tradition which is generally reproduced by women in the bedtime stories they tell their children without realising that, in the process of retelling folktales, they are also reproducing their own alterity. *The Anthology of World Mythology* comments that: ‘In the 20th century, the symbolic interpretation of myths moved from the external environment to the internal environment of the unconscious mind. Sigmund Freud and his followers view myths as the expression of the individual’s unconscious wishes, fears and drives’. D. Rosenberg, *World Mythology: An Anthology of the Great Myths and Epics* (Harrap, London, 1986), p.xix.
characteristics of her alien parent (corrosive acid instead of blood, enormous strength and extreme insensitivity towards human suffering), yet in the body of Ripley. In turn, she is ‘adopted’ by a mutant baby alien which she later pushes through the suction duct, in a clever allegory for abortion. As the mutant baby disintegrates, his/her terrified face and eyes become almost human and the cries of agony resemble that of a human baby. Ripley sacrificed her adoptive baby to save Earth like the Virgin Mary allowing Christ, her ‘alien’ son - for being only partly human - to die for the whole of humanity. Thus, the film plays with ancient fears of hybridity through women’s reproduction.

Inbreeding as a source of hybrids is another culturally gendered belief originating in creation stories and myths. Whoever the creators are in different cultures, they are always warning humans of the terrible consequences of having sexual intercourse with close relatives: we could bear animals or a mixture of human/non-human animal. People have taken this a step further and included the dangers of practising sexual intercourse with non-human animals, as if animals wanted to engage in such ‘practices’ with humans! Nevertheless, many oral folktales have featured women being ‘raped’ by all sort of animals including snakes and then giving birth to hybrids. This is particularly true of Latin American folktales. Not surprisingly, then, the topic of women’s fear of giving birth to monsters who are neither human nor animals - yet are both - is often explored in the literary genre of magic realism, to which I now turn.

A Hundred years of Solitude and a Millennium of Iguanas

Although magic realism, as a literary term, has been mainly used to describe the works of many Latin American writers, it can also be said that a number of European novelists incorporate magic realism in their works of fiction. These novels ‘explore the unexpected, supernatural and fantastic within a realistic frame of reference’. The genre ‘typically

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21 This is also, of course, a violation of animal rights.
22 Among many others in this genre, I can mention: Angela Carter, Emma Tennant, Salman Rushdie, John Fowles, Elsa Morante and Fabrizia Ramondino.
incorporates elements of dream, fantasy, myth and fairytale within ostensibly realist narratives’.  

Magical realism as is also known, ‘has become an almost universal description of the ‘Latin American style’ - exotic and tropical, overblown and unrestrained, phantasmagorical and hallucinatory - it is so ideologically dangerous that it should really be rejected’, asserts Martin in his analysis of Latin American fiction.  

This has helped it gain world recognition through novelists such as Angela Carter in Europe, Alejo Carpentier, Gabriel García Márquez and Isabel Allende, to mention just a few in the Americas. But magic realist fiction has also helped record cultural beliefs including many regarding scientific, biomedical concepts. In Latin America these beliefs are refracted through discourses of masculinity and femininity expressed as the ideologies of machismo and marianismo. The latter stems from a fusion of the Spanish Catholic dogma of the Virgin Mary (a pure, unblemished young woman) with the indigenous concept of motherhood, which includes Pachamama, Mother Earth (more than a human being, in fact a goddess) according to Aymara myths. This blending of religion and paganism in gendered discourses of motherhood is in itself a hybrid, as is the mestizaje that came from the mixing of Spanish and indigenous genes. In this context, Latin American literature is fertile ground for hybrid forms of all sorts and both writers and readers find this phenomenon of b(l)ending rules, norms, cultures, myths and beliefs in general, very ‘natural’ indeed.

Gabriel García Márquez, if not the ‘creator’ of magical realism in Latin America, has been the first Latin American writer to give magical realism world recognition with his novel One Hundred Years of Solitude. Generally, readers like the novel ‘because it appears to conjure up a

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24 Ibid.
27 Aymaras are indigenous people who live on the borders of Chile, Peru and Bolivia, therefore influencing all three countries with their culture.
28 Alejo Carpentier and Miguel Angel Asturias are, according to literary critics, the first Latin American writers to explore magic realist fiction in their novels after returning from Paris where they encountered surrealism (See, for example, Martin, Journeys through the Labyrinth).
magical reality’.30 There is in the novel a blending of reality and fantasy which makes it difficult for the reader to say where one begins or ends. Significantly, the boundaries between humans and animals are fluid and interchangeable, and not always just allegorical.

Briefly, the novel is a synopsis of Latin American historical experience as seen through the life and eyes of the Buendía family. José Arcadio Buendía and some others set out to find an outlet to the sea. Eventually, after 26 months they abandoned the expedition and founded Macondo. I am struck by the parallel here with Columbus and his expedition to the Indias which, took him instead to the coast of Latin America.31 However, it is as the Buendías’ story unfolds that we encounter the first mention of hybridity:

To the south lay the swamps, covered with an eternal vegetable scum, and the whole vast universe of the great swamp, which according to what the gypsies said, had no limits. The great swamp in the west mingled with a boundless extension of water where there were soft-skinned cetaceans that had the head and torso of a woman, causing the ruination of sailors with the charm of their extraordinary breasts.32

Fantasy and reality fuse here such that the reader simply accepts the fantastic narration as reality in the story, though the allusion to the mythological siren (or mermaid) is clear. Within Greek mythology, this sea nymph lured sailors on to rocks by her singing, resulting in cultural beliefs, widespread from medieval times until the 18th century in Europe. So the writer creates or invokes a mythical figure like the mermaid to call our attention to the fact that Latin America is a place where indigenous and occidental cultures mix sexually, indeed inbreed, to produce mestizaje, hybridisation. In other words, the significance here of a mythical character like the siren is that Márquez is playing with the Western belief that mixing with ‘uncivilised’/indigenous women would cause the ‘ruination’ of a ‘civilized’, superior group of people, in this case the Spanish and Portuguese conquistadores. What I find fascinating is that Márquez seems to be conveying that it was the colonisers who ‘ruined’ the original inhabitants of the Latin American continent by mixing with them, usually through the methodic raping of women albeit excusing themselves by saying that it was because of ‘the

30 Martin, Journeys through the Labyrinth, p.224.
31 Cf P. Mason, Deconstructing America
32 Márques, One Hundred Years of Solitude, p.16.
charming of their breasts’. As I commented above, the figure of the siren is not a modern creation. Anthropologist Peter Mason refers, for example, to Columbus’ letters to Luis de Santangel in 1493 in which the explorer reports that on the islands of the Caribs ‘he saw three sirens, although they were not as beautiful as he had been led to believe’.33

The fantastic being in the shape of a siren in *A Hundred Years of Solitude*, comes as no surprise, then, since the foundation of Macondo, has clear undertones with the colonisation and foundation of Hispanic towns in America. In Márquez’s text, however, the mermaid’s singing is substituted by her alluring breasts perhaps a less subtle sexual discourse on fears of reproducing with the ‘wrong’ species.

