

CONFRONTING THE SPECTACLE OF THE OTHER (THAN HUMAN):  
POSTHUMANISM AND THE CONVERGENCE OF ART, AESTHETICS, AND ETHICS

by

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Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of  
The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

May 2014

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## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following people for their enormous contributions to this project. I owe each of them a great debt of gratitude. All of my committee members influenced the project in significantly important ways. Also, each of them challenged me, engaged with my text, and asked incredibly wonderful questions. I cannot thank each of them enough.

This project began in Dr. Stacy Alaimo's Environmental Literature and Film course. She has been an integral part of project providing important insight on initial drafts. Her work in Environmental Humanities and Animal Studies greatly influenced this entire project. She also chaired the Animal Studies Hermann's, which brought important scholars to UTA. Because of this event I was able to discuss my project with one of the leading scholars in the field, Cary Wolfe. This is just one of many examples of why Dr. Alaimo continues to be a great mentor. Her guidance and importance to the project could not be overstated. She continues to greatly influence my scholarship and my teaching.

My theoretical contribution, a(e)s(th)et(ics), grew from Dr. Tim Morris's Sports Literature course. Dr. Morris asks some of the most thoughtful questions and has an amazing range of knowledge on a variety of topics. His comments on my initial essay about a(e)s(th)et(ics) helped me shift the focus from sports (rock climbing) to Animal Studies. Dr. Morris is an incredibly thoughtful reader and his wealth of comments on my drafts really helped the project move forward.

The central premise of Chapter Three stemmed from Dr. Kevin Porter's Foundations of Rhetoric course. His book greatly influenced one of the many theoretical principles of the project (meaning). I have taken several courses with Dr. Porter and I am continually impressed by the depth and scope of his questions. The way he engages with subjects helped me think through some of the broader philosophical questions broached by this project.

Dr. Neill Matheson shared his knowledge of 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Literature, which greatly contributed to Chapter Four. The sections on Poe, Thoreau, and Melville materialized because of many impromptu discussions with Dr. Matheson. Also, his interest in Animal Studies helped as well. Dr. Matheson participated in an informal Animal Studies group at UTA with me. His comments on my paper and my working questions helped me think through some of the theoretical issues I needed to address in order to move forward.

Also, I would like to express my deep sense of gratitude to my family. My academic journey has been long yet they remained patient and understanding. Their support has helped me through the project, especially when I struggled. I cannot thank my Mother and Father enough. I would like to thank my brothers, Justin and Marc, for their time and friendship. Also, Justin gave me good feedback on the project. Lastly, I want to thank my partner Tracey-Lynn for listening, caring, and pushing me to succeed. Our discussions over the texts in this project were extremely helpful.

April 14, 2014

Abstract

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The University of Texas at Arlington, 2014

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This project argues that humans should recognize the intersection of aesthetics and ethics in literature, film, and art that use or represent nonhuman animals. Too often, the right of artists to express their “message” trumps the ethical obligations humans should have to nonhumans. In this scenario, the materiality of nonhumans becomes subjugated to their role as semiotic content—as signs not bodies. Generally, this process of signification ignores the rich entanglements of history, biology, semiotics, materiality, and shared places. Also, this process can lead to negative consequences for nonhuman animals. In order to address these issues I posit a theory of entangled human and nonhuman lives termed a(e)s(th)et(ics), which not only addresses these entanglements, but also connections despite differences. For instance, although humans and nonhumans have different perceptual abilities that recognize different semiotic markers they remain connected through shared places.

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## Chapter 1

### “You Are What You Read”

#### Arts and the Intersection of Human and Nonhuman Animals

At the Codice Gallery in Managua Nicaragua in August of 2007 Costa Rican artist Guillermo Vargas revealed an art installation titled *Exhibit No. 1*, in which he took an emaciated dog off the street and tied it to the gallery wall. A phrase, roughly translated as “you are what you read,” created out of dog food was plastered on one of the gallery walls.



Figure 1-1 Navidad in the Codice Gallery 2007 <sup>1</sup>

According to the artist, the work demonstrated the “the hypocrisy of people and see how a dog becomes the focus of attention when in a gallery and not when it is on the street.”<sup>2</sup>

However, reactions to the work, the artist, and the gallery were so overwhelmingly negative—including numerous petitions to ban Vargas from participating in his native country's Biennial of Visual Arts in the same year—that the director of the gallery addressed the media in order to alleviate the public's anger, which stemmed from misinformation according to her.<sup>3</sup> She claimed the majority of the stories posted on the internet, which alleged the dog was not cared for and thus soon died, were inaccurate. In fact, according to her, the dog was well cared for and did not die in the gallery, but rather escaped after the gallery closed and then was not found or replaced. Some of the protesters contest this version citing not only a lack of evidence, but also Vargas's refusal to deny or confirm any of the versions of what transpired.<sup>4</sup> Protesters contended that Vargas not the audience is hypocritical and to some a reprehensible human being who should not be allowed to exhibit his art ever again. The reactions created such a stir that the jurors for the Costa Rica Biennial of Visual Arts had to address the controversy. Consequently, at the end of October 2007 they released a statement indicating that Vargas would be allowed to participate because

it is legally irrelevant and unfounded, not only because the works which the artist was selected to the 2007 Bienarte are different from the work at issue, but because the confidence of an artist to do a work—although this very controversial subject for discussion in the fields of aesthetics and ethics, should not in any way the basis of legitimacy of censorship.<sup>5</sup>

Like Vargas's *Exhibit No. 1*, Marco Evaristti's controversial work *Helena* also employs nonhuman animals as a means of highlighting the problems of human practices, specifically the cynicism present in contemporary society. For the work Evaristti placed a single goldfish in ten blenders, which were plugged into the gallery wall. As part of the exhibit, a sign notified participants they can engage the blenders. During the exhibit's opening at least one patron embraced the opportunity, killing two fish. As with Vargas's work, international outrage ensued, resulting in the exhibition continuing, but without power to the blenders. In the fallout from the exhibition the Danish police cited the gallery for animal cruelty; however, a Danish court ruled in the gallery's favor citing that the fish died instantly and humanely. The director of the museum

has refused to pay the minor fine arguing “an artist has the right to create works which defy our concept of what is right and what is wrong.”<sup>6</sup> However, as with Vargas, the exhibit places nonhumans in the very position the artist criticizes—the poor treatment of them. The work also affirms a problematic position: humans stand outside nonhuman worlds and, therefore, control issues like life and death. The glass container, while transparent, separates human from nonhuman in a way not consistent with contemporary environmental and material theories of entanglements.

Although *Exhibit No. 1* and *Helena* remain mired in controversy, the work and the subsequent (re)actions illustrate many of the major historical debates in Animal Studies. The works exhibit many of the primary concerns in Animal Studies, as well as, predominantly reify rather than liberate problematic conceptions of “the animal” in Western cultural practices because the dog clearly is situated as object, not subject, and as primarily a symbolic object whose referent is human practices toward other objects. In this respect the dog in the exhibit, as well as those on the street, and the fish are denied subjectivity and agency. Moreover, the art jurors’ and Danish court’s dismissal of aesthetics and ethics as grounds for censorship reinforces the human artist’s work and subsequent right to expression supersedes any ethical duty to the nonhuman animal. Also, their separation of aesthetics and ethics suggests that the two co-exist in artistic discussions, but are separable. Although true in some cases, in these instances the aesthetics and ethics seem inseparable. That is, aesthetics and ethics converge because the work and its processes cannot be separated from the material and semiotic consequences for the dog or fish.

Although quite reprehensible, the works do provide brief moments that could liberate rigid and outdated representations of animals that circulate in Western culture. For instance, *Exhibit No. 1* forces humans to confront or encounter not only the nonhuman animal, but also the material consequences of their cultural practices, all the while by engaging multiple human senses. Eventually, *Exhibit No. 1* demonstrates that the dog does have agency—it is more than

object—as it escapes the gallery.<sup>7</sup> While the agency of the fish remains absent, placing fish in a blender could suggest the strange cultural practice of owning goldfish. In fact, the blender could indicate the disposability of “cheap” pet fish—a fish in a toilet would be more direct, but would convey a similar message. The cultural practice of owning nonhumans also could come under assault as the strangeness of placing a fish in a blender mirrors the arguments of the strangeness of placing pets or other nonhuman animals in artificial habitats. Or, the blender—a tool for making food—could indicate the disconnection between hierarchies of nonhuman animals, such as the taboo of eating nonhumans deemed pets. Certainly, the primary challenge for Animal Studies scholars, as well as artists is to alter these problematic presentations so the process bolsters the product, not undermines it.

#### An Excursus: Animal Studies and the Importance of the Humanities

Animal Studies is a burgeoning and widely inter-disciplinary field that eludes a comprehensive description because of the wide variety of scholars from different disciplines and theoretical approaches—from the hard sciences to the liberal arts—that intersect in interesting ways like biosemiotics. Also, Animal Studies remains an overarching title for other subsets of scholars and activists who focus on human and nonhuman animal relationships. For example, the Human-Animal Studies (part of the Animals & Society Institute, ASI) and Critical Animal Studies are but two of the different incarnations of Animal Studies. However, all the subsets of scholarship and activism in Animal Studies share a common idea—advocating for humans to have a better ethical approaches toward nonhuman animals. Although the various groups in this diverse field often disagree on how to accomplish this goal—some argue literary, film, and art studies lack the necessary advocacy and materiality required to enact real change—most agree that humans mistreat nonhuman animals in both their material and discursive practices. Because of the common appeal for better treatment, often in terms of rights, Peter Singer’s *Animal Liberation* is one of the most influential texts for Animal Studies, and could be argued to be the genesis for Animal Studies because of the text’s influence and direct discussion of rights,

ethics, and philosophy. Yet, much of the exigency for animal rights extends back at least as far as Cartesian thought but could extend back as far as Aristotle, whose “scala naturae” situated humans at the top of the hierarchy of being. Or, it could extend as far as Genesis where God gave Man dominion over nonhuman animals. Regardless of the historicity of human and nonhuman animal relationships, the primary goal for Animal Studies is, as Kalof and Fitzgerald argue in their introduction to the *Animal Studies Reader*, how to rethink, rebuild and recast human relationships with other animals.”<sup>8</sup>

Initially, this goal was greatly influenced by Singer whose approach mostly worked in the framework of ethics, law, and philosophy. However, with the confluence of diverse disciplines the scope of Animal Studies shifted to include not only philosophical, ethical, and legal approaches to and definitions of animal, but also cultural components because of the proliferation of representations of nonhuman animals in industrial and consumer culture. Also, scholars from the humanities identify an increase in how animals reflect, influence, reinforce Western perceptions of the human, thereby extending the focus from real, material animals’ (narrowly defined) treatment by humans to how discursively and materially (broadly defined) nonhuman animals co-shape the relationship between one another.

Because of the connection between the treatment of animals and the proliferation of animal literature, art, films, and consumer goods this project is important and inherently political—despite protests that the humanities lack of political action by some animal rights activists. In fact, the humanities provide an opportunity to extend perspectives on the relationship between human and nonhuman animals that better recognize, as Chris argues via Foucault’s heterotopias, that cultural representations of nonhuman animals, even those in the hard sciences, do “not simply reflect the whole world in condensed form,” because the knowledge that informs them is “selected, framed, edited, [and] interpreted according to an array of social forces and cultural contests over meaning.”<sup>9</sup> The humanities, or hybrid humanities/sciences approaches, like Science Studies, better interrogates the very foundation

of these representations by analyzing the paradigms and terms that constitute them. For example, Wolfe argues that the humanism that arose from the Enlightenment remains problematic because of the focus on rationality, yet the Enlightenment “is not, as it were, rational enough because it stops short of applying its own protocols and commitments to *itself*.”<sup>10</sup>

This critical and self critical approach that recognizes the multiple participants in shared places through time, and the discursive and material factors that co-constitute both human and nonhuman animals affords an opportunity to, as Haraway argues, think *with* nonhuman animals, and think *through* the entangled relationships—both physically encountered, and imagined. Human discursive and consumer practices have material consequences. Animal Studies, the humanities, and hybrid approaches, like Science Studies are critical in recognizing these consequences, as well as, reexamining the suppositions on which the paradigms and practices of humans toward nonhumans rest.

“You Are What You Read:” A (re)TurnArt , Human, and Nonhuman Animals:

#### Material and Discursive Consequences

Like Singer’s *Animal Liberation*, *Exhibit No. 1* and *Helena* address rights for nonhuman animals as well as the glaring problems with laws toward animal rights. *Exhibit No. 1* serves as a condemnation of Nicaraguan laws, culture, and people, while it also advocates self reflection and then social change by highlighting the plight of the average street dog through a material, visual, olfactory, and auditory assault on audience sensibilities—a visceral encounter with the suffering of another living being. *Helena* serves as a condemnation of human cynicism by “plac[ing] people before a dilemma: to choose between life and death.”<sup>11</sup> The overarching argument is that choosing death aligns with cynicism. Thus, killing the goldfish is wrong. Unlike *Exhibit No. 1*, *Helena* neither highlights the suffering of the fish, nor assaults the audience’s perceptual senses—unless the blender engages.

Subsequently, because of the broad scope of Animal Studies, *Exhibit No. 1* and *Helena* illustrate a confluence of the relationship between discursively and materially imagined and encountered nonhuman animals in art. Although the confluence of materiality, ethics, semiotics, art, politics, and consequence remains difficult to untangle, addressing both material and (im)material imagined and encountered nonhumans that diverge from anthropocentric and humanist ideologies that circulate in Western culture remains an ethically and politically significant project.<sup>12</sup> One of the significant difficulties with animals, art, and the confluence of all the aforementioned issues is that most often works house contradictions, as Wolfe argues, that reinscribe the humanist paradigm the works attempt to reject. Wolfe argues these contradictions are usually based upon terms or processes that are still imbued with humanist principles. Although problematic, scholars and artists should expose and then expel these humanist moments while expropriating the potentially posthuman moments into new works, thereby engendering a creativity that rejects “the uncreative project of consensus and complacency.”<sup>13</sup>

*Exhibit No. 1* and *Helena* certainly attempt to undermine complacency, the former toward the welfare of dogs in Nicaragua and the latter toward human cynicism. However, by both also reinforce contemporary concerns in Animal Studies that nonhuman animals are reduced, and then consumed, as signs. They become spectacle, whereby their materiality becomes (im)material, or at the very least subordinated to meaning—a central postmodern problem pertaining to how to discuss and engage with animal issues without ignoring materiality. For example, the proliferation of nonhuman animal signs, along with the increasing separation of materiality from the discursive can create the very problem Vargas attempts to critique. Generally, material, fleshy nonhuman animals remain outside humans’ consciousnesses, unless confronted by them—as in both *Exhibit No. 1* and *Helena* nonhumans “confront” humans. Animal Studies scholars, like Baker<sup>14</sup> or Datson and Mitman<sup>15</sup>, argue that despite the potential for animals as signs for positive social critique humans must not forget that animals are more than signs. *Exhibit No. 1* attempts this in earnest, while *Helena* does not. For

Animal Studies scholars it is important that nonhumans are perceived as fleshy beings that inter-act with their lived environments. Works like *Exhibit No. 1* and *Helena*, inform and are informed by the cultural practices that attempt to categorize nonhumans, potentially distancing them from human animals. However, nonhuman animals are present, even in their apparent absence, especially in constituting what is “human.”

The ethical and moral outcry against both *Exhibit No. 1* and *Helena*, although justifiable, primarily remains crouched in a paradigm, as Wolfe argues, that reinscribes notions of rights, subjectivity, and agency in human normativity—white, masculine, heterosexual, and affluent—thereby, regulating species, like race, gender, sexuality, and disability, in terms of lack, or inadequacy. Similarly, the protesters of *Exhibit No. 1* and *Helena* further the type of speciesism Wolfe identifies by advocating an underlying humanist agenda in the framework of animal rights advocacy. For instance, numerous blog posts proclaim Vargas’s inhumanity (he is the beast) ironically reinforcing the notion that humanness is solely based on rationality and compassion, something the protestors staunchly deny Vargas. Their primary accusation is that Vargas is the hypocrite for disregarding the very plight, and materiality of the dog used in his work.

Although Vargas and Evaristti clearly recognize nonhuman materiality, at least power of it for appealing to pathos, it is more important for their political project. For instance, the dog in *Exhibit No. 1* is perceived as a sign that signifies the lack of care for the numerous emaciated dogs that roam the streets of Nicaragua. Moreover, Vargas intends that spectators perceive the dog as a sign that signifies the hypocrisy of humans who remain complacent about the number of mistreated and/or abandoned dogs on the street—including complacency with Nicaraguan laws that do not adequately protect nonhumans animals from inhumane treatment—while vociferous and empathetic in regards to the dog in *Exhibit No. 1*, thereby raising important ethical concerns about the station of dogs in Nicaraguan society, and the Western World.<sup>16</sup>

The social critique framed in *Exhibit No. 1* and *Helena* also raises questions about the relationship between materiality and semiotics, in which materiality and cultural signifying



practices are entangled with, in fact in some cases permeated with, each other. For example, *Exhibit No. 1* subordinates the dog's materiality not only to its potential as a sign, but also to the audience for whom the sign identifies as hypocrites. The exhibit is much less about this particular dog but more about dogs "out there." At least the work attends to a fairly specific nonhuman population and issue, unlike *Helena*, which subordinates the fish to human moral dilemma. The work is less about fish, the history of fish as pets, or consumer culture, because, while the presentation is effective, the fish could have been substituted for another small nonhuman animal.

Thus, however admirable the artists' ethical concerns are an imperative and very material concern lingers. For example, in *Exhibit No. 1* the dog remains an object for viewing and for reflecting on humanity. Neither, the artist, the gallery director, nor the audience intercedes to care for the dog. Rather, it is meant to be observed, not interact<sup>17</sup>, and more importantly, the ethical concerns the exhibit raises are ironically not for this dog.<sup>18</sup> In fact, for his project to "succeed" (convey his intended meaning) the audience must not help the dog. Vargas created an exhibit using a live dog that he anticipated would not receive assistance, whereby the dog remains an object in the problematic anthropocentric subject/object binary where the observer possesses activity, while the observed passivity, and therefore is denied subjectivity. In this respect the dog becomes art, or at the very least an aspect of the spectacle created by the exhibit. The dog is still a sign—a passive one that is to be "read" and interpreted by art aficionados as a blight on "civilized" society. The dog, as an individual living being, disappears, his emaciated husk replaced by social critique and the millions of homeless and hungry dogs worldwide. Or, at least this is what Vargas intends, an arrogance that further reifies the humanist paradigm in the work— that the artist creates and controls meaning. In this respect flesh and sign merge as an object in the purview of Vargas' "vision." This is the central issue for Animals Studies pertaining to art. In order to discuss the relationships between humans and nonhumans, matter must become a sign of the issues at hand. However, what current Animal

Studies scholars advocate is recognizing the connection between materiality and discourse, rather than dissolving matter to discourse.

*Helena* also places the fish in the role of object—one that is to be observed, not as nonhuman, but as a social critique of human moral decisions. Engaging the blender serves as a statement on the choice of life and death, not particular lives or contexts. On the one hand, such a statement could serve as an equalization of humanist criteria (human life as more valuable) as choosing to kill any life is wrong. On the other, it suggests only humans have the choose life or death, potentially reenacting the type of god complex arguments that circulate in humanist paradigms. Unlike Vargas's work, for *Helena* to fit in the Evaristti's artistic intent, the audience must *not* act. They must refrain from engaging the blender. Life and death are the choices. However, in Vargas's work, quality of life is the question.

As scholars argue, this transformation from fleshing being to sign illustrates that too often representations, such as Vargas's, create a nonhuman animal that represents an entire species throughout time, or over vast amounts of time.<sup>19</sup> Such representations disregard the relationship between temporality, materiality, and place. Taxonomy, generality, and objectivity supplant heterogeneity, materiality, and connectivity. More specifically, representations of nonhuman animals often exclude the individuality, materiality, and temporality of the inter and intra connectivity between shared places in favor of taxonomic, general, and grand narratives that are timeless and essential. Although such an approach can have positive rhetorical influence (usually Pathos in film and art), by forgoing individuality for generality such an approach often creates a sense of helplessness (there are too many too help), a false sense of distance (not in my neighborhood), or a sense of superiority (usually based on nationality, ethnicity, or race—i.e. shame on that nationality, ethnicity, or race).<sup>20</sup>

Animal Studies scholars and animal activists not only object to the transformation of a nonhuman animal to sign, but also raises concerns about the cultural practices that value certain nonhuman animals or landscapes over others. For example, the dog in *Exhibit No. 1*

signifies the inadequacy of animal protection laws and the hypocrisy of people in that remain complacent with these laws. The fish in *Helena* generically signify life in the matrix of human moral conundrum of choosing life over death. However, the dog and fish also signifies the cultural—at least Western culture—valuation of nonhumans. Primarily culturally valued animals are ascribed a value based upon cultural norms for anthropomorphism (both documentary wildlife and animated films), aesthetics (tiger), companionship (dog), metaphorical importance (eagle), and labor (horse). In this hierarchy, the species of nonhuman contributed to the vigor of protestors as Vargas received more venom from a wide variety of people, while Evaristti generally was chastised by animal activists. Art and other visual rely on all these cultural norms, however, aesthetics remains the predominant concern through fairly solidified tropes—like an a priori, pure nature, one devoid of humans.<sup>21</sup> *Exhibit No. 1*'s primary exigency is the negative consequences of human interference with “nature” (domesticating animals in this case) and then the subsequent neglect of it. *Helena*'s primary exigency also stems from the negative consequences of human choices; however, unlike *Exhibit No. 1*, the moral choice is not to interfere with “nature.” Both works convey a strong ethical message; however, in both aesthetics and ethics diverge as, ironically, the nonhumans are treated unethically, thereby creating a scenario whereby the director of the gallery defends the work by asserting that aesthetics are superior to ethical concerns under the guise of freedom of artistic expression.<sup>22</sup> In these works the material nonhumans are doubly subordinated, first to a sign, and then from a sign to meaning and expression.

The trajectory of this transformation highlights an inherent and crucial issue in projects that use representations of nonhuman animals in various mediums (including documentaries, which are also representations)—the process involved can, and in both works does, contradict the progressive, or socially significant, message of the end product. More attention to the process—that which is often unseen yet intertwined with the product—continues to be important in order to revisit nonhuman animal use laws, and to identify moments that are legal, yet

unethical. Also, projects, like *Exhibit No. 1* and *Helena*, could create moments where ethics and aesthetics converge by employing ethical processes and creating an ethical product. However, in order to accomplish this, artists, scholars, and spectators must reconsider how both product and process can further separate human and nonhuman animals through paradigms that rely on anthropocentric power relations whereby the animal is rendered (im)material through attempts to define and solidify meaning. Also artists, scholars, and spectators must resist the urge to separate ethics and aesthetics by identifying and advocating moments where ethics and aesthetics converge, thereby better ensuring that material and discursive practices promote nonhuman animal welfare.

Yet, although fraught with significant ethical problems *Exhibit No. 1* and *Helena* do provide moments that could alleviate concerns that animals are disappearing from society, or at the very least, receding further from the proximity of humans raised by scholars like Berger and Lippit by placing the observer in an encounter that requires recognition that the observed also observes, and that contains opportunities for more than just visual perception. For example, although Vargas reduces the dog to a sign, the gallery patrons still encounter a fleshy dog that looks, makes noise, and emits odor. Also, the exhibit forces the patrons to view the emaciated dog, rather than the fairly standard practice of removing disturbing or problematic issues from view—a significant issue for scholars like Baker who argue humans must see images of animal testing or cruelty in order to realize why it is problematic, and why those who engage in it attempt to hide it.<sup>23</sup> This type of obfuscation reinforces the perceived distance between humans and nonhumans. A distance that scholars argue legitimizes nonhuman animal mistreatment, intentional or not, through cultural practices, including those deemed less harmful because of their less immediate impact—art, film, and literature. However, because of the material encounter and the multiple sensory experiences, *Exhibit No. 1* can decrease the distance between human and nonhuman animals, not only through proximity, but also through the

recognition that human practices, both legal and ethical, have material consequences for nonhumans.

*Exhibit No. 1* also illustrates that living fleshy nonhuman animals possess agency and are active participants in their environments, even when displaced. More specifically, *Exhibit No. 1* ceased not because of protests or a new exhibit was scheduled, rather because the “art” escaped. The dog’s flight and coinciding close of the exhibit demonstrates that the dog is a material being with agency whose actions are consequential as well, which adds additional meaning to the work because it illustrates that meaning derives from all participants, not just the author. The dog, the patrons, and art aficionados, the gallery director, Vargas, and the numerous bloggers all add meaning to the work through their participation and subsequent actions—flight, protest, support, etc. The multiplicity, or fluidity, of meaning in *Exhibit No. 1* further extends Animal Studies arguments opposing the static and often oppressive conceptions of animals that usually stem from Cartesian approach to nonhuman animals, that even if dismissed, still circulates in representations of animals in many mediums, whether through language, photos, film, or art. The dog’s actions are consequential as well—meanings are participatory, temporal, and contextual.

*Helena* also can decrease the distance between human and nonhuman animals through the recognition that human practices, both legal and ethical, have material consequences for nonhumans by demonstrating quite materially the problem of leaving choices over animal lives to humans. The intention of the artist—to combat cynicism—fails in a single depression of the blender button, which signals two important ideas about meaning. First, artists cannot control meaning, despite their intention of creating works that attempt to convey a particular meaning. Second, animal bodies, even in such circumstances as being blended, directly contribute to the meaning of the work. That is, materiality and semiotics collide and, ethically, animal bodies cannot be simply signs even though some contemporary art, practices, and theory subjugate bodies to signs.

The blender also indicates the false sense of separation between humans and nonhumans as the blender serves as a material metaphor for human actions on ecosystems—especially those humans are deemed separate. The button, the blades, the fish could all easily be a ship, waste, and fish. Also, the work itself folds into questions of what is art, its role, and the uses of nonhuman animals in it. Certainly Berger’s question “why look at animals” weighs heavily on a work like *Helena*. Or, as Wolfe asks “what does art add” to the discussion of human and nonhuman relationships becomes central as the Danish court rules based on how the animal died, not why, or more importantly that it did. The overarching humanism of the work comes to the forefront, thereby adding to the material narrative of Animal Studies discussions concerning art, literature, and film (the arts broadly conceived).

However, shocking and appalling *Exhibit No. 1* and *Helena* appear for audiences they illustrate the importance of analyzing, critiquing, and/or extending concerns raised by Animal Studies scholars and activists because art, film, literature, and other popular mediums that use nonhuman animals representations have become more pervasive. Berger’s and Lippit’s claims are salient because nonhuman animal programs, exhibits, narrative continue to proliferate thereby increasing the potential for a perceived distance between humans and nonhumans, especially when the foci of many of these programs reinforce a timeless, wild, and sublime animal, far removed from human culture. Moreover, these medium have the potential to negatively influence humans’ perceptions of nonhuman animals. *Jaws*, clearly has had a strong, and negative impact on how swimmers view all sharks, not just great white sharks. However, films, art works, and texts can have a positive influence in one respect, and negative influence in another. For example, Steve Irwin’s television program (and subsequent film) informed and inspired viewers about many nonhuman animals that humans usually devalue, primarily because of the potential for human harm. Ironically, the death of the same man who inspired his followers to treat animals with respect and reverence for these oft devalued nonhumans caused

a small group of followers to kill stingrays (Irwin was killed when he startled a stingray) in retribution.<sup>24</sup>

Although filmmakers, writers, artists, and animal rights activists cannot control the meaning of their works, they can attempt to provide a more positive, posthuman paradigm in order to alleviate some of the potentially detrimental effects of their work. This requires a critical analysis of not only their final product, but the practices and paradigms that inform it. In this respect, nonhuman animals become more than symbols, but fleshy material beings who inter and intra act in shared places with their human community members.

#### MaterialSemiotics and the A(e)s(th)et(ics) of Nonhumans in Art

Subsequent scholarship, political and ethical reform, and cultural approaches toward nonhuman animals will, however, continue to perpetuate a humanist bias—one that risks reinscribing nonhuman animals as perpetual other—always on the periphery, but unrecognized as active participants bound in material and semiotic relationships with humans, nonhumans, and the places they (in)habit. In order to alleviate a humanist bias scholars, lawmakers, protestors, and global and local citizens should embrace a critical posthuman approach, one that (re)examines not only the assumptions of humanism, but also of itself. Wolfe best formulates this position, where posthumanism is

thus analogous to Jean François Lyotard's paradoxical rendering of the postmodern: it comes both before and after humanism: before in the sense that it names the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being in not just its biological but also its technological world, the prosthetic coevolution of the human animal with the technicity of tools and external archival mechanisms (such as language and culture) of which Bernard Stiegler probably remains our most compelling and ambitious theorist—and all of which comes before that historically specific thing called “the human” that Foucault's archaeology excavates. But it comes after in the sense that posthumanism names a historical moment in which the decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatic, and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore[...]

Wolfe's notion of posthumanism embraces the connections between humans and nonhumans via the paradoxical pre and post humanism in so far as both exist prior to and are constituted through and implicated in the intersection of Haraway's natureculture and material-semiotics. More specifically, Wolfe's posthuman identifies and supports the inter and intra connection

between humans, nonhumans, materiality, and culture that destabilize humanist assumptions by illustrating, via Derrida and Luhman, scientifically that studies indicate “much stronger continuity between animals and humans with respect to speech,” and philosophically that the distinction between the divisible line of thought is lack, a lack based upon humanist notions of language, and therefore, Being.<sup>25</sup> Philosophically, Wolfe argues that Derrida’s blurring of the distinction between pretense and the pretense of pretense (reaction versus response) makes “pure, rigorous, indivisible concept[s]” difficult to “attribute to man.”<sup>26</sup> While this claim remains debatable in reference to language, it is no small feat that academia debates it. For some time post Cartesian thought this was not a debatable issue.

Extending Wolfe’s posthumanism to issues such as materiality, knowledge, meaning, aesthetics, agency, consequence, and ethics could broaden the scope of Berger’s famous question “why look at animals” from strictly a humanist perspective—what looking says about humans—to posthuman *perspectives* that illustrate the intersection of human, nonhuman, materiality, history, culture, and evolution. In this respect, Berger’s question requires more than exposition on why, but also, an analysis of the assumptions and processes that govern how humans begin to answer why, and, more importantly, as Haraway argues, “who and what are is precisely what is at stake,” including human and nonhuman animals.<sup>27</sup> That is, humans and nonhumans are co-constituted through their participation in natureculture and material-semiotic relationships in shared places. In such a posthuman approach, one where its theoretical concepts are applied not only to issues such as materiality, knowledge, meaning, aesthetics, agency, consequence, and ethics, but also to posthumanism itself, could better serve the multiple entangled living beings that share places through time and between naturecultures and material-semiotic relationships. Moreover, such an approach could (re)invent artistic creations about and for nonhuman animals that better illustrate these connections by not only shifting human thought from a humanist to a posthumanist point of view, but also reduce the distance, both literally and figuratively, between human and nonhuman animals by creating art that



recognizes the different degrees (and in some instances kinds) of perceptions amongst all animals (human and nonhuman) and the importance of place and all the aforementioned entangled issues for all animals (human and nonhuman) in the co-constitutive relationships amongst all animals.

### Migratory Routes: An Overview of the Project

Chapter Two examines the entanglement materiality, semiotics, and agency from a posthumanist framework. The central argument in this chapter revolves around recognizing the material and semiotic connections between humans and nonhumans. Intertwined in shared places, human and nonhuman encounters are both products of material and semiotics histories—or as Stacy Alaimo argues, material memoirs. The gestating material and cultural factors of these encounters erodes the ill conceived boundaries between human and nonhuman because art, film, and literature are fertile sites for the investigation of materiality (actual and imagined) and semiotics, as well as popular vehicles to disseminate posthumanist projects. Artistic projects also illustrate the intersection between materiality and semiotics and can bolster posthumanist ideas of agency. The films *Winged Migration* and *The Making of Winged Migration* contain moments where the animal “actors” go off script “improvising.” Filmmakers incorporate these scenes into the film, realizing the animals’ actions make for better scenes than the scripted ones. Juxtaposing the two films reveals the importance of looking to the periphery or to the cutting room floor as the films complement and complicate each other creating a “new vision” of the complex relationships between humans and nonhumans.

This section reformulates Haraway’s material-semiotic through a posthumanist (re)reading of trans-corporeality, viscous porosity, and performativity, natureculture, and biosemiotics. Haraway uses the metaphor of knotted nodes to explain her material-semiotic. By definition knots tie or tangle, but do not provide the necessary permeability, inter- and intra-action, and agency between and in the co-constitutive materialsemiotic practices while still recognizing the multiplicity, asynchronicity, and performativity of agency and power relations

through inter and intra action by actors, who are also usually stakeholders, in shared places. These relations are further muddied by the Beck's notion of a "risk society" as posthumanism bridges the gap between human and nonhuman bodies. For instance, diseases and toxins eschew species boundaries spreading among and between species. The short story "Devil Deer," the novel *My Year of Meats*, and the photograph series *Meatscapes* demonstrate the leaky boundaries between bodies (humans and nonhumans) and culture in a risk society. All three works disrupt materiality and culture in shocking ways, which further demonstrates the initial disregard for the connections between humans and nonhumans because the realization is the materialization of the consequences of toxins between species in a risk society.

Chapter Three broaches the problem of meaning in a posthumanist paradigm. The convergence of materiality and semiotics creates a problem of signification between humans and nonhumans in a risk society. More specifically, as the last chapter illustrated the boundaries between materiality and semiotics as well as human and nonhuman bodies are permeable, which requires thinking about nonhumans' understanding of place. The chapter begins with an example of the potential dangers of thinking only in humanist terms. The burial of radioactive waste requires signification of the area as dangerous. However, by not considering nonhumans who inhabit or pass through the area the dangers could pass from nonhumans to humans and from place to place. In order to address such issues the chapter focuses on two approaches: Jakob von Uexküll's biosemiotics and Kevin Porter's meaning consequentialism.

Uexküll analyzes the markers of significance for nonhumans in their *umwelt*. He argues that nonhumans are more than mere machines, and that particular perceptual abilities help nonhumans decipher signs in their environment. More importantly, the *umwelt* of nonhumans can differ significantly. In one of his famous examples, he argues that a tick can remain in hibernation for years until it recognizes the smell of butyric acid, which mammals emit. Focusing on this particular semiotic feature in its environment, the tick differs greatly from other nonhumans, even other insects such as a spider that recognizes vibration on one of its threads

of webbing. At the very least, Uexküll's work demonstrates humanist paradigms do not fare well in attempting to describe or define nonhuman animals' umwelt. Porter's meaning consequentialism buttresses Uexküll's work because much like animal umwelt, meaning derives from the consequences of encounters with others. While Porter's primary focus is human meaning via utterances, the elasticity of his theory allows for a posthuman reading as meaning is neither fixed, nor a priori. Rather, meaning, like animal Umwelt, shifts in different contexts or times.

Chapter Three concludes with a comparison of the films *Avatar* and *How to Train Your Dragon* in order to highlight posthumanist meaning and consequentialism between species—even imaginary nonhumans. In both films humanoids learn to ride dragons by bonding with them. While similar in this respect, the films differ greatly in how the humanoids bond with their nonhuman dragons. In *Avatar* the bond is biological, as the humanoid species on the planet have a lock of hair that includes an "interface" which they plug into the dragon, creating a cross-species biological bond. In *How to Train Your Dragon* the main character learns through interactions with dragons their behaviors and biology. His bond is formed through observation and application. In both cases, meaning derives from material and semiotic consequences from human and nonhuman encounters.