Interestingly, Mason also mentions Columbus’ comments in his letters that on this island of the Caribs ‘people with tails are born’.34 Interesting, because this further example of hybridity also appears in *One Hundred Years*. The original couple, José Arcadio Buendía and his cousin Ursula Iguaran delay the consummation of their marriage because of her fear of incest which could bring about the bearing of iguanas instead of human children. Also, note the name Ursula Iguaran, which can be said to be, again, one of Márquez’s subtle jokes: Could Urs(ul)a, if deconstructed, mean a female bear and *Igua(r)a(n)*, iguana? Maybe my deconstruction is extreme and bears (excuse the pun) no relation to the author’s intentions, yet as a writer myself I feel tempted to see beyond the obvious; after all, other names in the story are laden with meaning (cf for example, Buendía (Good day in Spanish). But going back to incest and inbreeding, the story of Ursula and José Arcadio Buendía is such that:

> Although their marriage was predicted from the time they had come into the world, when they expressed their desire to be married their own relatives tried to stop it. They were afraid that those two healthy products of two races that had interbred over the centuries would suffer the same shame of breeding iguanas.35

To make this fear more believable, Márquez introduces a further, more ‘real’ example:

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33 Ibid., p.102.
34 Ibid.
There had already been a horrible precedent. An aunt of Ursula’s, married to an uncle of José Arcadio Buendia, had a son who went through life wearing loose, baggy trousers and who bled to death after having lived forty-two years in the purest state of virginity, for he had been born and grown up with a cartilaginous tail in the shape of a corkscrew and with a small tuft of hair on the tip. A pig’s tail that was never allowed to be seen by any woman and that cost him his life when a butcher friend did him the favour of chopping it off with his cleaver.36

It is up to Ursula to stop incest by wearing chastity pants for a year, despite her cousin’s efforts to consummate the marriage. This symbolic birth control reflects Latin American gender roles in which women are to control reproduction at any cost whilst men are to prove their manhood by sleeping around indiscriminately, the proof of which is children. When this virility is put into doubt by other men, they blame their women. In the novel, after winning a cockfight, José Arcadio is ridiculed by the angry loser thus:

Congratulations!, he shouted, Maybe that rooster of yours can do your wife a favour.37

On hearing this, José Arcadio kills the other man with a spear in front of the whole town, goes back to his house and orders Ursula to take the chastity pants off whilst threatening her with the spear. Ursula responds:

You’ll be responsible for what happens.38

To which he retorts:

If you bear iguanas, we’ll raise iguanas. But there’ll be no more killings in this town because of you.39

He not only reproaches Ursula for his blemished macho image but also, and more infuriatingly for me as a female reader, blames her for a murder he himself committed and for the potentiality of hybrids through her reproduction (which reminds me of the blaming of women

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36 Could this be a symbolic penis?
37 Márques, One Hundred Years of Solitude, p.25.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
for bearing daughters). This is the archetype of Latin American *machismo*.

A further and last example of hybridity present in *One Hundred Years*, which unlike the two previous ones, has no connections to fears of reproduction and inbreeding is that of a *snake-man* being toured in a cage by the gipsies in Macondo. The narrator recounts:

[T]he crowd ... was witnessing the sad spectacle of the man who had been turned into a snake for having disobeyed his parents.40

The ‘spectacle’ is peculiarly similar to the aborigines on display mentioned earlier. In that show, it was difference which had to be exhibited, emphasised and played against the ideological constructs of civilisation. In this show, the fears are to do with being ‘unnatural’. Disobedience to one’s parents in Latin American culture goes against the ‘natural’, ‘normal’ behaviour and rules dictated by religious ideologies. Malformation of one’s spirit is punishable and ‘corrected’ through some divine intervention, which draws parallels to scientific intervention to amend physical deformities, even when they present no threat of death to the ‘abnormal’ person.41

Modern genetic engineering now gives us the possibility of creating further ‘unnatural’ forms of hybrids between humans and other animals that were hitherto imaginable only in fiction. Feminist historian of science, Donna Haraway, exploring the interweaving of science-fiction and modern genetics, remarks that on learning about Christian salvation stories she has been ‘a marked woman informed by those literacies as well as those given to [her] by birth and education’.42 She also notes the potential scientific creation of fantastic and exotic hybrid forms through genetic engineering which evoke precisely those cultural themes. Writing about OncoMouse™, the patented mouse bearing the gene for (human) breast cancer, Haraway comments:

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40 I can’t but help make connections to the Christian creation story of Adam, Eve and the snake in the Garden of Eden.

41 For example, geneticists might attempt to intervene to improve the ‘normal’, to give the human body qualities beyond those given by nature. However, they first experiment with animals, since animals are constructed as dispensable and inferior to humans.

OncoMouse™ is my sibling, and more properly, male or female, she is my sister. Her essence is to be a mammal, a bearer by definition of mammary glands, and a site for the operation of a transplanted, human, tumour-producing gene - an oncogene - that reliably produces breast cancer. Although her promise is decidedly secular, she is a figure in the sense developed within Christian realism: She is our scapegoat; she bars our suffering; she signifies and enacts our mortality in a powerful, historically specific way that promises a culturally privileged kind of salvation - a “cure for cancer”.

The imagery interweaving the fantasies of science-fiction and scientific fact is powerfully explored by Lynn Randolph in her painting of a human-mouse hybrid, created in response to Haraway’s paper ‘Mice into Wormholes’. The painting features a being which has the body of a female mouse (with human looking breasts, hands and feet). She is sitting inside a box, like a cage, observed by seven pairs of human eyes as she stares out at the viewer. Significantly, she is crowned with thorns, like Jesus Christ, supposedly to save humanity from cancer. Haraway also makes this point when she comments that:

[Randolph’s OncoMouse] is a [Christ] figure in the sacred-secular dramas of technoscientific salvation history, with all the disavowed links to Christian narrative that pervade U.S. scientific discourse.

What I want to emphasise is the reproductive aspect, not only of oncogenes, which gender this hybrid (by suggesting with a sole image of a breasted human-mouse, that the hybrid is somehow female) created by genetic engineering and which play into cultural fears of hybrids and of women being the ones to reproduce them. Scientists (usually male) play God to create a monster which can ‘save’ us. But to do that, they must have their victim, their ‘scapegoat’ as Haraway puts it. They must impregnate a female mouse, with the diseased gene of a human, the ‘superior’, the ‘creator’ in order to save the rest of humanity from the awful disease called cancer. Even if we accept the argument that the creation of OncoMouse is justified to save humanity, this glosses over the creation of many other experimental hybrid forms (all of which will

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43 Ibid., p.79.
44 Lynn Randolph’s painting is entitled ‘The Laboratory, or The Passion of OncoMouse’.
45 Haraway, Modest_Witness, p.47.
be murdered in the name of science).46 Here, there is a clear hint of the phantasmagorical, something between reality and surreality, between life and death, which is extremely disturbing for some women, since the cross,47 the cruza continues to fall on our shoulders.

Thus, the fears/anxieties about hybridity, reproduction and gender so eloquently expressed by writers such as García Márquez, Angela Carter, and Carol Emshwiller are evoked again by the literal creation of hybrids in science. Carter’s Nights at the Circus48 follows a female hybrid (she is the daughter of a male swan and a woman and is called Fevvers, possibly because of her wings and also because of her working class origin) on a circus tour from London to Siberia. This is certainly a novel in which magical realism and gender intersect; as the Bloomsbury Guide to Women’s Literature rightly asserts:

> Gender identities are positioned within an interrogation of cultural mythologies of gender, as well as a question of the whole problem of “authenticity”: Am I fact or fiction? asks Fevvers.49

As for Emshwiller, her novel Carmen Dog50 is one in which animals turn into women, while women mutate into birds and other animals. At some point in the process of mutating they are hybrids and we read about women like giant sloths

> upside down in the lower branches of a tree. Some are, you know, on the way up, others the reverse.
> As I said: woman to beast, beast to woman, and not much point to it all seems to me.51

I will not go into the symbolism of this science fiction novel but what is clear from the beginning is that men find it difficult to understand women’s change and try, of course, to control the whole process in the name of reason and attempt to lead a ‘normal’ life with their hybrid wives and lovers.

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46 This has clear resonance with the fate of the hybrids (including the cloned Ripley) in the film Alien Resurrection.
47 I am playing here with the religious and scientific meaning of ‘cross’ which also means ‘hybrid’ in Spanish (just as ‘cross-breeding’ is used in English).
49 Buck, Bloomsbury Guide to Women’s Literature, p.861.
51 Ibid., p.1.
Whatever scientists believe transgenes can do, the fear of bodily forms that transgress species boundaries (in Randolph’s picture, half woman, half mouse) runs deep in our culture. That is why the picture disturbs. It touches on possibilities which are more than just fictional. It evokes fears that science can now create the very fantastical forms which were hitherto the prerogative of the novelist or storyteller.

We ignore these fears at our peril.

Biography

Consuelo Rivera-Fuentes is a Chilean feminist writer now living in Britain. She is an EFL teacher and holds an MA in Sociology and Women’s Studies from the University of Lancaster, UK, where she is currently doing her PhD thesis on Lesbian Autobiographies, a hybrid in itself since it combines literature, photography and oral narrations. She lives in North Wales with her lover, one of her sons and lots of animals.

Acknowledgments: This article would not have born had it not been for Lynda Birke who persuaded me to, first present a shorter version at the International Society for Anthrozoology conference in June 1999 (University of Philadelphia, USA), and, second, to send it to Animal Issues. Her patience to read draft after draft is only comparable to her patience with the animals we share our lives with and believe me, they can be a handful!
THE FACE IN THE TREE

Simone Poirier-Bures

It was an overcast, November day, cool and still. A good day for a walk along the gravel roads in rural Virginia where I live. I had been struggling with words all day, trying to find them, tame them, use them. The act of walking calmed me; the cool air filling my lungs, refreshed.

As I rounded a bend in the road, I felt myself being watched. I looked up and saw an odd-looking creature eyeing me from the crook of two bare branches. I studied the long white oval face, the narrow slanted eyes lined in black, the pink nose, the rounded black ears with pink tops. It didn't look quite real, more like the face of a plush toy, or a novelty balloon. For a moment I thought it might be a stuffed animal that someone had put in the tree as a joke. But as I advanced it moved the tiniest bit, keeping its beady eyes on me.

Except for that small flicker of movement, the possum was as still as the tree itself, not even blinking. I met its gaze, keeping myself just as still. I noted its leathery tail curled like a hook, like an upside down question mark. I wondered if I had surprised it, this nocturnal animal, now trapped in daylight, and whether it was terrified.

I could feel the possum studying me as well, though it remained as still as stone. It was amazing, really, the two of us facing each other across the huge divide of our separate species. “Hello”, I said in a low voice. “I won’t hurt you”.

I sensed that it understood, though not from my words. Some other language ran between us, a language of gesture and scent, perhaps. I thought of how we must smell, we big galumphing humans with our sweat and soaps and perfumes, as we thump and thrash our way through their woods. Does danger have a particular scent, I wondered, something other than normal human scent? I imagined hunters as giving off a hot red peppery scent, the walker a more benign one, like salt. Surely the possum could smell my good intentions, or at least, my lack of bad ones.
I realized, then, that the possum must have been aware of me long before I had become aware of it. It had been unlucky enough to be caught in the open, but why had it not run off? Why had it stayed there, locking me in its gaze?

Native Americans believe that animals choose to show themselves to humans, so that humans can learn from them. Perhaps the possum had shown itself to me on purpose, wanting to teach me something. How lacking and insignificant words seemed now!

All around me, I could hear the low twittering of birds, things rustling off under the trees. They were tiny sounds, sounds I probably would not have heard if I were not then as still as the possum. I wondered how many other creatures were watching me, watching this little drama unfold. I imagined them peering out from burrows, from rocks, from behind and over tree trunks.