Chapter Four makes a case for the ethical importance of analyzing the arts via the posthumanist paradigm created in Chapters One and Two. The chapter presents a case study of sorts: the Western cultural perception of sharks post *Jaws*. The overarching claim focuses on how post *Jaws* the widely diverse species of sharks are subsumed under the wake of *Jaws*—all sharks become Shark, a mindless eating and killing machine. A central problem of the history of animals in the arts is the overly simplistic or singularity of their representations. Primarily animals serve as metaphors for human ideals or actions, or they serve as Animal devoid of any species distinctions in order to frame or define humanity. *Jaws* does both, the former explicitly, the latter by following fairly typical horror movie conventions. Historically, however, this view of

sharks did not exist in popular American culture. For instances the texts of canonical writers like Poe, Melville, and Thoreau portray sharks as a nuisance rather than mythical killing machines bent on destroying humans. These 19<sup>th</sup> Century authors present a strong contrast to contemporary views of sharks, and, therefore demarcate a significant turn in perception at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. As the creative non-fiction work *Close to Shore* indicates this shift occurs around the increase in beach luxury culture. The title, *Close to Shore*, becomes doubly true as both sharks and humans become closer to shore. Also, post *Jaws* animated shark tales, such as *Jabberjaw*, *Finding Nemo*, and *Shark Tale* challenge the grim perception of sharks as harbingers of death for humans. These animated works directly respond to *Jaws* poking fun at the film's influence on the Western perceptions of sharks. Other works, such as the film *Shark Water*, attempt to recast the solitary image of the fin breaching the water from terror to sympathy. The emotionally loaded images of sharks being finned and left to die along with scores of dried fins reverse the perception of shark as human predator—rather humans prey upon sharks in disturbing and wasteful ways.

Chapter Five posits a theory for the convergence of aesthetics and ethics, termed a(e)s(th)et(ics). More specifically, an aesthetics whose foundation is the early Greek conception of aesthetics as “perception,” yet appropriates the posthuman perspectives from the prior sections (materialesemiotic, agency, meaning, etc.). This section revisits and recasts art, aesthetics and ethics, via aesthetic theory and ethics, with a posthuman ethic and an assemblage of the issues in the prior sections. However, to avoid a humanist version of perception (primarily vision)—which both Haraway and Wolfe caution—a(e)s(th)et(ics) encompasses not only visual aesthetic (the dominant paradigm for humans, especially in art), but also auditory, tactile, olfactory, kinesthetic, and gustatory. In fact, a posthumanist view of perception includes other, non-human senses as well while recognizing the interplay of senses in perception—an interplay, that although asynchronous and susceptible to materialesemiotic power relations in shared places, that extends between actors in those places.

Chapter Five applies a(e)s(th)et(ics) to animal participatory works such as animal wellness behavior art projects (used by zoos to keep animals mentally and physically fit) that engage animal specific behaviors and sensory perceptions. The overarching similarities between these works is the earnest desire to understand animal behaviors from aesthetic and ethical perspectives. The chapter concludes with a comparison of Allison Hunter's "New Animals" and Lynne Hull's "Raptor Roosts." Both artists consider highlight the aesthetics of nonhuman animals and place but in radically different ways. Hunter highlights the importance of place by erasing it. Her works blur any recognizable animal habitat via a color wash. Her animals reside in "no place" a strong statement on issues like habitat loss caused by human practices. Hull works in the raptors habitats in order to provide them roosts. Her work also highlights human practices that have detrimental consequences for nonhumans as the roosts share characteristics with power line poles, which are significant threats to the birds. Both also highlight the historical and biological factors that entangle humans, nonhumans, and shared places. In this respect, their works demonstrate aesthetics and ethics can converge, and, for many animal artists must.

Chapter Six, extends a(e)s(th)et(ics) to public projects (i.e. outside artistic endeavors) to illustrate the co-constitutive relationship between the arts and cultural practices. While the primary focus of this project is the arts (literature, film, and art) the theoretical concepts apply to public projects such as parks, roads, or even "environmental" projects (like renewable energy farms—solar and wind). In this section two such projects are compared, the first a solar energy facility along the Southern border of Nevada and California and the second a highway animal crossing project along Highway 93 in Montana. The first project demonstrates the negative consequences of not considering a(e)s(th)et(ics), while the second the positive consequences of employing a(e)s(th)et(ics).

## Chapter Two

### Mattering Matter: Posthumanism and the Confluence of Materiality and Semiotics

In Karan Barad's groundbreaking text, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, she asks her reader to contemplate the impact of the linguistic turn on concepts of materiality and agency. Her primary concern centers on the dismissal of materiality in contemporary theory. She states quite simply that "language matters. Discourse matters. Culture matters. There is an important sense in which the only thing that doesn't seem to matter anymore is matter."<sup>28</sup> While Barad's claim certainly has roots in contemporary theory and signals the concern of many current new materialist approaches, the foundation of her claim (the linguistic turn subsumes matter) doesn't reflect the general trajectory of the philosophical underpinning of Western thinking about nonhuman animals. That is, ontological questions about "the animal" remain grounded in notions of materiality. Matter does matter when thinking about animals because in many contemporary theories matter still serves as the foundation for animality. Animals matter as material beings because many philosophical approaches concerning animals suggest they cannot participate in the linguistic turn. In discussions surrounding "Animal" matter matters insofar as it aligns with Cartesian philosophy, which still circulates in representations and uses of animals in contemporary Western culture. Animals, under Cartesian philosophy, are denied the linguistic turn. Therefore they always only (are) matter—because they are devoid of cognitive and language abilities. Such views justify human practices toward animals such as animal medical testing because animals cannot attempt to transcend "mere" matter through cultural and discursive practices.

For Animal Studies, Barad's analysis highlights a more significant line of inquiry—how matter is perceived. Too many representations of animals still rely on a rather poor in the world (to echo Heidegger's view of animal being) definition of matter. In such paradigms matter not only remains passive, but also unexceptional and a foundation for anthropocentric normalization categories—again, following fairly traditional Cartesian thought. Under anthropocentric views

passive nature and passive “bodies” require “actors” who control, enact, create, and propel matter, unlocking potential and shaping “worlds.” Matter matters in this paradigm only insofar as humans have use for it. Yet such an underwhelming concept of materiality has come under assault by scholars such as Karen Barad, Stacy Alaimo, and Donna Haraway. For all three scholars matter is neither inert nor disconnected from the environments and cultures in which it exists—a major break from Cartesian thought. According to all three scholars matter participates, acts, intersects, and passes through “encounters” between humans, nonhumans, and shared places. Matter does not exist outside space-time, per Haraway, because it remains a part of the contact zones in which all living and nonliving things collide. This dynamic and interrelated conception of nature and culture raises ethical questions about stakeholders and agency in such entangled and interactive contact zones. Cultural representations and uses of nonhuman animals become mired in questions of cultural and material connectivity and history whereby separating humans and nonhumans remains difficult. Thereby, the ethical imperative of recasting nature from out of the shadow of anthropocentric and humanist paradigms becomes imperative and, hopefully, apparent.

For instance, in *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and The Material Self*, Alaimo states “potential ethical and political possibilities emerge from the literal contact zone between human corporeality and the more-than-human world, underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from “the environment.”<sup>29</sup> As Alaimo demonstrates through numerous examples in her text, toxins from human products and practices permeate the supposed “safety” of barriers such as fences and walls. The history, or as Alaimo argues material memoirs of bodies, toxins, and places, signals the importance of revisiting anthropocentric views of the world in order to better navigate encounters in shared places. While Alaimo’s examples in *Bodily Natures* are more about real places, people, and encounters, such as the vicious cycle of mercury, oceans, fish, and humans, her arguments align well with concerns over representations and uses of animals in art, film, and literature

because she recognizes the complicated amalgamation of culture and nature and matter and discourse. The intersection between material and representation becomes apparent in her chapter about Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) where the film *Safe* plays a prominent role in raising awareness about the material realities of people who suffer from MCS and the representations of them by a bewildered medical community. One of the central conflicts of the film focuses on the main character's struggle with her material reality, her failing health, and the general disbelief of her claims by the medical community. The medical professionals she visits decide her symptoms are mental not physical, further reinforcing the type of Cartesian thought that continues to underpin Western culture. However, Alaimo demonstrates through a reading of the film and science studies that MCS is a material reality and an indicator of the intersections of bodies, toxins, and places.

Although *Safe* centers solely on humans and toxins, the connection between toxins and bodies extends to nonhumans, and, more importantly between humans, nonhumans, and places. However, Alaimo's reading suggests more than just the material reality of bodies exposed to toxins—the representation of MCS patients by “experts” and the general public shapes and is later shaped by material and semiotic factors. That is, current understandings of human bodies and chemicals shape the experts' representations of MCS patients. Yet, the material realities of the patients and their discursive practices, including a vast network of online forums and websites, in turn helps shape the representations of them. Similarly, in *When Species Meet*, Haraway articulates how representations remain woven in the tapestry of collision of materiality and semiotics when she states, “figures help me grapple inside the flesh of mortal world entanglements that I call contact zones. [...] figures collect the people through their invitation to inhabit the corporeal story told in their lineaments. Figures are not representations or didactic illustrations, but rather material-semiotic nodes or knots in which diverse bodies and meanings coshape one another.”<sup>30</sup> The idea representations remain more complex than simple discursive constructions lends credence to the type of ethical and political



implications Alaimo and Haraway identify in discussions of materiality, humans and nonhumans. If contemporary theory provides such dynamism to discursive practices, at the very least Alaimo and Haraway demonstrate the importance of revisiting matter and the connections between humans and nonhumans.

The confluence of matter and semiotics, for both scholars, indicates slurry of dynamic action whereby representations of those with MCS (Alaimo) or companion species (Haraway) always remain in flux. Because matter and semiotics shape and are shaped by representations, attempts at over-generalization and anthropocentrism fail under movements, shifts, and permeations. While contemporary theory generally supports dynamic views of semiotics, it has not viewed matter the same. In fact, as Barad notes, contemporary theory primarily views matter as inert, or at least something that must be acted upon by those with agency in order to exhibit a similar dynamism of words or symbols. Such an approach has had detrimental impacts on nonhumans who, as Berger notes, are too often viewed as passive or merely reactive beings. Barad's recasting of matter supports Berger's idea that animals are not passive beings. Like Alaimo and Haraway, Barad provides a more recursive (i.e. folding and/or intersecting) version of matter. She states:

Matter is neither fixed and given nor the mere end result of different processes. Matter is produced and productive, generated and gerative. Matter is agential, not a fixed essence or property of things. Mattering is differing, and which differences come to matter, matter in the iterative production of different differences. Changing patterns of difference are neither pure cause nor pure effect; indeed, they are that which effects, or rather enacts, a causal structure, differentiating cause and effect. Difference patterns do not merely change in time and space; spacetime is an enactment of differentness, a way of making/markings here and now.<sup>31</sup>

Matter in this sense erodes the boundaries enacted by Cartesian thinking because matter becomes agential, positive, and transformative rather than passive or reactive. Agential and productive matter, while a significant addition to thinking about and with human and nonhuman animals, does not fully address the "knotted nodes" Haraway discusses without addressing the multifaceted entanglements of issues such as culture and history. Recasting matter remains an important addition to critical theory that addresses the connections between humans and

nonhumans. However, without these other factors (such as technology) the ethical implications risk staying connected only to matter. More specifically, in order to wear away the rigid Cartesian boundaries still circulating in contemporary views of animals, matter must also be viewed in relation to semiotics. Alaimo's and Haraway's projects are sympathetic to Barad's and, more importantly, buttress her idea of matter by providing more connections between humans, nonhumans, nature, and culture. The result of the collision of the ideas of Alaimo, Haraway, and Barad is shifting "centric" thinking—especially anthropocentric—to relational or encounter thinking, whereby human ideas of animals cannot be simply reduced to passive matter or, more importantly, to only matter. In such encounters, animals produce and are produced by the multiple factors and participants in contact zones. In such a relationship humans become intertwined in a paradoxical relationship with nonhumans and their shared environments. Cary Wolfe notes this paradoxical relationship as conceptions of the "human" cannot be separated from the multiplicity of implications that constitute and are constituted by humans. In *What Is Posthumanism* he notes:

"being 'after' our embodiment has been transcended." His version of the term champions "the exact opposite [...] analogous to Jean-François Lyotard's paradoxical rendering of the postmodern: it comes both before and after humanism: before in the sense that it names the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being in not just its biological but also its technological world [...] and] after in the sense that posthumanism names a historical moment in which the decentering of the human by its imbrications in technological, medical, informatics, and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore."<sup>32</sup>

For ethical and political considerations of/for animals such a paradoxical approach is necessary, because it not only better recognizes the types of complex connections both Alaimo and Haraway highlight in their respective works, but also requires that humans seriously consider nonhumans when thinking about what constitutes "human." For example, Wolfe's examples of economics and technology or Alaimo's example of mercury in fish both blur the boundaries between human and nonhuman as both demonstrate how intertwined bodies, ethics, history, economics, technology, and a myriad of other factors intersect, thereby making easily identifiable categories difficult. Literature, art, and film also require such a paradoxical

relationship. As with economics and technology, these media illustrate the imbrications of human with nonhuman, whether in the products, process, or the material and semiotic implications of both. Barad identifies the ethical importance of a posthumanism that “[signals] the crucial recognition that nonhumans play an important role in naturalcultural practices, including everyday social practices, scientific practices, and practices that do not include humans.”<sup>33</sup> Art, literature, and film that represents or uses animals echoes Barad’s claim insofar as they also signal, directly and/or indirectly, the crucial role nonhumans play in naturecultures and human social practices. The primary issue, however, revolves around whether the “crucial role” includes materiality and semiotics or is primarily concerned with animals as metaphors rather than fleshy beings that interact in their shared environments. Posthumanism in this respect focuses on considerations and inclusions of nonhumans in earnest. For instance, Haraway argues she considers the lives and habitats of real animals, whereby Deleuze and Guattari do not.<sup>34</sup> While Deleuze and Guattari have posthumanist tendencies (in fact, Cary Wolfe situates them as posthumanist posthumanism), Haraway is correct that their section on becoming teaches readers little about wolves other than they are pack animals. Yet, both Haraway and Deleuze and Guattari advocate entanglements, encounters, and events. For Haraway humans and nonhumans are inextricably bound in shared places, so much in fact that both are inseparable and yet exist in particular contexts and relationships that render pre-constituted categories tenuous. While ruminating on “companion species” Haraway notes that:

The world is a knot in motion. Biological and cultural determinism are both instances of misplaced concreteness—i.e., the mistake of, first, taking provisional and local category abstractions like “nature” and “culture” for the world and, second, mistaking potent consequences to be preexisting foundations. There are no pre-constituted subjects and objects, and no single sources, unitary actors, or final ends.<sup>35</sup>

Although Haraway’s theory of companion species excludes many animals—those not deemed companion species to humans, which she lists examples—the type of knotted contexts and encounters can extend outside companion species. That is, Haraway’s focus on “companion species” as presented suffers because she carefully notes that many species are NOT

companion species and, therefore, do not fall under the purview of her theory. Excluding nonhuman species such as sharks<sup>36</sup> potentially erodes the significance of the “world as knot in motion,” because she places more emphasis on the knots between companion species than the knotted connections or world in motion for those species who are not companion species with humans. More specifically, similar to humans’ anthropocentric or cultural bias toward certain species, Haraway’s theory affords only those animals with closer proximity (both historically and biologically) the type of ethical consideration she advocates. According to Haraway, dogs have a traceable historical and biological entanglement that makes them particularly potent examples of the permeable boundary between human and nonhuman. While Haraway provides a far more complex and compelling case for rethinking human and nonhuman binaries the results align with a specific cultural bias—dogs are more associated with ideas of “human” than other species. Dogs, as “companion species,” already possess a cultural significance that provides them with more ethical considerations and sympathies than species such as sharks.<sup>37</sup> Yet, as her “world in motion” statement indicates, entanglements (or knots) between humans and nonhumans based upon historical and biological factors can change, and through natureculture and technological intersections between humans and nonhumans, new “companion species” can exist. Also, while certain species may not exhibit the same co-evolutionary aspects as humans and dogs do, they still may exhibit the similar historical or cultural entanglements, which if traced could illustrate her dislike of pre-existing categories. In fact, her conception of the world as a knot signifying no “singular sources” shares a theoretical principle with Deleuze and Guattari’s becoming. Similar to the world knot having neither beginning nor end, or singular sources, “becoming is always in the middle; one can only get to it by the middle. A becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is in-between, the border of line of flight or descent running perpendicular to both.”<sup>38</sup> The middle, the encounter, the in-between highlights one of the significant foundational ideas for posthumanist thought moving forward in rethinking the relationships between humans, nonhumans, art, literature, and film because this type of

middle (per Haraway and Deleuze and Guattari) includes rather than excludes materiality, discourse, nature, and culture. Humans and nonhumans are inextricably knotted and exist in a middle—neither outside one another, or before and after one another. Defining one of these terms requires the consideration of the others, as well as numerous environmental, biological, historical, or cultural factors. The entanglement of discourse and materiality in literature, art, and film relating to nonhuman animals exhibits a crisis of representation because of the very paradox of how human conceptions of animals both inform and are informed by animals and their representations in film. More specifically, Western perceptions are both constituted by animals, and by the representations of them. The crisis of representation, therefore, is that representation as a term adhering to reflection, mimesis, or duplication fails. Like the entanglement of the aforementioned terms (nature, culture, materiality, and semiotics), the portrayal and use of animals in literature, art, and film adheres to a “messy mix” (to borrow Haraway’s phrase) of these terms, thereby making representationalism untenable in its Platonic understanding. Barad argues against representationalism by advocating a performative understanding of materiality because “a *performative* understanding of discursive practices challenges the representationalist belief in the power of words to represent preexisting things. Unlike representationalism, which positions us above our outside the world we allegedly merely reflect on, a performative account insists on understanding thinking, observing, and theorizing as practices of engagement with, and a s part of, the world in which we have our being.”<sup>39</sup> Evaristti’s *Helena* highlights Barad’s concern with representationalism in two significant ways.

First, the fish in the blenders are insignificant other than as a vehicle to discuss human morality—not necessarily in relationship to animals, but to killing of living things. While the piece does address an “engagement with [...] the world” it does so very generically, and in a manner that reinforces the human/culture versus animal/nature binary Barad attempts to unravel. Also, “the world” the piece interacts with remains deeply rooted in discursive or cognitive views of the

world. That is, while the engaging of the blenders has material consequences for the fish, the piece is far more concerned with the human choice.

Second, by placing the goldfish in blenders, the work enacts the very disassociated from “the world” view Barad resists. The fish are cordoned off from the spectators—the glass separates them, keeping the humans outside “the world” of the goldfish, which suggests human choices can be contained in prescribed areas. More specifically, unlike Alaimo’s or Haraway’s accounts of leakage and agential materiality, the material consequences are contained in the enclosures. Humans are, in this respect, not a part of, but rather apart from the world of the goldfish. This leaves little or no performative power or agency for the fish. However, reading *Helena* through Barad’s “performative approaches call[s] into question the basic premises of representationalism and focus inquiry on the practices or performances of representing, as well as on the productive effects of those practices and the conditions of their efficacy.”<sup>40</sup> As noted, her performative approaches require a rethinking of “practices of engagement with, and a part of, the world in which we have our being,” which includes not only the practices of creating *Helena*, but also the historical, material, cultural, and semiotic practices of human and goldfish relationships. More specifically, the work, its messages, and its use of goldfish *cannot* ignore issues such as the commercial goldfish industry’s role in breeding fish or the economics of pet goldfish. In this performative account, humans cannot stand outside the world of the fish because humans are explicitly tied to them historically and materially. Such an account also opens the piece for a more complex interpretation that considers perspectives other than what the artist “intends.” The optical metaphor of representation as mirroring or sameness falls short because of the multitude of factors that contribute to the work. Barad argues for another optical metaphor—one which better addresses the intra-actions, the folding of culture and nature or materiality and discursive phenomena. She argues that “as Haraway suggests, diffraction can serve as a useful counterpoint to reflection: both are optical phenomena, but whereas reflection is about mirroring and sameness, diffraction attends to patterns of difference.”<sup>41</sup> Attending to

difference serves as a foundational principle for the types of posthumanism Alaimo, Barad, Haraway, and Wolfe advocate. More importantly, the intersections of difference, whether cultural or biological, creates the type of contextual, in the moment, performative engagement that affords nonhumans consideration while eroding binaries such as nature/culture. Diffraction also better adheres to Alaimo's trans-corporeality" or Tuana's "viscous porosity" where these different phenomena coexist and pass across or permeate through each other co-constituting beings and places in shared contexts. In this respect, diffraction supports permeations in particular contexts that alter participants and leave traces of the interaction (per Derrida) rather than reflection, where images or ideas are bounced back (i.e. do not permeate) and where the perpetrator (the original) is unaltered (similar to Plato's idea of essence—i.e. a perfect a priori idea exists, the representation resembles, but doesn't perfectly capture it).

For example, Vargas's *Exhibit No. 1* purports to frame the hypocrisy of humans concerning the welfare of dogs (i.e. people are outraged by his work, but not one spectator helped the dog or called authorities). For Vargas, the work *reflects* the prevailing attitudes and public policies of humans toward nonhumans. Yet, the work and Vargas's reading of it, overlooks the more complex history of humans and dogs that Haraway expounds on in her works. More specifically, for Vargas, the relationship between humans and nonhumans hinges on humans as agents, not dogs (yet the dog does escape, i.e. doesn't necessarily need the intervention/help of humans as Vargas claims). Also, the historical and biological relationships between humans and dogs are far more complex than Vargas provides. The work does not address issues such as the impact of commercial dog breeding and pet commercialization on stray animals, or the frequent spay and neuter campaigns that at the very least attempt to provide a solution to the problem Vargas raises. The rather simple message Vargas disseminates echoes Barad's concern about humans standing outside "the world" by suggesting only humans have agency in this relationship. Vargas brashly demonstrates this point in an interview about the work stating

The purpose of the work was not to cause any type of infliction on the poor, innocent creature, but rather to illustrate a point. In my home city of San José, Costa Rica, tens of thousands of stray dogs starve and die of illness each year in the streets and no one pays them a second thought. Now, if you publicly display one of these starving creatures, such as the case with Natividad [the name of the dog, meaning 'Nativity' in English], it creates a backlash that brings out a bit of hypocrisy in all of us. Natividad was a very sick creature and would have died in the streets anyway.<sup>42</sup>

Again, Vargas's statement oversimplifies the issue and the relationships between the numerous aforementioned factors. For example, his outrage hinges on his belief that until Natividad was placed in the gallery, "no one pays them [including Natividad] a second thought." Vargas, a resident of San José, seems unaware that "northeast about a half hour from the Costa Rican capital" sits "one of the most progressive shelters and veterinary clinics in Central America [called The Refugio by locals]."<sup>43</sup> Hyperbole aside, his statements also miss the material and cultural relationships that have co-evolved (as Haraway would argue) in the region, a significant factor in the emerging type of contextual agency Barad advocates. Lilian Schnog, president of The Refugio and Dutch expat, learned that her preconceptions of hoards of abandoned pets were misconceived.

When Schnog started at the shelter, it was common for residents to let their pets "live" on the streets. Many visitors thought the animals roaming around were homeless. That actually wasn't the case. Owners often turned their animals out in the morning and then let them back in the house in the afternoon, not just dogs and cats, but even cows and horses. Over time things started to change. Now residents are aware that providing for their pets includes a safe place for them to stay at all times. Although numbers from a WSPA survey are not in yet, Schnog says that the stray population has dropped drastically while pets in houses, owned but not out roaming, went up. She said her new challenge is to change people's attitudes about spaying and neutering animals.<sup>44</sup>

As Barad argues, history, biology, species, discourse, and matter all intersect in this example, complicating what agency means. For Barad, the term interaction fails, because it allows separation, not entanglement. She prefers intra-action whereby

*"intra-action" signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies. That is, in contrast to the usual "interaction," which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action. It is important to note that the "distinct" agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute, sense, that is, agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements.*<sup>45</sup>



The entangled agencies of Vargas, the spectators, and the dog emerge out of the relationship of the contexts in which they reside, move across (Alaimo) or through (Tuana). These contexts include material, discursive, historical, and biological contexts that are not apart from but a part of each other. While Vargas chastises the spectators' hypocrisy, he demonstrates his historical ignorance of the complex issues that contribute to the very social issue he raises. Moreover, he seems to suggest agency in this relationship (between the dog in the gallery and the spectators) is wholly and, more importantly, understandably one directional. In this respect, the dog remains more important in its message, than its material being. More specifically, this dog is all dogs, or at the very least all emaciated stray dogs. Breed, history, economics, and other factors play little if any role in the message. Also, although Vargas's message serves as a reflection of a societal issue, it doesn't address "matter as a dynamic and shifting entanglement of relations, rather than as a property of things."<sup>46</sup> Rather, the complex entanglement of dog, humans, art, public policy, evolution, and economics becomes overly simple as the dog is not only passive, but in a very material sense the "property of things"—people. The dog, Natividad, sadly becomes a prop, a statement, an object rather than an active part of the work in Vargas's reading of the work.

A posthumanist reading, akin to Alaimo, Barad, or Haraway, however; addresses the oversights of Vargas's but not without looking outside the work itself. More specifically, the dynamic intra-active paradigms of these scholars demonstrate how literature, film, and art concerning nonhumans do not exist in a vacuum. Vargas's work examined outside the "frame" (the gallery) illustrates a potential for changing how relationships between humans and nonhumans are perceived in Western culture—as connective, dynamic, contextual, and permeable. The documentary film *Winged Migration* offers a similar challenge as the film employs representational language (such as mirroring) and raises questions about the ethical use of nonhuman animals, agency, and the confluence of matter and semiotics.

### Actors, Agency, Animals, and Posthumanism with Popular Culture:

The theatrical trailer for the Sony Pictures Classics'™ film *Winged Migration* (2001)<sup>47</sup> boldly proclaims the film “presents a new vision of nature.”<sup>48</sup> This statement, however, remains difficult to prove because of the complex relationships in the film between humans, nonhumans, cinematic history and techniques, and culture that intersect, overlap, and are difficult to untangle. The result of these entanglements is a film that simultaneously complements and contradicts the trailer’s claim by both eschewing and relying on traditional Wildlife Film themes that many scholars argue reinforce perceptions that create a binary relationship between humans and nonhumans. The film exhibits how these entanglements complicate the veracity of the trailer’s statement in many ways. For instance, the filmmakers’ determination, vision, and ingenuity do create an aesthetically stunning view of the migration of several flocks of birds from an intimate point of view. The technological initiatives provide multiple perspectives that shift from micro views, as if the viewer is a part of the flock, to macro views, sweeping panoramic perspectives that illustrate the expansive trajectory of the birds’ migration. These multiple perspectives present a bold vision when they abut, fade in/out, or overlap. However, scholars from both animal studies and wildlife films pose persuasive arguments that contradict the trailer’s bold claim because through its technological initiatives, perspectives, narrative, and scenes *Winged Migration* either perpetuates early wildlife filmmaking themes, or reduces animals to symbol. Despite the potential veracity of the film’s limited vision, *Winged Migration* and its companion film<sup>49</sup> *The Making of Winged Migration* provide an innovative and more complex method to think with/through<sup>50</sup> animals where “approach[es to] the ethical question of nonhuman animals [are] not as the other-than-human but as the *infrahuman*, not as the primitive and pure other [...] but as part of us.”<sup>51</sup> The films accomplish this in two ways, through a multiplicity of perspectives that fold on one another, thereby complicating subject/object and interior/exterior boundaries, and through a dynamic and more inclusive view of agency that challenges humanist conceptions of agency as “something that someone or something has” by

viewing agency as “an enactment,” not as an “attribute of subjects or objects” and not as only limited to “the possibilities of human action.”<sup>52</sup> Finally, although the films do engender “new visions” of nature, how they accomplish this raises serious ethical considerations that possibly reinscribe the very speciesist framework the films complicate. Juxtaposing *Winged Migration* and *The Making of Winged Migration* reveals that such ethical considerations must be accounted for through viewing the periphery—that which is present in its absence—as well as the screen.

As popular culture continues to (dis)assemble animal bodies (both materially and discursively) in film it remains important to analyze the ethical implications of the relationships between humans and animals. However, rather than conceive animal bodies in film either as overly positive in their potential to undermine problematic ideologies entrenched in Western society, or as overly negative in their ongoing marginalization of animals to passive object, analyses should recognize that animals are not mere symbols, “they are privileged, and they are performative. They do not just stand for something [...] they do something.”<sup>53</sup> Such an approach would allow for the recognition that the boundaries between human and animal are not static and the relationships between them are porous. Films like *Winged Migration* can extend discussions about why we look, or should look, at animals; however, these discussions must weigh the potential benefits of popular representations and any potential drawbacks, both materially and discursively, for animals and humans. This means also addressing that which is out of focus.<sup>54</sup>

*The New Is Old: Symbol, Aesthetics, and Ingenuity in Wildlife Films*

*Winged Migration* begins with a black screen where the following text appears:

*For eighty million years, birds have ruled*

*The skies, seas, and Earth*

*Each spring, they fly vast distances*

*Each fall they fly the same routes back.  
This film is the result of 4 years following*

*Their amazing odysseys*

*In the Northern Hemisphere and the Southern Hemisphere*

*Species by species, flying over each continent.*

*No special effects were used in the filming of the birds.*

This prologue underscores the filmmakers' romantic vision of the durability of birds in spite of their arduous journeys and superimposes the accomplishment of the film in capturing migrations from a unique perspective over an extensive period, thereby collapsing the distance between the filmmakers and the birds. The final line, however, is most significant. The filmmakers recognize the proximity of the filming, and therefore the birds—especially in flight—might seem a result of technological manipulation (such as green screens or CGI), rather than technological ingenuity (posted night vision cameras or critter cams). For the filmmakers, the proximity, perspective, and duration of filming provides a new vision of nature by focusing on the migrations of birds across multiple environments in order to highlight that birds still rule the skies despite human activities such as manufacturing or hunting. However, the prologue also underscores an underlying message that situates the film, as Wildlife Film scholar Jonathan Burt argues, “[as] more reminiscent of an old-fashioned ethos found throughout the history of nature photography (still and moving) that points towards the aesthetic wonders of nature while highlighting the novelty of its own achievement.”<sup>55</sup> The final line remains significant for this argument as well. More specifically, it can be read as self-aggrandizing because the filmmakers highlight that they accomplished such spectacular footage *without the use of special effects*.

In this final line, rather than present a new vision of nature the film perpetuates fairly entrenched themes in wildlife filmmaking that are not new and that many theorists find problematic because they often reinforce a human and nonhuman binary by focusing on a sublime nature, often synonymous with wilderness. For instance, William Cronon argues focusing on a sublime nature is detrimental to natures considered less sublime, yet still “wild,”<sup>56</sup> or as David Ingram argues such a focus creates a considerable “drawback of [the] need to

conceive of nature as pristine [because] it tends to position human beings as fundamentally opposed to, and excluded from, nature."<sup>57</sup> The film illustrates Ingram's concern by relying on fairly traditional themes such as a spring-to-fall narrative and the wildness and timelessness of birds in order to illustrate how they continue to endure, despite perils, including those humans create. And, although the film does not exclude humans from nature, they minimally appear, and in quite problematic ways. When humans appear it is the more modern industrialized consumer who poses great threat, and is opposed to nature, while children and non-industrial agrarian adults pose little if any threat to birds, thereby reinforcing more common, yet highly contested themes in Wildlife Films—the purity of children, the nostalgia for older agrarian practices, and the connection between both children and farmers (non-industrial) to a pristine and highly aesthetic nature that should be preserved because of its beauty.<sup>5859</sup>

Nowhere in the film are these entrenched, yet contested, themes illustrated better than the opening and closing montages. As the film begins the camera focuses on a flock of birds nestled in an idyllic rural setting. The camera then quickly cuts to a young child with a joyful smile running toward them. The child pauses, glancing through a weathered structure. His voyeurism parallels the audience's—a close view of the Other from an aesthetically pleasing nature, one that is rural and peaceful.<sup>60</sup> This is a place far from urbanized areas and very similar to the traditional locations for Wildlife Films. When the birds become aware of the child they take flight further, separating them from humans. Yet, one bird remains, trapped in a fishing net. As it violently struggles the child moves from cover and then frees the bird to continue on its journey. The aesthetic wonder of the setting, the child's innocent gaze, and the birds' flight folds with the child's innocence and benevolence, thereby reflecting the aforementioned traditional, and problematic, Wildlife Film themes.

*Winged Migration* not only reinforces traditional themes, but also, as Burt argues, it becomes a celebration of the filmmakers' ingenuity. Burt's argument is best demonstrated in the *Winged Migration* DVD bonus feature *Winged Migration the Making of*, which when juxtaposed

with *Winged Migration* provides more evidence for this as the filmmakers go to great lengths to demonstrate their effort and to celebrate their inventiveness. In fact, the inclusion of the 'making of' footage with the DVD even further supports Burt's claims because, as he argues in *Animals in Film*, behind-the-scenes footage "highlight[s] the constructed nature of the filming process and could be read as contributing to a process of displaying integrity in revealing how images are produced. Alternatively, this is less a demystification of animal films than an aestheticization of their mechanics."<sup>61</sup>

Yet, the films do more than perpetuate an "old fashioned ethos" or celebrate the filmmakers' ingenuity. They comment on humanity, thereby transforming birds, landscapes, and narrative to spectacle and shifting from Burt's argument that the film presents "old-fashioned ethos" and "novelty" to arguments by scholars such as John Berger, Akira Mizuta Lippit, and Steve Baker, where the animal disappears because "the animal is celebrated [...] as a sign but not as a body."<sup>62</sup> In this aspect, rather than present a new vision of nature, in many ways the film participates in an ongoing 19<sup>th</sup> Century paradigm that collapses the potentiality of animal to sign: the observer peers through what Berger calls, a highly aesthetic technological clairvoyance that transforms the birds to mere observed phenomenon.<sup>63</sup> This paradigm marginalizes nonhumans, leading to their "disappearance." Consumer culture perpetuates this "disappearance" by reducing animals to spectacle and placing them in "a domain [that] will never be entered by the spectator," a domain where they become signs for ideas such as a wild and timeless bird, aesthetic wonder, and reformation. The latter is particularly not a new vision of nature because, "[...]the development of natural history film [was] partially an effort in moral and social reform."<sup>64</sup> In *Winged Migration* the reforms focus on how the actions of adult industrialized consumers effect birds.<sup>65</sup>

Both *Winged Migration* and *The Making of Winged Migration* contain moments that indicate the birds are more important as signs of moral and social reform, than as bodies. Revisiting and recasting the opening and closing montages, where the young child not only

witnesses the start of the birds' migration, but also saves a bird and then when the birds finally return, reinforces such claims. That is, the first and final montages not only reflect early themes in wildlife films, but also reduce animals to signs because they are more concerned with human animals, rather than nonhuman animals. The opening and closing scenes enforce the human role in the constant struggle of nonhuman animals and the fragility of their environments along with the Disneyfied optimism in children's ability to transform harmful ideologies of man as important moral and ethical concerns for humans.<sup>6667</sup> Yet, the focus shifts from the birds to the child, and more importantly, to the netting that remains on one of the bird's legs. The child frees the bird from the trappings of industrialized man (the net), signaling the possibility of a future where humans do not upset the natural cycle. The tattered remains of the net around the bird's leg serves as a social and moral reminder—currently humans disrupt the natural cycle, yet change is possible. The sentiment is reinforced because the bird cannot remove the netting. The relationship between birds, humans, and environments has changed. This bird is not the timeless wild bird. Instead, it becomes both a sign of cultural practices that endanger nonhumans, and the hope of transforming these practices in order to save nonhumans. More importantly, by focusing on the netting in both the opening and closing scenes the film shifts the focus from the birds to how humans create dangers for non-human animals. The focus on social and moral reform is further supported by Perrin's claim in *The Making of Winged Migration* that *Winged Migration* is a "mirror," an "optical analogy" that engenders "representationalism [through a] preexisting determinate boundary between subject and object."<sup>68</sup> This paradigm not only reduces animals to signs, but also solidifies problematic binary relationships because the mirror analogy relies on sameness vs. difference, exterior vs. interior, subject vs. object, and separation vs. entanglement. In each pair the mirror reinforces fixed boundary positions, rather than allows for entangled connections that shift. By signaling that *Winged Migration* is a mirror the filmmakers have attempted to fix perspective—that of a subject looking at an object.<sup>69</sup>