I felt acutely aware, then, of the whole teeming animal and bird and insect world, that enormous parallel universe that goes on side by side with the human one, though most of the time we are barely aware of it. Here, I was the intruder, the outsider, “other”. I felt a sudden piercing desire to know that world, to see it through those thousands of eyes peering out from the trees and leaf mold, to know how it must be to experience the world wordlessly, through eye, ear, and nose.

The possum continued to watch me, and I, it. I knew that it would stay this way for as long as I met its gaze - for hours, if necessary. But my fingers were frozen, my leg muscles stiffening; it was time to go home. I bent down to fix my shoelace, and when I stood up the possum was gone. I had heard nothing, not even the faintest rustle; it had slipped away, as silently as an apparition.

All the way home I peered into the trees, looking for faces. I saw none. But I knew they were there, watching. Another would eventually show itself, some brave ambassador come to remind us that we are not alone here, that the human world is not everything, that another, larger world surrounds us, like a dim memory waiting to be recalled.
Simone Poirier-Bures is the author of two books: Candyman (1994), a novel set in her native Nova Scotia, Canada, and That Shining Place (1995), an award-winning memoir of Crete. Simone’s stories and essays have won numerous prizes, and have appeared in more than two dozen literary journals in the United States and Canada as well as in eight anthologies. She is currently working on a book of stories (fiction and personal narratives) about human relationships with animals and the natural world. She teaches in the English Department, Virginia Tech, US.
ISAZ

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR ANTHROZOOLOGY

ISAZ is a supportive organisation for the scientific and scholarly study of human-animal interactions. The primary aim of ISAZ is to promote the study of all aspects of human-animal relationships by encouraging and publishing research, holding meetings, and disseminating information. Meetings have focussed on a wide variety of topics including: attitudes to animals, companion animal welfare, methodologies in anthrozoological research, medical, social, and psychological aspects of human-animal interactions, ethological and behavioural approaches to the study of human-animal interaction. Membership is open to individuals currently or previously involved in conducting scholarly research within the broad field of human-animal interactions. Corporate membership is open to any charities, organisations, or companies which have an interest in the aims of the Society.

contact: http://www.soton.ac.uk/~azi/isazl.htm or Dr. Debbie Wells, Membership Secretary and Treasurer, ISAZ, School of Psychology, The Queen’s University of Belfast, Belfast BT7 1NN, Northern Ireland, UK. ph: +44 - (0)1232 - 274386; fax: +44 - (0)1232 - 664144; e-mail: d.wells@qub.ac.uk.

Henry’s work can teach us how to make our ethical views become more than words – how to put them into action, so that they have an impact on the world. It is hard to imagine anything more important than that. (Peter Singer, from the Preface).

In many ways, Peter Singer’s recent foray into biography, Ethics Into Action, can be read as a manual for those who were moved by Animal Liberation and wanted to take some action to prevent the unnecessary suffering of non-human animals. Singer’s approach is to illustrate how abstract ethical ideas can be applied in the real world and effect change, by way of example: his subject is the late animal rights activist, Henry Spira.

Spira, born in 1927, emerged from a tumultuous and difficult childhood to embark on a varied career as a merchant marine, a private in the United States Army, a teacher at a poor New York City public school and finally a full time activist. His early interests in activism and involvement in various socialist organisations caught the attention of the FBI, who for some time kept Spira under surveillance and documented his movements.

Spira’s interest in animal issues really began when he read a review of Singer’s Animal Liberation, and came to see defence of animal interests as a logical extension of his interests in the rights and interests of human beings. Once committed to the cause of action on behalf of his non-vocal, non-human counterparts, Spira, through strategic planning, creativity and sheer relentlessness, achieved some astounding victories over individuals and organisations involved in animal exploitation. Given the widespread impact of behaviourism in science and the social norms of the period (beginning in the early seventies, when the term ‘animal liberation’ was often interpreted as a parody of the women’s liberation movement, for example), Spira faced formidable opposition. Any reader interested in animal issues will be fascinated by Singer’s
accounts of Spira’s successes, among them his contribution to preventing the notorious Draize-test through careful negotiation with major cosmetics companies (most notably, Revlon).

To those with an interest in the animal rights movement, *Ethics Into Action* lends an important historical perspective, but some will be disappointed that animal interests and suffering come across as means to an end: a meaningful life for the human beings in question. In the sense that Singer is presenting Spira’s life as a case in point, one has the sense that Singer’s conception of a meaningful life is unfortunately narrow, and this is the major weakness of the book.

Whilst Spira, who eventually devotes himself to the liberation of animals on a full-time basis, is presented as leading a meaningful life devoted to ethical concerns, Singer neglects to address alternative but perhaps equally valid lives of other persons discussed within the book in relation to ethics. Spira’s father, we are told, methodically committed a covered-up suicide in order that his wife and daughters (intermittantly institutionalised for depression) could survive on his life insurance payments. ‘He literally gave up his life for my mother and sister’, says Spira (p. 42). Like Spira, his father was trying to prevent the suffering of those who could not protect or care for themselves, and yet this morally and ethically significant act is treated by Singer as a mere episode in Spira’s life.

Similarly, Spira’s life is presented by Singer as that of a model animal liberationist. In contrast, other individuals or groups seen to clash with Spira are presented as hindering the ‘good’ work he did. Though this may be the case, Singer does not give the reader the opportunity to judge for him or herself, and thus one has the distinct uneasy feeling that the account is biased in Spira’s favour. One is also constantly reminded of Singer’s own influence on Spira through *Animal Liberation* (chapter four is entitled ‘Animal Liberation’ and opens with a quotation from Singer’s book), yet the book is lacking a philosophical assessment of the utilitarian approach shared by Spira and Singer. Perhaps it is unrealistic to expect Singer to be critical of what is essentially his own position, given that his ‘argument’ for it is presented in *Animal Liberation*. Nonetheless, when it comes to the biography of Spira, Singer must realise that these views are not uncontroversial. *Ethics Into Action* simply suggests that these views work and that by adopting them and devoting our time to reducing suffering, we automatically accrue vital meaning in our lives.
What is needed are argument and explanation, and more discussion about what constitutes “meaning”. According to Singer, it appears to be physical and mental health and happiness – again, this is uncontroversial, and tends to beg the question.