*About Looking: Visions, Folding, Diffraction, and Cultural Context*

Yet, the mirror analogy does not hold in the films primarily because of a play on the term 'vision' in the trailer's bold claim. As Jennifer Fay argues, through the camera's gaze "*Winged Migration* offers an avifaunal perspective which defamiliarizes human patterns of looking and offers a mode of intersubjective spectatorship."<sup>70</sup> In the both films vision conveys a perspective "outside of politics and law" by "absenting the human as both the explicit subject and object of knowledge."<sup>71</sup> Fay claims the shift in perspective from human to bird "acknowledge[s] the limits of our own earthbound, human, and political ways of thinking."<sup>72</sup> A claim best supported by the films' message for moral and social reform that exposes some of the negative consequences for nonhumans that stem from speciesist thinking. In the film vision produces wonder and empathy, which the filmmakers believe is essential for the success of the transformation from human to bird, and for moral and social reform.<sup>73</sup> In this respect the film is a new vision of nature because audiences and film critics proclaimed the film made them feel, "as if [they are] one of the flock."<sup>74</sup>

Their sentiments remain important because an "avifaunal perspective" addresses Berger's persisting question, "why look at animals," because both films contain moments where binaries, like subject/object, or active/passive, unravel—thereby extending discussions of human and nonhuman relationships by illustrating the instability of rigid boundaries that attempt to separate humans and nonhumans. The films accomplish this through numerous moments where the ill conceived, one-way human gaze is disrupted because the birds clearly look as well. At these moments, the proximity of the camera to the birds reveals nonhumans who clearly look at the camera, or at one of the handlers, who remain in the periphery during *Winged Migration*. These moments challenge what Berger calls the troublesome "ideology [that] animals are always the observed" by demonstrating "they can observe us," a significant claim because, as Berger argues, since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century this assertion "has lost all significance."<sup>75</sup> Also, the films demonstrate that, "the 'eyes' made available in modern technological sciences shatter any



idea of passive vision; these prosthetic devices show us that *all eyes* [emphasis added], including our own organic ones, are active perceptual systems, building in translations and specific ways of seeing, that is, *ways of life*.<sup>76</sup>

Yet, vision remains problematic when employed as a means to claim another's perspective because one cannot "see from these positions critically" because "one cannot relocate in any possible vantage point without being accountable for that movement."<sup>77</sup> Vision is always a question of the power to see—and perhaps of the violence implicit in our visualizing practices.<sup>78</sup> Haraway's concern applies to the shifts in perspective in *Winged Migration* because they are entangled with history, film history and practices, complex human and nonhuman relationships, and multiple ideologies. More importantly, the perspectives in the film are multiple, dynamic, and co-constituted by these entangled relationships that further complicate vision because:

The inclusion in a film or television programme of a particular type of shot does not necessarily guarantee [a particular] ideological positioning [the filmmakers and scholars] assume, because the meaning of a shot is context-dependent, being produced not only by that shot's relationship with other elements in the film, but also by the filmic spectator's prior knowledge which he or she brings to the viewing process.<sup>79</sup>

Because of the complex entanglements between *Winged Migration*, *The Making of Winged Migration* (both as a product and process), and the spectator, in order for *Winged Migration* [to] erod[e] notions of human uniqueness and structures of knowledge that privilege the human over all other forms of life," vision must be considered active and from a variety of perspectives (human and nonhuman) and human animals must recognize the complex entanglements related to any claim of experiencing another's point of view.<sup>80</sup> Contrary to the filmmakers' claim, rather than categorize the camera's gaze in *Winged Migration* under the optical analogy of reflection, the camera's multiple perspectives in the film and its companion, *Winged Migration the Making of*, should be categorized under a different optical analogy—diffraction—which better accounts for the entanglements, differences, and that actions have consequences.<sup>81</sup> Both films indicate differences and entanglements where "the world is

materialized differently through different practices.”<sup>82</sup> The multiplicity of intertwined relationships in the films engenders a “performativity” where “subject and object do not preexist as such, but emerge through intra-actions.”<sup>83</sup> Therefore, the film de-centers the human subject through multiple, shifting entanglements where positions emerge, disperse, and reemerge.

The films decenter the human subject further because in *The Making of Winged Migration* the subject/object binary unravels through a folding or becoming because the gaze is a human gaze looking at birds from a “bird” perspective—looking for an understanding of birds, and humanity. The folding of perspectives makes who sees and what difficult to discern because of the intertwined material and cultural factors and the multiple perspectives. This complicates the diffraction analogy further because juxtaposing the films highlights the difficulty in locating a fixed position of outside viewer and observed object. Looking from the camera’s or viewer’s perspective creates a multiplicity of views—that simultaneously look outside and inside, or as Wolfe argues, *infra*, rather than out or in.

The multiplicity of folding perspectives unravels fixed subject/object positions because in the film humans and nonhumans are intertwined with each other through vision, history, multiple environments, especially through physical and cinematic landscapes. An analysis of these intersections reveals the way in which film history and techniques complicate the connections by entangling positions throughout the film with these multiple factors. These intimate relationships provide critical approaches for conceiving the human and nonhuman because both are simultaneously *a part of* and *apart from* each other, in addition to being culturally, materially, and discursively defined through the film.

The complex relationships between human and nonhuman animals in the films illustrate the historical, material, and cultural influences entangled with these multiple perspectives. The influence of points of view, cinematic techniques, such as panoramic shots, cinematic references to films and locations, such as the Monument Valley section, and the inclusion of humans and nonhumans into the birds’ “stories” complicate a human/animal or subject/object

binary through the complex relationships that exemplify the material and active roles of both humans and nonhumans in the film. Both participate in observing and interacting in ways that illustrate intricate and dynamic relationships that defy the simplifications of viewer and observed. However, a critical analysis of the relationships between humans and nonhumans must recognize “the serious danger of romanticizing and/or appropriating the vision of the less powerful while claiming to see from their position.”<sup>84</sup>

Although *Winged Migration* and *The Making of Winged Migration* certainly contain moments that risk romanticizing the birds and landscapes, or appropriating a bird’s perspectives as a bird’s position, the films illustrate the difficulty of locating a singular vision of nonhumans, whether through the multiple perspectives that include timelessness or culturally specific referents, such as allusions to John Ford’s Monument Valley movies in the Canadian geese migration scene—a scene that best demonstrates how enmeshed perspective and cultural factors are in the films, and how subject/object boundaries are porous in the films.

The Monument Valley scene folds subject/object positions, human/nonhuman, and past/present through cultural references and scene construction. On the one hand, through allusions to Ford’s films, the geese parallel the cowboy of early cinema, whose bravado blazed across a hostile west. John Wayne’s characters embodied this best (or worst) and influenced culture whether through his hyper-masculinity, or through his larger than life presence. In this respect the geese embody the sense of adventure and danger that Wayne’s characters encountered in Ford’s films. Like Wayne, the geese endure, despite obstacles, proving their subjectivity. Yet, unlike Wayne, the geese do not appear larger than life, or hyper-masculine. Rather, they seem awkward and out of place in the desert. Moreover, they not only parallel the cowboy, but also the material consequences of the cowboy’s violent practices which lead to the exploitation of minorities, nonhuman animals, and the land. In this sense they are both active subject (cowboy) and passive object (the exploited), thereby folding the categories. The juxtaposition of the geese and the wild mustangs further complicates these boundaries as the

geese are wild, free, and timeless, and they are driven by human wranglers, contained, and connected to their human counterparts. In this scene the past becomes intertwined with the present through these allusions and analogies. The cinematic history of Monument Valley and of the Western becomes entangled with nonhumans and landscapes. Monument Valley is not mere backdrop. Like the birds, its aesthetic wonder and history make it an important aspect of the film and of the birds. The national importance of the Western, Monument Valley, and birds (notice the bald eagle appears prior to this scene) extend the layered relationships in the film. Yet, this scene not only challenges fixed notions of nationality, because the most “Americanized” scene in the film focuses on the migration of the Canadian geese, but also challenges human practices of co-opting nonhumans for national symbols.<sup>85</sup>

Through these complex entanglements one relationship remains at the forefront of the films. Humans are connected to nonhumans through these multi-faceted connections. The importance of this relationship is apparent because humans appear throughout *Winged Migration* whether as a hazard to birds (the hunters, industrialized farmers, or animal traders), as a safeguard for them (the young boy), or as ambivalent to them, yet present (the non-industrialized farmers). However, ironically, a film that, at times presents a bird’s perspective, rarely offers this perspective when humans share the scene (the harvesting scene is a notable exception). A significant shift considering these moments provide unique opportunities to look at humans from a different perspective. This perspective is not truly a bird’s perspective; yet, these moments illustrate the constant shifting of perspective in the film and the close proximity of the human and nonhuman.

Humans also appear in the film in their absence, and, although the erasure of the camera and production crew is a common theme in wildlife filmmaking, seeing that which is not supposed to be seen adds to the multiple perspectives in the film and further demonstrates how humans and the birds are a part of and apart from each other. Juxtaposing *Winged Migration* with *The Making of Winged Migration* expands the complex relationship because the strong

bond between the filmmaking crew and the birds becomes evident after viewing the latter film. The crew shows genuine concern for the birds as living beings, not commodities for the film, and the crew even sleeps near the birds, challenging the perceived stereotypical boundary between human and nonhuman. Human and nonhuman animals migrate together co-creating footage through their intra-actions not only with each other, but also with the multiple environments they traverse. The result (en)visions connections through folding perspectives, both from shifting points of view and folding material and discursive contexts.

*Animal Agency: Human and Nonhuman intra-action.*

*Winged Migration* and *The Making of Winged Migration* not only provide a new vision of nature through entangled perspectives, but also through a (re)vision of the humanist notion of agency, where “agency is ‘doing’ or ‘being’ in its intra-activity.”<sup>86</sup> The prologue introduces the birds as active participants in the film by stating the film is the result of “4 years following their amazing odysseys.”<sup>87</sup> That is, the prologue indicates these are birds doing bird things in their environments—not digital creations, birds on sound stages, or mechanical representations. The filmmakers assert the viewer observes birds—as they would if they were able to fly alongside them, and, more importantly, that the birds lead. Of course, *The Making of Winged Migration* complicates this claim because on the one hand the birds do lead, and in these moments their departure from the script creates moments of co-creativity. More specifically, they actively participate in the film, and the filmmakers find these departures as important, hence why these moments exist in the final cut of the film.

However, the filmmakers lead as well. Yet, even in these moments the birds do not seem passive. The films “signif[y] the mutual constitution of entangled agencies.”<sup>88</sup> In this respect the birds obscure the boundaries between trained actor and animal, resulting in both meticulously crafted scenes and scenes where the birds do what they want and the camera follows. The films then present a postmodern animal—birds who intra-act with humans, other birds, their environments, and the cinematography. The birds are not special effects in either a

contemporary or traditional sense and yet they are not wild birds of the traditional animal film. They perform, are comfortable being viewed and in viewing. The films present moments that demonstrate the performative aspects of the birds—moments where the birds react to the camera and/or crew, thereby alerting the viewer that the bird is also viewer and quite aware of the presence of the camera and the film crew. These animals do not recede into the wilderness; rather they destabilize the boundaries between observer and observed, subject and object, and man and animal. The latter distinction may seem unclear, but as both films illustrate the birds are not only quite intimate with the film crew, but also travel with them, sleep with them, etc. The birds in these films do not seem severed from man—they both become, in Wolfe's terms, part of us.

*On Screen Off Screen: Material and Cultural Entanglements, Ethics, and Film*

*Winged Migration* and *The Making of Winged Migration* challenge any distinct separation of human and nonhuman by decentering the human subject through entangled perspectives and a new vision of agency. Moreover, the films can extend theoretical discussions in Animal Studies and Wildlife Film Studies about how animality, agency, and perception can be recast in order to dilute the rigid binaries that circulate in cultural conceptions of human/animal, subject/object, and interior/exterior. Although the films do perpetuate problematic traditional film themes, the positive aspects of the films make them worthy additions to Animal Studies and Wildlife Film Studies discussion.

However, juxtaposing the product, film, with the periphery, the footage not used, or the footage documenting the process, raises serious ethical considerations that must be addressed in order to better understand the cost to the material and discursive bodies of nonhumans. More specifically, although the films challenge and extend current theories, they do so through questionable means that could undermine the positive aspects of the films.

Therefore, analyzing human and nonhuman relationships formulated in film, along with the associated ethical issues—especially with the proliferation and profitability of wildlife films

(see Burt and Chris)—remains salient to any discussion of the potentiality of film to provide new visions of nonhumans. Being cognizant of the ethical issues, especially those circulating in the periphery, is important because the relationships between humans and nonhumans are mediated through discursive and material means, such as the language used to identify nonhumans or the physical barriers used to separate them from humans. Film adds another layer of mediation through scripts, direction, and common film themes.

In order to better navigate these layers an analysis should “concern itself with seeing that which it is not permitted to see, and with getting others to see it.”<sup>89</sup> Although Baker is specifically concerned with people seeing images of animal testing and *The Making of Winged Migration* is footage that audiences are permitted to see, the footage provides a view of the periphery—of the humans always present in their absence in *Winged Migration*—an ethical inquiry that remains salient to discussions concerning the relationships between humans and nonhumans. These relationships, as Haraway notes, are intertwined through vision and violence. The latter can be traced through the history of wildlife films, ranging from early filmmakers like Edison or film entrepreneurs like Howe to recent programs like “When Animals Attack,” demonstrate that violence and entertainment remain intimately intertwined with wildlife filmmaking and its visualizing practices. Although films like *Winged Migration* generally avoid visualizing violence—rather the risk of violence is a common theme—entertainment remains important through highly aesthetic shots and the close proximity to the birds via a “bird’s” perspective. In order to accomplish these entertaining shots the filmmakers imprint, crate, and ship the birds, a process which the filmmakers admit engenders the very risk of violence to the birds *Winged Migration* suggests. The birds, because of these processes, are in danger of violence, such as approaching moving vehicles or ignoring loud noises. Because of these dangers the birds were placed on a “farm” after the filming was completed.

The apparent contradictions between the positive and negative aspects of how the films address the aforementioned troubling binaries should engender positive discussions on the

filmmaking process—not just the product—that not only recognizes the inconsistencies between the ends and the means, but also recognizes the ironies contained in the product after viewing the process. The Blue Macaw scene in the film best illustrates these issues. The filmmakers go to great lengths to construct a scene where a bird, who, when caged for capitalist means, escapes through its own acumen. The message is that birds should not only be free, but also are resistant and intelligent. The irony is the filmmakers, for pragmatic and financial reasons, cage and ship birds around the globe. Although not “captured” in the “wild,” the scene is somewhat similar to that which it protests—the caging and shipping of animals for profit. The result is a positive vision of animality in theory and a less than positive vision in practice.<sup>90</sup>

In order to better address these issues, the process and product should “not merely reflect human-animal relations and the position of animals in human culture, but are also used to change them.”<sup>91</sup> Change, however, may will be difficult, if not impossible, under current paradigms that focus on what animals signify rather than “what animal[s] might yet be made to signify” and, more importantly, that do not recognize that animals *are material beings that intra-act through cultural and material entanglements with humans*.<sup>92</sup> Through a new vision of perspective and agency, however,

more is at stake than ‘the results’; intra-actions reconfigure both what will be and what will be possible—they change the very possibilities for change and the nature of change. Learning how to intra-act responsibly as part of the world means understanding that ‘we’ are not the only active beings—though this is never justification for deflecting our responsibility onto others.<sup>93</sup>

In order to alter these problematic paradigms, films like *Winged Migration* and *The Making of Winged Migration* must depict “animals [that] are encouraged, without manipulation or coercion, to ‘interact’ with the work,”<sup>94</sup> while recognizing the material and discursive entanglements that better allow movement between polarized categories such as subject object. More importantly, the filmmaking practices must better reflect the theoretical approaches that attempt to extend discussions of animality in current scholarship. Although *Winged Migration* does provide positive challenges to problematic binaries in Animal Studies and



Wildlife Film Studies, its practices should be scrutinized and future projects should encourage more intra-action through a rejection of fixed subjectivity or agency. Yet, such scrutiny is difficult without sifting through the complex connections, accepting the potential for emergence through difference, viewing the periphery—better yet, demanding such material—and recognizing that “our practices matter”<sup>95</sup> because “ethics [are] not simply about responsible actions in relation to human experiences of the world; rather, it is a question of material entanglements and how each intra-action matters in the reconfiguring of these entanglements.”<sup>96</sup>

#### Toxic Entanglements: Matter, Semiotics, and Permeable Boundaries.

While juxtaposing *Winged Migration* and *The Making of Winged Migration* highlights the types of material and cultural entanglements Haraway discusses throughout her work, the films do little to advance discussions concerning modern risk society, permeability, and the relationships between humans and nonhumans. Posthumanism, as a paradigm for rethinking human and nonhuman relationships, falters without considering the micro as well as macro entanglements that exist between humans and nonhumans. To be fair, the film does offer several scenes that demonstrate the ongoing risks for birds caused by human practices (there are scenes with machinery, hunters, and oil spills); however, the effects of these scenes ignore the permeability of bodies. More specifically, while the birds are in danger, the bodies (both human and nonhuman) remain cordoned off from issues like toxins, genetically altered food, or cross-species contagions. Without such discussions, the theatrical trailer’s claim of presenting a new vision of nature is inadequate as the film ignores the types of important discussions of materiality posed by material theorists such as Alaimo and Tuana. The birds, in a very material and cultural sense are tied through issues like toxins (mercury) and contagions (bird flu) that make their relationships with humans materially and culturally significant. *Winged Migration*, therefore, still adheres to the problematic view that humans live outside nonhuman worlds and bodies—i.e. that a rigid and impermeable boundary exists between them. This type of thinking frequently occurs in film, art, and literature about nonhuman animals.

For example, artist Mark Evaristti's "the goldfish in a blender" piece, *Helena* reinforces the trouble with matter under the paradigms Alaimo, Barad, and Haraway protest. The type of nonhuman used in the work is rather insignificant for the artist's intended meaning (i.e. human choice and ethics are more important than the particular nonhuman, its perceptions, or its environment). Yet, matter does matter here—living matter—but per Barad's assertion, the work attempts to present the nonhumans (fish) as devoid of any agency and closed off from humans. That is, in *Helena* the boundaries between human and nonhuman are, at least for the artist, clearly demarcated and impermeable. Unlike the conception of matter in the works of Alaimo, Barad, and Haraway, the blender prevents leakage, permeability, and intra-action. The "fish in the blender" signifies the entrenched anthropocentric view that nature is separated from culture and, more troubling, that human decisions stand outside the realm of the nonhuman. In this work, the consequence of pressing the button to blend remains contained in the glass barrier. While humans can view the outcome, it only permeates culture via empathy or emotion. While empathy and emotion are important ethical aspects of human and nonhuman relationships, without illustrating the material connections (such as mercury in fish or eliminating an apex predator) the work continues to support the human/nonhuman binary current Animals Studies scholars attempt to erode. As Alaimo's, Barad's and Haraway's works demonstrate, matter and meaning are neither separate, nor containable. *Helena* ignores this material reality as any risk to the human via the knotted nodes or trans-corporeality remains safely contained inside the glass of the blender.

*Helena* could have a more charitable reading by aligning it with the pet industry's material semiotic practices of selling goldfish. For instance, the economic and historic practices of the goldfish industry, the artificial environments for goldfish, the looming death of goldfish by human hands, and the semiotic meaning of "life in a blender" could contribute to a more posthuman view of the work. Also, the overarching message of the work does indicate killing a goldfish is a moral choice. However, it does not suggest whether the choice is good or bad.

Also, the work still places the fish in a position to be killed and the artist still rejects any responsibility for the goldfish's deaths (the people who push the button are responsible). Also, as Haraway chides Deleuze and Guattari for not providing much knowledge about wolves (real wolves), the work provides little knowledge about goldfish, again their place in the installation serves to highlight human choices and practices. Similar to the aforementioned moments in *Winged Migration*, *Helena* illustrates the type of problems with conceptions of materiality post Descartes and post linguistic turn. A more apt example of the leakages between humans, human practices, history, place and nonhumans is Rudolph Anya's short story titled "Devil Deer."

Like *Helena*, "Devil Deer" addresses the morality of human choice; however, the short story strongly indicates how human practices in Ulrich Beck's risk society are entangled with humans and nonhumans alike. Unlike the glass separating humans from the goldfish, Rudolfo Anya's "Devil Deer" demonstrates the leaky boundaries between humans and nonhumans—the inability of humans to step outside material connections and consequences. The story takes place in the Jemez Mountains near Las Alamos, New Mexico. The short story begins with the collective excitement of the main character, Cruz, and his small community over the upcoming hunting season. The narrative clearly indicates a strong interconnection between the hunting season and the community's sense of culture, masculinity, sexuality, place, and continuity—between materiality and culture.

In order to land a trophy buck, one that will incite his wife's passion toward him and elevate his status in his community, Cruz plans to hunt on Black Ridge, near the Los Alamos Laboratory. He chooses Black Ridge "because there the pine trees were thick and dark. Part of the ridge was fenced in by the Los Alamos Laboratory, and few hunters wandered near the chain-link fence. The place was hard to get to, hard to hunt, and there were rumors that the fence carried electricity."<sup>97</sup> However, while camping the night before the season opens, he reconsiders his reasoning about why other hunters avoid the place. His night begins with a

horrible dream, a nightmare of a deformed bear that attacks him, as he wakes he notices “[...]just beyond the Tech Area fence of the laboratories [...] there was a blue glow in the dark forest, but it was too early for it to be the glow of dawn.”<sup>98</sup> He begins to realize that the environmental obstacles might be less of a deterrent for other hunters than the uneasiness and uncertainty the area causes his community. Determined to shoot a buck he persists, despite his apprehensions. He soon notices movement in the dark, dense trees. He tracked the buck’s outline when finally, “the buck stopped, and Cruz could clearly see the thick antlers for the first time. They were thick with velvet and lichen clinging to them. A pine branch clung to the antlers, Cruz thought, or patches of old velvet. But when he looked close he saw it was patches of hair that grew on the antlers.”<sup>99</sup> He pauses momentarily and then fires.

The buck toppled on its side and Cruz rushed forward to cut its throat and drain its blood. When he knelt down to lift the animal’s head he stopped. The deer was deformed. The hide was torn and bleeding in places, and green bile seeped from the holes the bullets had made. The hair on the antlers looked like mangy, human hair, and the eyes were two white stones mottled with blood. The buck was blind. [...] Its legs were bent and gnarled. [...] The tail was long, like a donkey tail. [...]Cruz stood and looked at the deer, and he looked into the dark pine forest. On the other side of the ridge lay Los Alamos, the laboratories, and nobody knew what in the hell went on there. But whatever it was, it was seeping into the earth, seeping into the animals in the forest. To live in the fence was deadly, and now there were holes in the fence.<sup>100</sup>

The language Anya uses in this scene illustrates the permeable boundaries of bodies and the intersection of materiality and culture. The deer’s hide fails to repel the toxins that leak from the inside out. Also, the hide fails to hide the consequences of the toxins on the deer’s material body. The scene indicates the passing through or across of toxins on bodies that Alaimo and Tuana highlight in their works. The language also indicates the cross-species connections between humans and nonhumans in a risk society because the deer’s features have mutated to include “human hair” and “a donkey tail.” Classification systems generally work on difference or lack, whereby a deer is identified not only by its physical characteristics, but also by its differences from other animals (human and nonhuman). The cross-species similarities between the “devil” deer, human, and donkey disrupt such classification systems. The scene also indicates the difficulty of identifying problems like toxins in a risk society. Cruz and his

community do not know the problem exists until this scene. More significantly, the scene specifically focuses on the visual perception of Cruz in order to make the necessary connections between the deer, the lab, and his community.

When Cruz returns from the hunt his community reacts in horror at the deer. His cousin Joe takes Cruz inside, away from the deer as the rest of the men quietly disposed of the deer (the narrator states they probably burned it). The shift in the characters' moods from pre to post hunt not only illustrates an important social commentary on the significant cultural shifts caused by the seeping radiation—in this case disrupting a long standing tradition of the community—but also how culture and materiality and humans and nonhumans intertwine in unexpected and often disturbing ways. The metaphor of protection of the community by the fence (which now has holes) and the dense trees that hide the laboratory works well to illustrate how boundaries marked as material objects such as bodies and containment apparatuses are permeable. In her chapter on “material memoirs” Alaimo demonstrates the overlap of matter and discourse, that both are narratives written on and through bodies whereby “the self becomes unrecognizable in the material memoir, not because of its discursive construction, but because self-knowledge in risk society demands “scientific” understandings of a vast, coextensive materiality.”<sup>101</sup> The importance of deer as means of sustenance and cultural identity fractures under the discovery of the “devil” deer. The community views Cruz as forever troubled and potentially beyond help, rather than one of the great hunters from their community stories. The narrator notes that “the medicine men would perform a cleansing ceremony; they would pray for Cruz. But did they have enough good medicine to wash away the evil the young man had touched?”<sup>102</sup> The leakages in Anaya’s story and the drastic and disturbing changes are both material and cultural. More importantly, these leakages support the type of interactionist ontology Tuana proposes when thinking about Katrina. She notes “[...] an interactionist ontology eschews the type of unity and continuity celebrated in traditional Western metaphysics, viscous porosity helps us understand an interactionist attention to processes of becoming in which unity is dynamic and

always interactive and agency is diffusely enacted in complex networks of relations.”<sup>103</sup> The “devil” deer emblemizes (materially and semiotically) the complex network of relations of bodies (human and nonhuman), place, and culture and triggers the type of history of relations—the traces of the various isms that circulate in discussions of the laboratories and test facilities such as Los Alamos. The deer and the community are difficult to separate from discussions of issues such as environmental justice, the Cold War, economics, and environmental health. The deer has infected the community’s sense of itself, but the greater concern is whether the unknown practices at Los Alamos have infected the bodies of more than the “devil” deer. The uncertainty at the end of the story reflects Alaimo’s argument about uncertainty in a risk society. Without scientific tests the community will remain unaware how far the leakages extend.

Susanne Antonetta’s *Body Toxic* traces the material effects of toxins on her body. Her work, a “material memoir” per Alaimo, works well with “Devil Deer” as both works identify both cultural and material practices that drastically constitute and are constituted by the entanglement of bodies, practices, and place. Antonetta ruminates on the early moments of her life where she was frequently exposed to DDT. The memoir transforms her sense of self, just as she contends the exposure to DDT materially transformed her, laying the foundation for her numerous health issues. The frequent sprayings of DDT serve as a material metaphor and an example of how material culture frequently misunderstands the inability of boundaries to repulse “outside” factors. She notes that, “DDT arrived commercially in 1942, making my mother at least twenty-two. [...] I feel like those trucks powdered me in the womb.”<sup>104</sup> However, as Alaimo notes, the difficulty of isolating a singular chemical, place, or exposure remains difficult in a risk society without expert knowledge and equipment. Antonetta recognizes how difficult it is to identify the cause of her numerous health problems because of her family’s frequent exposure to many chemicals. She notes, “of course my infertility could have happened in my mother’s body, the DDT, the swimming in the Toms River, by the chemical pipeline leading into the woods.”<sup>105</sup> The consequences of such leakages are not limited, however, to humans. The

leakages have consequences for place and the multitude of nonhuman inhabitants. Moreover, the connection between humans and nonhumans in these places becomes apparent when, like “Devil Deer,” a mutated animal becomes all too visible. However, making the invisible visible can reduce the relationships between humans and nonhumans to rather easily resolvable differences—often difference demarcated as fairly rigid material or semiotic boundaries. For example, in “Devil Deer,” the locals burn the deer in order to excise the evil, yet as the language and tone of the story indicates the “evil” has seeped into the earth. Yet too often the perceived material boundaries between humans and nonhumans are enacted as justifications for cultural practices. Antonetta remembers that when the DDT spraying happened “my mother and aunts slammed the windows shut and dragged the cats in. For some reason they related the danger of pesticides to animals, not children, not Baby Boom children.”<sup>106</sup> The beliefs of Antonetta’s mother and aunt exemplify the problematic idea that humans and nonhumans are disconnected materially despite the overwhelming evidence otherwise, such as cross species diseases and the transfer of toxins through watersheds.

Also, while her mother and aunt are worried about the family pets, animals without familial connections become part of a larger material memoir—one that extends to nonhumans such as raptors. DDT decimated eagle populations through the very viscous porosity or trans-corporeality Tuana and Alaimo discuss. The larger web of relations both identify broadens Animal Studies as they help erode rigid species distinctions by recognizing “species difference as a strategically ambivalent rather than absolute line, allowing for the contradictory power to both dissolve and reinscribe borders between human and nonhuman animals.”<sup>107</sup> The contradictory power between human and nonhuman animals extends further by eroding material and semiotic borders and anthropocentric processes that exhibit the posthumanism scholars such as Alaimo and Haraway advocate. For example, in her text *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times*, Nicole Shukin employs what she has coined “animal capital,” which “points, among other things, to the paradox of an anthropocentric order of

capitalism whose means and effects can be all too posthuman, that is, one that ideologically grants and materially invests in a world in which species boundaries can be radically crossed (as well as reinscribed) in the genetic and aesthetic pursuit of new markets”<sup>108</sup> Shukin analyzes advertisements where animal bodies promote the very services or products that the animal bodies help create. For instance, she notes the foundation of modern automobile manufacturing rest upon the meat packing plants of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The disassembly of animal bodies not only led to the assembly of automobiles, but also to the images and perceptions of the automobiles themselves (for example, Mustang evokes a certain attitude and style). The intertwining of material bodies and semiotic markers further dissolves the divisions between human and nonhuman in this capitalist system as “at once a *metaphor* that strategically amplifies the totalizing repercussions of capital’s mimicry of nature in tautological times and a *material history* that tracks the contradictory discourses and technologies that can never perfectly render capital animal.”<sup>109</sup> The contradictory discourse extends, as scholars such as Alaimo and Haraway argue, because human and nonhuman bodies and culture leak amongst each other crossing species divides in often quite alarming ways. Risk society, in this respect, includes bodies as well as processes—contact zones and intra-actions. For advancing discussions of the relationships between humans and nonhumans, recognizing the contradictory relationships between humans, nonhumans, and cultural practices remains important as all too often these discussion separate materiality and metaphor. For instance, the metaphor of animal as patriotic metaphor disregards or displaces the material reality of animal bodies in nation building or the metaphor of animal as soft or safe for beauty products disregards or displaces the material reality of animal bodies in the testing process of such products.

Despite the frequent disregard for the confluence of human and nonhuman and materiality and metaphor, two recent works exemplify the difficulty of separating the human and nonhuman from an animal capital perspective: Ruth Ozeki’s *My Year of Meats* and Nicolas



Lampart's art series titled *Meatscapes*. Both works highlight the often hidden connections between human and nonhuman bodies, capitalist practices, leaky boundaries, materiality, and semiotics. The works also demonstrate these connections by exhuming these hidden details and revealing them in startling ways. In fact, both Ozeki and Lampart attempt to shock their audiences by removing the layered veil that obscures the connections between nonhumans, humans, health, culture, and food production. Both works identify the distance the meat industry places between food and its sources and processes, especially the connection between nonhumans, female humans, sexuality, and birth. Moreover, both Ozeki and Lampart illustrate the overlapping of materiality and metaphor. The Penguin edition of *My Year of Meats* includes a reflection piece by Ozeki where she ruminates over the process of researching and writing *My Year of Meats*. She notes that

[...] when I came across the information that the synthetic hormone D.E.S. had a history of misuse, as not only as a pregnancy drug for women, but as a growth stimulant for cattle. Suddenly the metaphor was no longer literary conceit. It was frighteningly real: women weren't just like cows; women and cattle were being given the identical drug, with equal disregard for safety. I realized then that Jane was a D.E.S. daughter, and it was a moment of exquisite and horrifying resonance.<sup>110</sup>

Similar to Antonetta's material memoir, Ozeki discovers Jane's story is a material and metaphorical history, one passed through and across bodies. As a filmmaker for the meat industry Jane chronicles the lives of "American" families eating "typical" American meat dishes in a show called "My American Wife." The metaphorical overtones between women, meat, and nonhumans become even more overly apparent via the pitch for the program: "Meat is the message...it is the meat (not the Mrs. ) who's the star of our show! She must be attractive, appetizing, and all-American. She is the Meat Made Manifest: ample, robust, yet never tough or hard to digest."<sup>111</sup> But as Jane travels America filming "My American Wife" the material connections also become apparent.

While Ozeki's text is flush with examples of these connections, one best exemplifies the leaky boundaries between bodies and cultural practices in a risk society. Toward the latter portion of the text, Ozeki introduces the Dunn family. The patriarch, John, is a prominent

rancher; Bunny, his second wife, was a stripper and a rodeo queen; Gale, his son from his first wife, runs the family business and tries to gain his father's approval; and Rose, his daughter with Bunny, spends a lot of time around the ranch with her stepbrother. Bunny mirrors the "ample, robust, yet never tough" expectation for meat, and her pairing with the elderly John transparently demonstrates the meat industries message that eating meat associates with virility. The relationship between John and Bunny, while interesting, becomes secondary to the role their daughter, Rose, plays in the novel. Jane realizes through her conversations that five year old Rose spends a significant time with Gale while he works with the Dunn family cattle. As a daughter of D.E.S. Jane worries about Rose's exposure to chemicals on the ranch. Her fear exacerbates while in the barn as she notices that

Stacked against the wall were more paper sacks, like large flour bags, containing what I suddenly recognized as various brands of powdered drugs. A thick coat of dust covered every surface. At first I didn't think anything about it. Dust was everywhere, indoors and out. But then I noticed I had dust on my hands from the stainless-steel counter, and up close it seemed to consist of a mix of ground-up grains and powder.<sup>112</sup>

Jane, who had recently discovered she is pregnant, panics and begins desperately scrubbing the powder from her hands. While scrubbing she notices Gale giving Rose a popsicle from the fridge where the Gale keeps the cattle hormones. The horror of the situation grows as Jane watches as "Rosie took the popsicle in her dust-covered hands and stuck it in her mouth. The heat started melting it almost immediately and the sticky blue liquid ran down between her fingers. Contentedly she licked it off and sucked at the pop."<sup>113</sup> Worried about Rose, Jane confronts Bunny. Initially Bunny refuses to discuss Rose with Jane, but eventually relents. She invites Jane into Rose's bedroom. While Rose sleeps, Bunny removes her daughter's clothes revealing that "naked Rose was not plump at all. The plumpness was an illusion created by two shockingly full and beautiful breasts[...]the girl was five years old."<sup>114</sup> This shocking revelation leads Jane to conclude Rose has Premature Thelarche as a result of her exposure to all the chemicals on the ranch. In this moment, the metaphor of women and cattle becomes a material metaphor. In an interview Ozeki expounds on her research into D.E.S (a synthetic growth

hormone) noting that “D.E.S. had a history of misuse, as not only a pregnancy drug for women, but as a growth stimulant for cattle. [...] women weren’t just like cows; women and cattle were being given the identical drug with equal disregard for safety.”<sup>115</sup> While neither Rose nor Jane were intentionally exposed to D.E.S., juxtaposing the two characters demonstrates the various ways in which bodies are permeable. Whether in the womb or by inhaling and ingesting D.E.S., both characters’ material memoirs are a confluence of humans, nonhumans, place, and culture in a risk society. Jane, like Antonetta, has little or no chance of conceiving a child, while five year old Rose has matured too early and will soon be able to conceive a child.

Ozeki highlights the material and cultural connections between humans and nonhumans by crafting a fictional, but very plausible narrative of Jane’s visit to the Dunn family. Artist Nicolas Lampart uses a different approach. By merging 50’s style landscape images, people, and enormous piles of meat, Lampart highlights the connections between place, humans, nonhumans, materiality, and culture. His work harkens to an earlier time where cultural practices begin elevating the importance of meat while removing meat from its source—nonhuman animals. By disrupting the otherwise “normal” image the massive piles of meat forge connections between materiality and metaphor.