Given that the text is presented as exploring ethical questions, it comes as a surprise that Spira’s methods are not questioned. He displayed an uncanny ability to negotiate with large corporations in order to effect change, but a potential criticism of this approach is that Spira was success-driven and not principle-driven. Thus he would attempt to work in conjunction with those corporations he was accusing of animal exploitation, in order to achieve a mutually satisfactory outcome. The approach has the merit of being realistic, but Singer does not adequately weigh up its merits and defects, leaving it vulnerable to the criticism that he potentially jeopardised the animal rights movement in its embryonic stages by not taking a strong enough position. Singer could have provided more philosophical discussion regarding this issue. Instead, his ‘Advice to Activists’ is entirely derived from Spira’s methodology, as if this is ethically unproblematic.

Singer struggles to straddle the twin genres of biography and philosophy. Unfortunately I don’t think he is successful: as biography the account of Spira is rather brief and selective, as well as being one-sided. In some ways this may be a case of the author being too close to give an objective and well-rounded account of the subject and his concerns. As philosophy, too many assumptions are left unexplored, unjustified or unacknowledged, and Singer tends to feed the reader his own views without challenging them. Though the emphasis is on “action”, the ethical component is disappointing in its lack of depth and its one sidedness. The book could almost be renamed ‘Animal Liberation into Action’.

To his merit, Singer has chosen a fascinating subject – Spira’s is a forceful and colourful persona, and the politics behind the animal rights movement provides high drama (conflict, corruption, misappropriation of funds and even – though very much an aside – murder). Readers will enjoy the complex ‘plot’ of this biography, and Spira does present an inspiring example (though not necessarily a blueprint) for activists. Nevertheless, one is left with the feeling that the book, from an ethical perspective, could only have been enriched by the presence of some critical discussion of Spira’s philosophy and life, insofar as this is an example of an ethical existence.
Anne Quain

Are zoos texts? Not precisely – and so Randy Malamud, an English professor at Georgia State University (USA), purports to 'read' them through their stories (ie fictional accounts that feature zoo scenes, inhabitants, or visitors). Finding in this way little if any redeeming value in the institution, and much that is objectionable, Malamud writes a staunchly abolitionist denunciation; indeed, his work of literary/moral criticism borders on the polemical. *Caveat lector*, in other words, for here hermeneutics of suspicion drive the argument: ‘if we examine the evidence and documents of our own culture, through our representations of zoos, I believe that the inconsistencies, the hypocrisies, the logical fallacies, and the rationalizations that have undergirded the perpetuation of zoos will become readily apparent; the system will deconstruct (p. 49).

Under Malamud’s critical lens, zoo stories manifest many defects of their subject. As seen through scores of authors’ eyes, zoos originate in imperialistic impulses (melding conquest and captivity, exhibition and exploitation), establish a regime of cruelty that oppresses by depriving wild animals of their freedom and by inflicting painful somatic stress, and encourage practices of spectatorship that stultify visitors and rob inter-species encounters of elemental reciprocity. Given this list of ills, it should not be surprising that Malamud decries the urban weekend ritual of taking kids to the zoo. There is nothing innocent or amusing about such outings: ‘zoos prove well-suited as a vehicle for children’s anxiety, fear, insecurity; zoos evoke these unsettling psychological reactions more prominently than they inspire (as zoo proponents would proclaim) fun, education, or imagination’ (p. 293).

Stark stuff, this. Some readers may not persevere through Malamud’s long, dark discourse. But then the history and legacy of the zoo is itself long and dark. So sour a view of the institution may be unexpected, especially for those who have subscribed to the popular, received metaphor of zoo-as-ark of conservation/education. On the other hand, philosophers and cultural critics ought not be strangers to mismatches of ideological rhetoric and phenomenological reality. And such is the
pattern at the structural heart of the zoological park - the central contradiction revealed by Malamud is that even whilst they proclaim to save wild animals, zoos actually extinguish biotic wildness both by dislocating their keep and by overexposing them. Unauthenticity of this sort deserves a thoroughgoing treatment of skeptical analysis.

Reading Zoos delivers that and unfortunately more, as its skepsis spills over into a cynicism that sometimes obscures. There is a tendency in this book, for instance, toward diagnostic totalization-negative judgments are issued with the aprioristic ring of cant: ‘inevitability, commercial culture will overshadow nature, replicating the dominance of imperial culture over the subaltern’ (p. 97, italics added); ‘the cage essentially and wholly defines, subordinates, whatever is inside’ (p. 119, italics added). Similarly, polarities of global reasoning arise when, as Malamud seeks to distinguish ‘the authentically enlightening intellectual experience of animals’ from the distress visited upon animals at zoos, he ends up posing the empirical difference as a dichotomy of principles: ‘imagination indicates creation, and pain deconstructs creation’ (p. 181). Is the imagination never delusory, one wonders, or pain ever ennobling? Maybe not, but the author's declamatory tone bespeaks a refusal to ponder the former's pitfalls or the latter's generative possibilities. Lastly, cultural cynicism again overcomes Malamud as he offers to explain the popularity of zoos by positing a social addiction, and so we are told that families frequently find themselves at animal exhibitions because ‘parents capitulate to some [monolithically evil] socio-cultural force’ (p.269). A more plausible account might make reference to the perversion of an innate disposition toward animal affinity (ie the biophilia recently theorized by a broad range of scientists).1

When it comes to prescribing therapies for the dismal state of biotic encounter in our current culture, Malamud is modest at first and confesses ignorance of the right way to regard wild animals. Yet he does think there should be better ways than zoological display, ways that would be more genuine and holistic. His chief recommendation is that we enhance what could be called our ‘biological imaginary’: because ‘proper interaction with animals necessitates not [always] knowing exactly where they are’ (p. 177), it appears that ‘a better way to appreciate the animals with which we share this planet depends upon

the invisible: upon our imagination of animals ... when they are not immediately present’ (p. 185). Developing an enriched ‘mental bestiary’ is preferable to keeping zoos, Malamud claims, in that it is less constraining for actual animals and more stimulating for humans. What would this look like concretely? Imaginative exemplars of authentic animal artistry, for Malamud, are the poetry of Marianne Moore and the prints of Albrecht Dürer. Where would we get the natural history necessary to feed and discipline our own zoomorphic imaginings? Here Malamud comes up a bit short in defending nature documentaries as the lesser of evils (compared to either zoos or expanded ecotourism). I’d suggest rather a renewed investment in local sanctuaries for the rehabilitation of displaced wildlife (eg Belize’s Tropical Education Center) as well as greater attention to the prospects for visiting native refuge areas (eg Australia’s Penguin Parade).²

Though I have taken issue with Malamud on several points, I find myself in broad agreement with his book’s overarching indictment of zoos as unauthentic institutions of animal representation. Perhaps he has over-stated his case, but then – given the abundance in zoo commentary of evasive apologetics and superficial reformism - it is refreshing to read a critique that pulls no punches. If not unique in aim,⁴ Reading Zoos is distinctive in method and singular in depth (the wealth of literary coverage and careful interpretation is impressive in itself and fruitful for further study). Before reboarding the ark floated by today’s conservation establishment, peruse Malamud and you may want to abandon ship.

Ralph Acampora

² An odd defense of a unidirectional medium (film), particularly since he goes on to reject the interactive imagery of computerized animals (CD-ROMs, WWW sites) as ‘glitzy pap’ (p.262). The advent on American cable of the channel Animal Planet - a kind of MTV of nature shows - demonstrates how biovisual broadcasts can be infected by the empty excesses of cyberculture.


Hugh LaFollette and Niall Shanks’s Brute Science: Dilemmas of animal experimentation builds a sophisticated and extremely convincing case against the use of animals in medical research. This is not to say that LaFollette and Shanks categorically reject animal experimentation, instead they call for more effective measures for evaluating the success of animal experimentation and a halt to exaggeration about its benefits. While this reviewer would have preferred that the book take a firmer stance on the issue, not least because the evidence marshalled seems to call for it, this is the only disappointment afforded by the work.

The book is carefully organised around a progression of arguments that at first glance caused consternation due to the claim made early on that ‘[w]e must delve deeper to determine the scientific and methodological merits of animal experimentation. Only after we have done so will we be able to morally evaluate the practice’ (p. 18). The suggestion that moral considerations about the treatment of animals rest upon potential benefits to other species is a position I would hesitate to support. However, setting this objection aside it is clear that the authors put their proposition to excellent use, producing a case that exploits the uncertainty of benefit in contrast to the considerable moral costs of experimentation.

Brute Science begins with a succinct account of both sides of the vivisection debate. A central thesis of the book is that the use of examples in arguing for or against vivisection is an inadequate strategy unless these examples are evaluated in the context of best current biological theory, here, evolutionary theory. Thus examples of medical successes and failures produced by vivisection mean nothing unless the ways in which such successes or failures occurred can be explained through theory. Given that often times this debate is indeed conducted on the level of example exchange, this is an important insight, and one which shapes the book profoundly.

Chapter three looks at the origins of the current biomedical model, citing Claude Bernard as the father of modern biomedicine. LaFollette and Shanks note that Bernard embraced animal experimentation for two main reasons, firstly because he considered observation and clinical research unscientific due to the difficulty of controlling variables adequately, and secondly because he rejected evolutionary theory and
any concommitant view of species as significantly different. As a result, he believed that science was best served by experimentation on animals where as many variables as possible could be controlled, in the context of a view of species differences as no more than superficial.

Thus, the book demonstrates that present day experimentation is founded upon the rejection of evolutionary theory, a state of affairs that is somewhat problematic given that evolutionary theory is presently well accepted. Chapter four details the current biomedical paradigm and makes clear the ways in which Bernard’s views are still central. Chapters five and six detail evolutionary theory, setting the stage for later arguments by emphasising evolutionary theory’s recognition of real species discontinuities and its commitment to the notion of nonlinear dynamical biological systems, a commitment that suggests that where particular species differences are apparent, these differences, though seemingly irrelevant to the experiment in question, limit the possibility of extrapolating research findings from animals to humans. Here, difference is understood to be not limited to single structures or functions in the body, but necessarily indicative of other variations.

In this discussion a significant theme of the book emerges; that of difference. This theme recurs consistently in section two where animal experimentation is evaluated in scientific terms. A central dilemma based on difference is uncovered here, for while researchers wish to argue that animals are similar enough to humans to yield meaningful data about human diseases, responses to drugs and other matters, they also assume that animals are different enough to warrant different (inferior) moral consideration. Returning to evolutionary theory, the authors are able to demonstrate that both perspectives cannot coexist. Where higher cognitive states are absent in animals (an absence that allows morally for their use in experimentation) evolutionary theory tells us that other, physiological, differences must also exist. Thus, the very grounds upon which animals are considered valid moral subjects for experimentation are the same grounds for why they are unsuitable scientific subjects for experimentation. This review cannot do justice to the complexity of the arguments made in this section, but suffice to say that chapters seven to twelve provide very strong arguments against the scientific validity of vivisection. Worthy of note here is the observation that the most common defences of experimentation fall into the ‘it just works’ category, a defence necessitated by the existence of significant theoretical obstacles (demonstrated here) to seeing vivisection as viable and by the lack of a detailed and serious measurement of its successes, failures and costs. Also important to note is the treatment of basic
research in this section, a treatment that is by contrast scant, inconclusive and relatively weakly argued given that it is simultaneously treated as perhaps the only area in which animal experimentation has some clear value. This scant treatment becomes more telling later in the book.

Having established that from a scientific point of view, animal experimentation occupies a very dubious location in relation to medical achievement, the authors move on to a moral evaluation of vivisection. Marshalling an impressive repertoire of philosophical arguments, the authors build a convincing case that due to the very uncertain scientific benefits of animal experimentation, moral justifications are difficult to launch effectively. For example, by arguing that current moral standards consider an evil perpetrated worse than an evil left unprevented, the onus is placed on vivisection to show exceptional benefits given that it is a widely recognised evil perpetrated in order to prevent the evils of illness. Additionally, having argued strongly for the vagueness and inconclusiveness around vivisection’s efficacy (as well as around its costs in terms of numbers of animals used), the authors are able to demonstrate that under these terms, the possible prevention of evil must be offset against the certain perpetration of evil. This is an even tougher moral and scientific ask, given the portrait of vivisection offered above.