2-1 Lampart, “Meatscapes”<sup>116</sup>

For instance, in Figure 2-1 a couple sits near a small pond sharing an intimate moment while in the background a mountain of processed meat looms. The man and woman are either

unaware of or unconcerned by the meat, a not so subtle comment on the lack of awareness of or indifference to the connection between food and nonhumans. That is, the food industry continues to obscure the processes of turning nonhuman animals into food. Films like *Food Inc.* and hidden camera videos from animal rights groups have addressed this issue by removing the veil between products and processes. Lampart reverses the trajectory of land, animal, process, and food by placing the food where the animal would reside. Lampart argues raising awareness about the relationships between humans and nonhumans and the arts remains important because “animals are part of every dialogue no matter what medium one works in. Everything is interconnected, a notion that is apparent in the natural world but is largely ignored in an industrialized mindset.”<sup>117</sup> The man and woman’s disregard for the pile of meat echoes Lampart’s statement. However, the scene also echoes Ozeki’s material metaphor of meat and sexuality. As the man and woman share an intimate encounter meat looms large in the background, a metaphor for an impending sexual encounter between the two. The cultural connection—meat and sexuality—extends to normative cultural practices as the couple enjoying meat are heterosexual. The meat, man, and woman become a metaphor not only for sex, but also reproduction. Lampart’s concern of consumers’ ignorance of industrialized practices parallels Ozeki’s concern with cattle, women, and D.E.S. Just as Jane raises doubts about what constitutes a “typical” American family and their eating practices, Lampart raises doubts about this overly 50’s traditional romantic encounter.

While the melding of materiality and metaphor and nature and culture becomes apparent in works like *Winged Migration*, *My Year of Meats*, and “Meatscapes” a significant problem persists. Although the works attempt to dissolve the rigid boundaries between humans and nonhumans, they insufficiently address meaning because, as Alaimo notes, in a risk society certain expert knowledge is necessary to navigate the intersections of toxins and bodies. Such expert knowledge primarily indicates the expert is not only human, but that the knowledge more frequently benefits humans (see Alaimo’s critique of certain environmental justice theories).

How does one define meaning to extend to the other than human? How can humans include knowledges and experiences of and for nonhuman animals? These questions are the basis for the following chapter.

## Chapter 3

### Posthumanism, Meaning, and Consequence

The confluence of materiality and culture, while a productive site for examining the elasticity of human and nonhuman animal relationships, creates another opportunity for rethinking humanist paradigms that underlie current cultural practices. In fact, in the current “risk society,” as Beck deems the current epoch, meaning, materiality, semiotics, and consequence create a major crisis. As Alaimo notes risk societies require expert knowledge in order to understand and navigate the toxins and diseases that circulate between humans, nonhumans, and places.<sup>118</sup> The crises for posthumanism becomes how do humans understand meaning between humans, nonhumans, and place in an increasingly technological and toxicological risk society? In Peter C. van Wyck’s *Signs of Danger: Waste, Trauma, and Nuclear Threat*, the overwhelming difficulty of living in a posthuman risk society becomes harrowingly evident. Similar to the problems of containment in “Devil Deer” where broken fences, leaky containment facilities, and humans and nonhumans overlap, van Wyck highlights the problem of identifying and containing nuclear/radiation danger from permeable bodies (both human and nonhuman).<sup>119</sup> As the mutated “devil” deer unsettled the cultural practices and material realities of the community, van Wyck’s text presents a similar potential of risk. His analysis also begins in New Mexico, however, rather than the Los Alamos laboratory, he focuses on the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) near Carlsbad. The facility will store a portion of the nation’s nuclear waste for the next 10,000 years.<sup>120</sup> Comparing van Wyck’s text with Anaya’s raises two significant concerns for posthumanism and semiotics.

First, too often meaning and consequence are identified in a very anthropocentric view of time. In “Devil Deer” the resulting changes in the Pueblo culture and the surrounding landscape are measured in a few generations, while the potential consequences of the WIPP might outlast humans. More crucially, the WIPP requires that humans consider the potential of risk for a world after humans. Also, as “Devil Deer” indicates, the effects are overtime (the

mutated deer appears in Cruz's lifetime. Yet, as long as humans and nonhumans dwell in the area risk exists. Time becomes potentially immeasurable in current humanist paradigms. For example, van Wyck further complicates time by including material and semiotic viability in a risk society. He states:

It is a singular meeting of the material and the semiotic. And it is an enormous wager that hinges on making the waste safe—through burial—then making it dangerous again—through signification. And in it must persist the groundless hope that the semiotic decomposition of the sign will take place at a slower rate than the nuclear decomposition of the waste. The sign must outlive the waste; a question of half-lives (waste vs. meaning).<sup>121</sup>

The intersection of sign and matter, “meaning and waste,” extends, however, across bodies as in the case of “Devil Deer,” matter and sign can exist simultaneously or in the case of material memoirs co-constitute each other.<sup>122</sup> Waste and meaning can overlap—the material effects of decomposition and mutation signal a change in bodies and places.

Second, signification—choosing signs—in the WIPP project almost entirely identifies potential ways to alert humans of the dangers below ground. However, as “Devil Deer” indicates, waste permeates the landscape and the bodies in it. In a posthuman paradigm the signification process must, at the very least, consider the potential carriers of matter and significance—nonhumans exposed to toxins. The potential danger of the buried waste moves with the migrations of or encounters with nonhumans. As Alaimo demonstrates containments fail and toxins spread through humans and nonhumans. Interspecies epidemics, such as bird flu, are only one example of how the boundaries between human and nonhuman bodies remain permeable. The relationships between human and nonhuman bodies in a risk society create a significant hurdle—how do humans signal the danger of the WIPP to the numerous nonhumans inhabiting the New Mexico desert? For instance, many of the pictorial or language based warnings suggested for the site target only humans who either speak a particular language or understand particular human signs (such as the radiation symbol) or facial expressions (such as Mr. Yuck). There were, however, examples that could begin to broach this important question. One of the suggestions was structural, rather than pictorial or language based. In this case, the

sign would be a fairly barren area with a large briar patch like structure that protrudes spikes and other “inhospitable” (according to the designer) shapes and angles. The densely packed structure with its sharp ends could discourage humans and nonhumans of certain sizes or with specific environmental associations. However, it could also serve as protection or homes for smaller nonhumans or nesting and burrowing nonhumans. For some nonhumans, rather than inhospitable the structure could become a safe home.

Understanding meaning from this posthuman perspective requires consideration of the multitude of constituents and environmental factors, or as van Wyck argues understanding *oikos*—that everything is interconnected, some directly tangled while others through more distant means. However, tracing these connections while signifying the hidden dangers to multiple constituents remains a gargantuan task—if not impossible. Posthumanism, at the very least, expands the consideration that, unlike the WIPP project, nonhumans are not only stakeholders in projects like nuclear waste disposal, but also potential carriers of risk. Humans and nonhumans share more than places—their encounters potentially co-constitute one another, especially in a risk society. Meaning becomes paramount as signification across species lines is more important as humans and nonhumans co-exist in risk society. Meaning also becomes paramount as a means of recognizing difference, while addressing contemporary theories of exclusion based on entrenched ideas of lack—that nonhumans lack the ability to respond to signs. They only react to them. The ethical importance of the project is best revealed through the numerous discussions surrounding the supposed divisions between humans and nonhumans. Such discussions signal an important shift in Western culture as until recently Western philosophy still adheres to a rather Cartesian approach to thinking about nonhuman animals. Challenging the boundaries between humans and nonhumans, in regard to meaning, remains one of many important tasks for advancing thinking about difference via connection rather than disconnection. The task, while enormous, has both biological and theoretical roots.



In 1934 Jakob von Uexküll published his observations of nonhumans' "worlds." This work, titled in English *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans*, attempted in earnest to identify and analyze the worlds of human and nonhuman animals. Unsatisfied with conceptions of nonhumans as merely machines (via Cartesian philosophy) he offered a counter-narrative of nonhuman perceptions of shared environments. His discoveries would influence discussions on being and experience from philosophers such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Deleuze and Guattari. Also, his theory of Umwelt has had resurgence in the field of Animal Studies as a means of arguing for nonhuman understanding of environments (or worlds as he states). Scholars place his work directly in opposition to Cartesian philosophy because "with Uexküll the inner real comes back in the realization that not only do we sense and feel, but so do other sentient organisms; and that our interactions and signaling perceptions have consequences beyond the deterministic oversimplifications of a modern science that has bracketed all causes that are not immediate and mechanical."<sup>123</sup> Uexküll argues that without such consideration—that nonhumans do not perceive worlds mechanistically—humans "should abandon all hopes of glimpsing their environments"<sup>124</sup> He argues the world view of animals, their Umwelt, results from signals and receptors or signifying and perceiving. Umwelt, as he deems it, adds to Animal Studies arguments because Umwelt is species specific. That is, these are the worlds, plural, of animals not the universal and overly reductive Animal and Environment that still circulate, even if faintly at times, in contemporary culture. Also, his view of Umwelt advocates connections between subjects, both species and environments, that while not as complex as Barad's intra-action certainly shares the type of dynamic relations in encounters. The intersection of a tick and a mammal undermines rigid species boundaries as the tick pierces the skin and then potentially passes cross-species diseases. For example, humans and white-tailed deer become entangled through Lyme disease, while humans, river fauna and avian nonhumans become intertwined because of fear of Lyme disease and insect repellent.

However, because these connections are tied to perceptual markers or markers of significance for each subject's Umwelt philosophers, such as Heidegger, have employed this idea as support for nonhumans' impoverished worlds (poor in the world), which for such philosophers serves as another means of expanding the perceived fissure between humans and nonhumans. Uexküll rejects such a view as he argues subjects and their "worlds" are in perfect balance—that is, a particular nonhuman does not have an impoverished world because the world aligns to the nonhumans specific needs. Of course, as the WIPP in New Mexico demonstrates, there are risks in environments that go unperceived *by both humans and nonhumans*. Lack of signification or perception, in this regard, can cross species boundaries, including human and nonhuman, thereby engendering posthuman possibilities where humans could address themselves "to animals not merely as objects but also as subjects, whose essential activities consist in perception and production of effects."<sup>125</sup> More specifically, with the WIPP, lack of awareness of a certain aspect of one's environment does not negate subjectivity. Humans and nonhumans still perceive certain aspects of their environments and can be "poor" in a world, or worlds. Umwelt, according to Uexküll, is like bubbles with each subject inside. He states:

the bubble represents each animal's environment and contains all features accessible to the subject. As soon as we enter into one such bubble, the previous surroundings of the subject are completely reconfigured. Many qualities of the colorful meadow vanish completely, others lose their coherence with one another, and new connections are created. A new world arises in each bubble.<sup>126</sup>

However, the metaphor of the bubble, while informative, fails in two important ways. First, a bubble for each subject—i.e. each world—disregards the overlap and permeability of materiality and semiotics. In order to hold air, bubble membranes are not permeable—rather they rupture on contact.<sup>127</sup> Uexküll is right to argue that there are moments where the Umwelt of one subject does not regard markers of another subject (or the subject itself), yet ecological theory indicates there are many moments where these worlds overlap and their subjects influence and are influenced by their worlds. In fact, there are even moments that have a significant impact on the

worlds of subjects even if the subjects do not share perceptual markers, such as species extinction. A tick, who disregards (or is unaware of) markers of significance outside its sensory system, can impact or be impacted by these very markers.

Second, the metaphor of the bubble oversimplifies the diversity in species, which is very evident in one of his most famous examples of nonhuman Umwelt: the world of the tick. In the opening pages of his text *Uexküll* chronicles the perceptive world of a tick, which becomes one of the primary examples of his theory and one of the most cited examples by others. Viewing the world of the tick he distills the tick's Umwelt to three markers of significance. He states:

The blind and deaf bandit becomes aware of the approach of its prey through the sense of smell. The odor of butyric acid, which is given off by the skin glands of all mammals, gives the tick the signal to leave its watch post and leap off. If it then falls onto something warm—which its fine sense of temperature will tell it—then it has reached its prey. Now, the tick pumps a stream of warm blood slowly into itself.<sup>128</sup>

The quest of the tick aligns with posthumanism because the relationship between tick and prey relies on the convergence of materiality and semiotics in a shared environment. The tick, according to Uexküll, is not impoverished in its world, but rather its Umwelt directly supports its biological imperative to live. Other perceptual markers in the environment are not a part of its Umwelt because they are unnecessary. The three sensory systems of the “blind and deaf” tick differ from other nonhumans in that its olfactory sense responds to a particular marker, while ignoring all others.

Yet his most famous example collapses ticks, a species of around 850 members in two major families, into Tick. While more specific than the customary collapsing animals to Animal, the two families of ticks have different habitats and behaviors, thus Uexküll's metaphor of bubbles divides further even in species. The two major tick families, hard and soft, differ in their engagement with their worlds. The hard tick, which Uexküll clearly observed, participates in a behavior called ‘questing’ where the tick ascends something such as a blade of grass and then awaits passing prey. Once the prey brushes by the tick it attaches via two of its extended legs. Similar to Uexküll's account, for hard ticks “biochemicals such as carbon dioxide as well as heat

and movement serve as stimuli for questing behavior.”<sup>129</sup> Some soft ticks also ‘quest’ while others reside in their hosts’ nests. That is, they are born and then reside in the nesting areas of prey. In this respect their Umwelt differs as some soft ticks do not climb blades of grass to wait for prey. Also, the process researchers use to collect hard and soft ticks differs greatly. In order to collect hard ticks researchers use “flags” (fabric), which the ticks grasp. In order to collect soft ticks researchers use dry ice, which the ticks crawl toward. These differences indicate that even though the two families have similar markers of significance (the three Uexküll lists), the two families differ in the significance of these markers and how they respond to them.

What these examples indicate is Uexküll’s Umwelt provides an entry point into rethinking the perceptual lives of nonhumans. However, his approach is only a start as even in species there are differences between nonhumans his examples disregard. Umwelt differences aside, Uexküll’s approach raises a significant question, one that still circulates in both philosophy and the sciences: do the subjects respond or react to the markers of significance? This question remains a significant hurdle for rethinking the relationships between humans, nonhumans and shared environments as the difference between the two terms mirrors the difference between mind and body in Cartesian philosophy. The view that animals are mere machines, matter that reacts, continues to plague attempts to revisit the perceived difference between humans and nonhumans. Uexküll’s analysis has moments that potentially undermine his attempt to demonstrate animals are not machines. In fact, in the aforementioned tick example, he notes that “experiments with artificial membranes and liquids other than blood have demonstrated that the tick has no sense of taste, for, after boring through the membrane, it takes in any liquid, so long as it has the right temperature.”<sup>130</sup> The inability of ticks to distinguish between blood and another liquid could reinforce the very distinction Uexküll attempts to unravel. Yet, for him, whether or not ticks can distinguish liquids of the same temperature is less important than whether the sensory capacity to detect the right temperature is the result of machine or machine operator. For him, the debate stems from two scholarly fields: physiology

and biology. Uexküll argues the physiologist views the tick as mere machine, an assemblage of receptors, sensory organs, and activity organs. He argues the biologist views the tick—and all its living cells—as a machine operator because it “perceives and produces and therefore possesses its own particular (specific) perceptive signs and impulses or “effect signs.”<sup>131</sup> His view of nonhumans and all living cells as machine operators is similar to Barad’s intra-action.<sup>132</sup> Similar to her account of agency, Uexküll’s nonhuman Umwelt is contextual and exists because of the intra-action within its world not outside it. The tick and all its living cells intra-act with its Umwelt, perceiving and producing signs. As Barad argues, its agency is not something it has, rather the result of an encounter—particular and contextual.

For Uexküll the distinction between perceives and produces hinges less on the relative complexity of the nonhuman and more on the interaction it has with its Umwelt.<sup>133</sup> For example, perceiving and producing perceptive signs is part of the Umwelt of humans as well as smaller brained nonhumans like honeybees. In his introduction to Uexküll’s text, Sagan provides a fairly lengthy example of how honeybee material semiotics demonstrates Uexküll’s rich definition of Umwelt. He states:

When bee scouts come back to a hive, before they do their famous figure-eight dance, which tells their hivemates of the distance and location of resources needed by the group, they spit the water, pollen, or nectar they’ve collected into the faces of the other bees waiting at the entrance of the hive. What they spit to their fellows is essentially a sign of itself, but their dance says where and how far. Moreover, if the message is of something the hive needs, the bee will be the center of attention.<sup>134</sup>

The bee scout not only perceives signs via its varied sensory abilities, but also produces signs for its hivemates to perceive. Their actions provide their hivemates signs with two specific bits of information: what sustenance is available and where to locate it. Interestingly the consequences of the delivery depend upon the hives needs. That is, if the hive does not need nectar at the moment, the forager bee’s spitting and dancing are ignored. However, if the hive needs food the bees follow “the directions” and gather the nectar. Moreover, Sagan’s example indicates two of Uexküll’s primary concerns regarding nonhumans and their Umwelt: specificity and purposefulness. Uexküll’s view of nonhuman Umwelt attempts to combat the randomness of

evolutionary biology—adaptation for him reflects purposefulness not chance. Without considering nonhuman sensory abilities and purposefulness, Uexküll argues biology as a field of study will be woefully insufficient. Sagan agrees, claiming Uexküll's approach "is a welcome tonic against the view that nonhumans are machine-like and senseless."<sup>135</sup> Sagan's view of Uexküll echoes much of the admiration for his work in Animal Studies and the interdisciplinary approaches to his work. Although popular philosophers like Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Deleuze and Guattari are frequently cited in discussions of Uexküll's work, other fields like Cognitive Science and Art embrace his work.