It is somewhat disappointing to this reviewer then (as I noted at the outset) that Brute Science stops short of identifying itself as opposed to animal experimentation. This may be a strategic move designed to hold the attention of those firmly in favour and easily put off by apparently partisan analyses, but nevertheless, it is a move not supported by its own material. Admittedly, there are many who hesitate to step decisively into the oppositional role in this debate, after all, even well-known champion of animals Donna Haraway, in her influential Modest_Witness@Second Millennium.FemaleMan@Meets_OncoMouse™ states, ‘my own ambivalence on the subject is unresolved’. However, having offered statements such as the following: ‘[t]o the extent that researchers cannot measure the benefits of a practice [vivisection], to that extent at least, they should not claim to know that the practice is beneficial’ (p. 173) and ‘[t]herefore, there are no compelling moral arguments for biomedical experiments using animals’ (p. 248) one would think that the authors’ conclusions would be stronger. Instead

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1 Donna J. Haraway, Modest_Witness@Second Millennium.FemaleMan@Meets_OncoMouse™ (Routledge, London and New York, 1997), p.290 (n54).
(and not insignificantly), policy recommendations are made which emphasise the need to learn more about animals used in research, the need to thoroughly evaluate animal research scientifically and the importance of stronger public health interventions to deal with chronic and preventable illness.

In the process, however, the authors return to the uncertain benefits of basic research to conclude that ‘[t]he evidence to hand suggests that biomedical research using animals - especially basic biomedical animal research - has benefited humans, albeit, indirectly, and might continue to do so’ (p. 262). Whether or not vivisection has benefited humans, *Brute Science* has singularly failed to support this statement. If such evidence exists, it is poorly represented in the book.² As such, the claim signals a retreat from stronger conclusions that would be well-supported in the body of the work. This, however, is the only criticism I would offer, given the stimulating and thoroughly argued material the book provides, but in the context of this urgent debate, it is a significant one.

Suzanne Fraser

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² Though admittedly this perception may partly be influenced by my own strong objection to animal research.

Written by an Australian author and drawing heavily on Australian research and making points illustrated by regional examples, *The Pact for Survival* must have strong appeal for the local readership. Jonica Newby is an Australian veterinary scientist and science journalist, and she acknowledges a particularly heavy debt to another Australian veterinarian, David Paxton, drawing extensively on the ‘lateral thinking’ manifested in his doctoral thesis for the Australian National University. The book however is anything but parochial in the scope of its ideas. Indeed the outstanding characteristic of Newby's style is her ability to review and integrate a vast array of theories and data, from a vast range of sources. She draws upon the work of archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, geneticists, biologists, philosophers and ethologists (I’ve probably missed out some), making it accessible and useful to the general reader.

*The Pact for Survival* must also have a paramount appeal to owners and lovers of domestic dogs and cats, investigating as it does the history, nature and origins of the relationship, and speculating as to its future. However, the questions raised about human evolution and society are hard-headed and exciting, and warrant widespread attention. At the outset Newby dismisses as counter-productive to serious scientific investigation the notion that dogs were somehow a human creation, and by the end she has certainly presented a challenging array of hypotheses as to how the two species came together and influenced each others' development.

Why, Newby asks, have so few species succumbed to becoming pets? What was special about dogs and cats? When and how did the process begin? Is it conceivable that biological and social interactions between humans and their pets have resulted in actual evolutionary change in the human as well as sub-human species? How have they influenced our culture - and we theirs? In the latter part of the book a series of contemporary issues are addressed - are pets good for health? are pets bad for the environment? how do they fit into modern town-planning? All is drawn together in the concluding chapter, ‘The Urban Sextipede’ (after Paxton), which is provocative, persuasive and fun.
In broad overview, the story runs as follows. The available archaeological record shows that dogs have been around us for at least 12,000 years. Conceivably, when DNA technology improves, there will be a case for arguing that dogs existed as a separate species as long as 80,000 years ago, when humans were acquiring language. ‘First dog’ may have been a pet, a sewage system, a hearing aid, or, most probably in Newby’s opinion, all of the above. A major theoretical step is taken at the end of Chapter 1, with the contention that the mixed species community of dog-human was the unit on which natural selection operated.

The next two chapters discuss evolutionary changes in canine and human species. For dogs, this has involved a reduction in brain size, a dulling of the senses, and neotenisation (retention of juvenile characteristics) - none of which Newby considers to be really bad, given the compensatory advantages of association with humans. An account of an amazing Russian experiment in fox farming supports the notion that selection for friendliness may bring about many and rapid physical changes. The Ancient Romans knew about selective dog breeding; the latest leap in such came with the establishment of breed standards in the late 19th century. The chapter on humans begins blandly enough, discussing the impact of domestic animals in various aspects of our culture - of dogs on hunting, cattle and cats on agriculture, horses on transport and warfare. The real excitement comes with the examination of Paxton’s thesis, that the ‘extension’ of the human brain brought about by the domestication of canines to include the dog’s superior olfactory capacities permitted the substitution of the apparatus of speech for the organs of smell, within the limited space of our cranium.

Chapters 4 and 5 take up very broad issues relating to human-animal cultural interactions. Chapter 4 examines the changing fortunes of cats and dogs across human history and habitat - their casting as devil, insensate object, pariah, dinner, and finally, pet. A pet is defined as ‘an animal that is kept for no other purpose.’ The rise of pet-keeping in Europe from the 18th century onwards is portrayed as involving a shift from opportunism to empathy, and as at least partly resulting from increasing urbanisation. Here is foreshadowed the theme on which the second half of the book pivots. Before that happens though, Chapter 5 describes portrayals of animals in art, language and literature, moving on to a mind-blowing discussion of ‘talking with the animals’. Another large-scale ongoing study of canine behaviour is reported, this one from the Anthrozoology Institute in Southampton, England, addressing the issue as to whether communication in modern dogs has significantly
departed from that in wolves. Results show that it has; furthermore all the new signals displayed are to do with ‘being friendly’ - to us. Do dogs have a culture? Well, yes, but canine cultural transmission occurs via the mediation of human language. It is we who pass down to the next generation of ourselves what and how to teach our pets!

There follows a competent review of the literature (much of it carried out in Australia in the ’nineties) on the healing properties of pets in contemporary life. The positive evidence suggests to Newby that the adaptive biological function of dogs and cats in human society continues, only differently. They help us deal with the challenges of urbanisation, most notably loneliness. The author then goes on to counter the notion (particularly popular in Australia) that an urban presence of animal companions has a downside as it increases pollution, a task she accomplishes with ease and some levity. For one thing, keeping pets helps to satisfy our drive towards nurturing, thus assisting with zero population growth. More positively, she expounds the concept of ‘biophilia’ (after E.O. Wilson) - that we are genetically programmed ‘to seek out natural settings and affiliate with animals and plants’. Unfortunately, modern town planners have forgotten to incorporate the means for pet-keeping into their designs. The interests of the animals and their owners are either ignored or misconstrued, as the very demographic trends which make animal companionship so valuable at the same time militate against maintaining it. We need them more, but can have them less. Of course, in Beijing there is a dog farm for city-dwellers to visit, while in Tokyo canine walkees may be rented by the hour!

David Paxton argues the need to examine community change in terms of how it affects a single, indivisible unit, made up of one two-legged and one four-legged partner - the Urban Sextipede. Newby’s final chapter is one of advocacy, in which she instances ways and means of dealing with this entity, at the official and self-help levels. She is passionate, practical, but also pessimistic. Although humans may be able to survive in environments hostile to our ancient genetic partners, do we really want to live there?

There are now lots of books on dogs and cats. Beginning in the 19th century with treatises on their care and breeding, in the 20th century we have this tradition continued, supplemented by manuals of dog training, anecdotes and biographies, histories and picture books. In the second half of the century the field expanded to include psychological and biological studies, beginning in 1954 with Konrad Lorenz’s Man
Meets Dog. Recently philosophers and psychologists have taken up issues relating to the presence or absence in these species of consciousness and emotion. The present book touches on most but goes way beyond any of these modes in its breadth of knowledge and ideas, scope of enquiry, seriousness and wit.

Alison M. Turtle
Book Reviews


There is some conflict between the title and the content of this book. Understanding Dogs is more a sociological study of how people relate to dogs than it is a study in how to understand dogs. Sanders uses observations of his own dogs, puppy training classes and the running of a major veterinary hospital, interviews with dog care-takers (which he equates with pet-owners), veterinarians, guide dog trainers and guide dog owners.

Sanders begins with comments on the ways pet ownership relates to self esteem, status and human sociability. Next he relates the dog owners’ beliefs about the capacity of dogs for thoughtful behaviour. Commonly the owners do think that their dogs exercise reason but usually as linked to emotions such as anger. The brief account of deception in dogs is fascinating. Dogs are often regarded by owners as persons. Further discussion on this point would have been welcome in the light of its importance in developing an ethics in relation to animals. (There is very little directly on ethics in this book, though the author displays love and respect for dogs.)

Chapter Three focuses on what it is like to become a guide dog owner and these owners’ ideas about their dogs unique personalities, attitudes and intelligence (including intelligent disobedience). Examples of thoughtful decision-making by these dogs are presented. The dogs’ empathetic abilities are also stressed. Then the discussion mores onto how the owners interact with other humans. Here the human-centred approach of the book starts to take hold.

The next chapter on the veterinarian concentrates on the ways in which animals might cause problems in a vet clinic, not why. This does not deepen our understanding of dogs much beyond saying they experience stress and fear. There is a quite lengthy discussion about vets’ dilemmas over euthanasia, clarifying how vets need to distant themselves from the owners’ suffering. Very little is made of the loss to the animal incurred by death. There are some interesting points made about the consequences of regarding companion animals as persons or not but these are not taken very far.
We move on then to guide dog trainers. In the training centre studied, the trainers agreed that ‘“dog understanding” was the most essential attribute of a successful guide dog trainer’, but this is thought not to apply to other training schools. Again the emphasis is on the human: trainers and the public, trainers and the blind. ‘Dog understanding’ is made up of a knowledge of dog behaviour and canine ethology combined with an ability to ‘read’ the dog, to understand how the dog is experiencing the training sessions. A description of good guide dogs is given: dogs with ‘some degree of basic intelligence combined with a “willingness” to learn while putting aside his or her “natural” instincts’ (p. 99). Guide dogs are distinguished as hard or soft depending on the trainer’s estimation of their sensitivity. Some views of trainers are given on whether dogs have emotions or think. The strain in behaviourist analyses is clearly revealed, yet behaviourism is central to the training programmes.

The final chapter entitled ‘Animal abilities and human-animal interaction’ promises to engage more directly with how to understand animals. Surveying and dismissing the view of animals as things, Sanders favours the idea of animals as actors. He argues that at least some animals have identifiable emotional experiences. They construct and use mental representations ‘in order to orient themselves to their surrounding physical and social environment’ (p. 113). They communicate these ‘thoughts’ to others. There is simply a difference in degree with humans. These general points are supported by a summary of the primate research. This is interesting but off the topic. There is an attempt to generalise to dogs but the same studies cannot be used. Anecdotes are presented (stories of specific dogs’ abilities) and some of the insights of the previous chapters are drawn together. The final section of human-animal interactions contains an intriguing discussion of play involving dogs and humans and what that reveals.

Denise Russell
Book Notes


This book attempts to draw out the philosophical implications of the Kanzi (and Panbanisha) research for theories of language acquisition and mind. Kanzi is a bonobo (non-human ape) who works mainly with Sue Savage-Rumbaugh acquiring considerable linguistic skills. The first 70 pages detail this research, which allows plenty of space to develop the philosophical arguments. This is done well but it is such a fertile ground, there is much more that could be said.


The sub-title to this collection is misleading. It consists of 17 papers with only 3 specifically on animal welfare. (One is by Mary Midgley.) The others cover issues to do with animal subjectivity, eg happiness in chimpanzees; attitudes to animals and the use of animals in research and education. Two of the most interesting contributions deal with wild animals and endangered animals.


Famous and not so famous authors are reprinted here reflecting on nature. Charles Darwin, Thoreau, Mark Twain, Audubon, Gerald Manley Hopkins, D.H. Lawrence and Nabokov are a few of the well-known names. The essays or extracts are collected around four themes: landscape; birds; beasts; insects and fish. The beast extracts focus on: the cat, beaver, bonte-quagga, narwhal and monkey. This is an eclectic and entertaining edition.

The result of 12 years studying elephants in Kenya, Namibia and Zimbabwe, *Silent Thunder* explores the abilities of elephants to communicate with each other, sometimes over long distances, using infrasound - sound below the range of human hearing in communication. Detailed observations of elephant behaviour, beautifully written, are also presented. A timely book given the resurgence of the ivory trade.
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