For example, Uexküll's work serves as the foundation for research by neuroscientists and animal behaviorists on "animals with small, often minuscule, nervous systems" in an edited collection titled "Complex Worlds from Simpler Nervous Systems." The text adds to Uexküll's work and conversations in Animal Studies pertaining to meaning and nonhumans by covering a wide array of nonhumans—the book does not collapse all small nervous system nonhumans into a general category, rather it illustrates convergences and divergences between species and the particulars of their Umwelt. It also provides many more specific details about each subject than Uexküll's text. For instance, Shaowu Zhang and Mandyam Srinivasan's essay "Exploration of Cognitive Capacity in Honeybees: Higher Functions Emerge from a Small Brain" argues via Uexküll that bees cannot be simply categorized as machines. In addition, Zhang and Srinivasan add to the rich sensory world of bees noting "throughout the course of evolution, honeybees have developed a variety of sensory systems for foraging. Although they rely heavily on their visual systems for navigation and object recognition, they have also evolved a well-developed olfactory system and auditory, magnetic, tactile, and gustatory systems."<sup>136</sup> This variety of sensory systems helps honeybees perceive and produce signs—adding to the complexity of its processes. While the complexity of perceiving and producing signs does not necessitate a break from being "machine-like," the manner in which the complexity coincides with evolutionary and environmental factors at the very least erodes any rigid distinction as the interaction

between a forager bee and its habitat and hivemates suggests that honeybees are not passive objects that only receive data. Zhang and Srinivasan argue honeybees perceive and produce signs and use fairly complex cognitive abilities to navigate their Umwelt. Like Uexküll, they chronicle the perceptual lives of honeybees; however, unlike Uexküll they focus primarily on the association of the sensory systems of nonhumans with cognitive abilities. Also, they attempt to dispel the belief that diminutive size equates overly simple life forms. For instance, they argue

Associated learning is an essential component of the bee's central-place foraging behavior and dance communication. To forage successfully, a worker bee has to remember not only the color and shape of nutrient-rich flowers, but also how to locate them. [...] honeybees accumulate experience and remember what they learn, especially after they start their orientation flights and become foragers.<sup>137</sup>

By using associated learning in perceiving and producing signs the Umwelt of honeybees becomes more complex and dynamic. They learn to locate and then identify particular marker of significance and then produce signs to relocate nectar. The learning, in this respect, is not only of the forager bee who locates the nectar, but also of the hivemates who learn the location by perceiving the forager's dance. Also, because honeybees perceive signs via experience and memory learning accumulates requiring recall. The material semiotic features of honeybees' Umwelt bolster Uexküll's interest in the material signs in nonhumans' environments.

However, their study also indicates the (im)materiality of the Umwelt of honeybees. Unlike Uexküll's study which focuses on how material markers of significance trigger particular material responses, they argue honeybees are capable of abstracting such markers and using symbolic rules. They state:

Honeybees are capable of a variety of visually guided tasks that involve cognitive processes that operate at a surprisingly high level. Bees can abstract general features of a stimulus, such as orientation or symmetry, and apply them to distinguish between novel stimuli. [...] They can learn to use symbolic rules for navigating through complex mazes and to apply these rules in flexible ways. Honeybees are able to form "concepts," and to group and recall stimulus associatively."<sup>138</sup>

The ability to abstract images and use symbolic rules further complicates any simple distinction between human and nonhuman, especially because these abilities are frequently held as an impassible chasm between humans and nonhumans. In this scenario, a machine can receive

and produce signs; however, it cannot engage in abstraction, develop concepts, or engage in symbolic rules. While the work in cognitive science and nonhumans is in its infancy and certainly still debatable, studies such as Zhang and Srinivasan's bolster Uexküll's account of nonhumans and, more importantly, indicate that at the very least Cartesian approaches to understanding nonhumans are inadequate.

Although Zhang and Srinivasan findings on honeybee sensory systems and behaviors expand the type of posthumanism scholars like Wolfe advocate, the evaluative foundation of their findings potentially reinforces the humanism that underlies discussions of nonhumans. As with Wolfe's critique of animal rights discussions, in their work the criteria for complexity and cognitive behavior rests solely on a humanist foundation as they ask "why is it that honeybees can perform some of the same complex cognitive tasks that mammals, including humans, can perform?"<sup>139</sup> The comparative to mammals—especially humans—appears throughout their essay, contributing the very speciesism that underlies legitimizing apparatuses such as legal rights or protections. More specifically, in order to afford animals rights, they must meet certain criteria based on humans. For instance, lawmakers or courts grant rights to a particular group of animals because their cognitive abilities are similar to children. Zhang and Srinivasan's work, while important for posthumanism, starts from and continues to adhere to a humanist paradigm. Specifically, they go to great lengths to illustrate their subjects are like humans (especially cognitively). Animal Studies scholars continue to assail the foundation of humanism because of its frequently detrimental consequences for and exclusion of nonhumans. Yet, their study indicates the larger problem Wolfe addresses, the deep foundation of humanism on which most discussions of the relationships between humans and nonhumans rests. The shadow of humanism looms large, precisely because it forms the foundation for many of the discursive and abstract concepts of what it means to be human. In this scenario meaning relates to the ability to respond—rather than react. Similar to other discussions of difference between humans and



nonhumans, the primary mode of comparison is lack—that humans and nonhumans differ, not by degree but in kind.

The belief that nonhumans are incapable of responding is exemplified in Lacan's "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious" where he poses "the idea of an animal characterized by an incapacity to *pretend to pretend* (*feindre de feindre*) or to *erase its traces*, an incapacity that makes it unable to be a "subject," that is to say, "subject of the signifier."<sup>140</sup> Scholars such as Derrida and Wolfe reject Lacan's distinction for two important reasons. First, as indicated in the honeybee example, excluding animals from certain categorical abilities is at the very least debatable. With the influx of interdisciplinary approaches concerning understanding nonhumans, the surrounding debate has become richer as scientific observable approaches like the honeybee study combine with more abstract and theoretical discussions of the definition of terms such as respond. Regarding Lacan and humanism Wolfe states:

The fallback position of humanism (as in Lacan) [...] is the difference between communication and metacommunication, signifying and signifying *about* signifying, the ability *to lie by telling the truth*, as Lacan puts it—that surely distinguishes the human from the animal. But as Derrida notes, even if we concede that this is a more compelling distinction between human and animal than simply language use as such, it is nonetheless deeply problematic in one fundamental sense: "The fact that a trace can always be erased, and forever, in no way means—and this is a crucial difference—that someone, man *or* animal, *can of his own accord* erase his traces."<sup>141</sup>

The inability of man or animal to erase its traces is because "the mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present, of the lack of the origin that is the condition of thought and experience."<sup>142</sup> As Derrida and Wolfe note in reference to the problematic human/animal distinction the absence of Animal (lack) in understanding animals is always present in the languages and practices of humans. Derrida's radical proposition "asks us to change certain habits of mind: the authority of the text is provisional, the origin is a trace; contradicting logic, we must learn to use and erase our language at the same time"<sup>143</sup> The

contradictory logic of excluding that which is always included [animals in thinking about humans] undermines Lacan's binary conception of the humans and animals.

Second, scholars reject Lacan's thesis based on how the ability defined. It is not enough that nonhumans are excluded via lack of ability, but also the definition of said ability rests on a binary between humans and nonhumans. Simply put, for Lacan not only do nonhumans lack the ability to respond, but also response by definition is based on humans. Similar to the contrasts to material and cultural or body and mind, the difference between reaction and response is defined through the difference between human and nonhuman. For Lacan, reaction is, like nonhumans, mechanistic. Derrida explains

[According to Lacan] when bees appear to "respond" to a "message," they do not respond but react; they merely obey a fixed program, whereas the human subject responds to the other, to the question posed by the other. This discourse is quite literally Cartesian. Later, as we will see, Lacan expressly contrasts *reaction* with *response* in conformity with his position between human and animal kingdom, and the same way that he opposes nature and convention."<sup>144</sup>

However, as Zhang and Srinivasan's study indicates honeybees both obey a fixed program and employ dynamic cognitive behavior where they receive and produce signs. Because honeybees exhibit both reactions and responses, Ironically, Lacan's understanding also follows a fixed program. Bees always react to a message, whereby react and message are also fixed concepts. More specifically, Lacan's position not only impoverishes perceptions of nonhumans, but also reduces their habitats to fixed signs by eliminating any environmental change, action or, as Barad argues, intra-action. With the interdisciplinary approaches in Animal Studies and Environmental Humanities, binary constructions, like Lacan's continue to come under assault. Moreover, as the distance between culture and nature or materiality and semiotics shrinks, so does the distance between human and nonhuman because it becomes more difficult to sustain such rigid boundaries as these concepts intersect or permeate each other.<sup>145</sup> Again, Wolfe argues the significant problem with humanism and Cartesian thought is its failure to apply its

tenants to itself. The type of binary reductionism Lacan employs fails in a similar regard. Derrida notes this stating:

It is difficult to reserve, as Lacan does, the differentiability of signs for human language only, as opposed to animal coding. What he attributes to signs that, “in a language” understood as belonging to the human order, “take on their value from their relations to each other” and so on, and not just from the fixed correlation” between signs and reality, can and must be accorded to any code, animal or human.<sup>146</sup>

However, Derrida is careful when deconstructing the concepts react and respond—the difficulty of reserving the “differentiability of signs for human language”—to note he is not “concerned with erasing every difference between what we are calling *reaction* and what we commonly call *response* [...] my hesitation concerns only the purity, the rigor, and the indivisibility of the frontier that separates—already with respect to “us humans”—reaction from response.”<sup>147</sup> His resistance to indivisibility is a common theme throughout Animal Studies. Most Animal Studies scholars recognize there are differences between humans and nonhumans; however, they argue the distinctions between human and nonhuman are not as pure or indivisible as some would like to believe. In fact, nonhumans can differ greatly from humans and still react and respond to their Umwelt, rather than just react. For instance, In “Portia Perceptions: The Umwelt of an Araneophagic Jumping Spider” Duane Harland and Robert Jackson argue that despite being “traditionally portrayed as simple, instinct-driven animals [...] the behavior of the araneophagic [eats spiders] jumping spiders is more comparable to that of birds and mammals than conventional wisdom would lead us to expect.”<sup>148</sup>

So *Portia* moves slowly onto the edge of the web, reaches out with its forelegs, and begins to pluck on the silk; but *Gasteracantha* [orb weaver] does not move. *Portia* continues to make signals, but varies them. It plucks with different legs, plucks with its palps, varies vibrating its abdomen up and down. [...] By using any combination of its eight legs, two palps, and abdomen, *Portia* is capable of generating an almost unlimited repertoire of web signals.

The authors argue that depending on the type of prey the *Portia* engages in a fixed or programmatic behavior or in a trial and error behavior that attempts to lure prey via by vibrations

that trick it to coming in proximity of the *Portia's* venom. They note that *Portia* “adjust[s] its web signals in response to feedback from the intended victim [...] an example of flexible problem solving and a rudimentary cognitive ability.”<sup>149</sup> The *Portia's* problem solving is not limited to catching prey. The scholars tasked it with escaping from an artificial island in a container. It had two possible escape routes; however, only one would succeed. The spider successfully escaped the island and repeated the behavior with subsequent trials. Their study helps dispel the view of spiders as simple reactionary machines and richens the understanding of spiders, hopefully tempering the cultural fear of spiders.<sup>150</sup> Uexküll's approach lays out the why and what—nonhumans perceive and produce specific signs through specific sensory systems—but meaning in a posthumanist paradigm needs further explanation in order to avoid the type of humanist undertones Derrida and Wolfe cite as problematic for thinking about nonhumans. Recognizing that cognition is not limited to humans offers an entry point into undermining the type of purity of categorization in Lacan. However, if cognition and meaning remain defined by humanist criteria then meaning for nonhumans will continue to work against the posthumanism scholars like Wolfe advocate.

In *Meaning, Language, and Time*, Kevin Porter begins with a provocative idea: “researchers in contemporary rhetoric and composition studies [...] have neglected to provide a coherent, explanatory account of *meaning* and its temporality.”<sup>151</sup> Similarly, the inadequate definition of concepts continues to plague discussions of human and nonhuman relationships in Animal Studies. The problem stems from either an expectation that said concepts are understood or a misplaced notion that said concepts are easily separable. For instance, in *Animal Rites*, Wolfe argues “the underlying fact that the operative theories and procedures we now have for articulating the social and legal relation between ethics and action are inadequate [...] for thinking about the ethics of *the question of the human as well as the nonhuman animal*.”<sup>152</sup> For Wolfe, the operative theories and procedures still adhere to strong humanist premises that preclude polysemy of meaning—the social and legal relation between ethics and

action always stem from human premises. In this respect, meaning—as it relates to the relations of these concepts—remains inextricably tied to human cognition and language. As noted, Wolfe and Derrida resist this idea by arguing that clear distinctions between humans and nonhuman falter under critical examination. Porter’s work on meaning provides another avenue for questioning the distinctions between humans and nonhumans, because scholars influenced by Cartesian thought argue only humans can create meaning. Porter’s “fusing the meaning of a sign to its consequences”<sup>153</sup> creates a dynamic understanding of meaning whereby, “the consequences of utterances extend beyond human cognition and into the material world [in order] to avoid grounding meaning in an anthropocentric constructivism in which “only people can mean.” [Thus] the premises of meaning consequentialism extend to signs of all types.”<sup>154</sup> Three of Porter’s primary critiques of meaning work especially well for jettisoning human cognition as the sole progenitor of meaning: universality, intentionality and time.

The WIPP project introduced at the beginning of this chapter highlights the importance of Porter’s meaning consequentialism and its potential posthumanist characteristics. The WIPP project concerns itself with human knowledge that unravels as multiple constituents inhabit or migrate through the area. The project focuses on humans who could potentially unearth the waste, not nonhumans. Therefore, signs of danger are only human signs. However, as Alaimo’s analysis of toxins and leaky bodies indicates risk cannot be contained. Those who employ universal notions of place or nonhumans disregard relationships between places and nonhumans, thereby increasing risk. For instance, as in “Devil Deer” meaning of place, culture, materially, and risk significantly shifts as the consequences of the convergences of these issues unfold. For example, witnessing the mutated deer has severe consequences for Cruz’s community as their understanding of the area shifts significantly and the optimism hunting season turns to pessimism. Material and cultural factors intersect and both are changed. The land and the community’s hunting celebration will never be the same. Similarly, the cognitive studies on honeybees and jumping spiders undermine an essential understanding not only of

“Animal,” but also of particular species as well. One of the central claims present in the aforementioned studies on diminutive nonhumans is they possess far more complex abilities than currently thought. In fact, both studies undermine the view that nonhumans are unable to respond through identification of cognitive abilities including learning and memory. The dissolution of universal meanings and categories remains a central goal of posthumanism, especially for engendering ethical relationships between humans, nonhumans, and places. Derrida and Wolfe take up this task by deconstructing terms like respond, while Haraway and Alaimo dissolve boundaries between concepts like Nature and Culture. However, because of the deep roots of humanism, as long as concepts like meaning remain grounded in humanist thought the ethical relationships between humans and nonhumans will be inadequate.

The WIPP project intends to signal the environmental and health risks of the waste buried below. However, the overarching problem concerns the difficulty of signaling even a human audience. The various proposals attempt to locate a universal or practically universal meaning for demarcating danger, yet all seem to fall short because of the potential for multiple meanings. The project coordinators recognize that despite their best efforts they cannot control meaning via intent. Add cross-species signification to the mix, and intentionality becomes even more problematic. For example, the WIPP structural design could mean very different things depending on species, size, habitat, or migratory patterns. It could even mean something different in species. For example, humans have decidedly different aesthetic tastes. The sharp and pointed objects jutting from the structure could be alluring to one person and repulsive to another. The crisis to control meaning via intentionality echoes the crisis to control risk, such as the very radioactive material contained below. The result garners a very material and semiotic failure of intentionality as meaning and waste can permeate their perceived boundaries. In a risk society, such a revelation provides little comfort; however, from a posthumanist standpoint the inability to control meaning supports a more dynamic and open approach to meaning. Humans and nonhumans can mean and, more importantly, perceive and produce a variety of responses

(signs) based on the consequences/meanings of signs. As mentioned, research suggests the jumping spider often starts with a fairly programmatic vibration for attracting its common prey. Yet, if the vibrations do not signal the prey to move toward the jumping spider it changes the type of vibration until the sign succeeds. Eliminating the centrality of intention from meaning also lessens the type of human cognitive arguments that still persist. More specifically, that animals do not have intentionality, they only react not respond.

Intentionality, as a means of defining meaning, also fails when considering time. Signifying the potential danger below the WIPP site is both an immediate issue and a future issue for as long as the toxic material stays radioactive. Project coordinators significantly struggle with the vast amount of time the site will remain dangerous because they cannot predict the meaning of the danger sign thousands of years into the future. They note that language or culture may alter so radically that a particular language or cultural symbol might become irrelevant (or worse mean dig here). By complicating meaning via time, Porter allows for different (i.e. nonhuman) considerations of time—an important project considering anthropocentric approaches to nonhumans that use human time as the bench mark for the relationships between humans and nonhumans. However, as Uexküll's observations of ticks (again, hard ticks) indicates their lifecycle and sensory system operates outside human time. A hard tick can remain in stasis, not feeding, moving, or responding to its environment for up to 18 years. A more posthuman conception of time not only affords nonhumans meaning, but also complicates other terms still perceived under the purview of humanism. For example, Lacan's claim that animals cannot respond complicates further when adding posthuman concepts of time. Similar to Aldo Leopold's "Thinking Like a Mountain," where he argues ecological thinking requires seeing from large scale time, posthuman time would include meaning that is immediate as well as unfolding—meaning that , as Porter argues, propagates.

## Cross-Species Material and Semiotic Encounters: Meaning among Dragons and Humanoids

Two films, *Avatar* and *How to Train Your Dragon*, present two male humanoids (a Na'vi avatar named Jake and a young Viking named Hiccup) who eventually ride dragon-like nonhumans (an ikran and later a toruk in *Avatar* and a night fury in *How to Train Your Dragon*).<sup>155</sup> Although the films differ significantly in genre, plot, place, and time period, both films place an importance on the connection between the humanoid characters and the dragon-like nonhumans.<sup>156</sup> In fact, both characters form strong bonds with their dragon like companions, and through the bonding process both films have moments that forward the type of posthumanism advocated in this project. Throughout the acclimation process of humanoid/human to dragon-like/dragon the characters perceive and produce signs, which convey meaning as they are consequential for the characters. However, the films differ significantly in the foundational way they approach, as Wolfe argues, questions about nonhumans. Juxtaposing the two films helps identify perceptions of animals that still adhere to humanist criteria and how to jettison such criteria.

James Cameron's *Avatar* introduces a stunning beautifully lush world called Pandora. The story follows Jake Sully, a paraplegic ex-Marine who ends traveling to Pandora because of the death of his brother, a brilliant scientist. His brother worked on a project that created "avatars" of the Na'vi—the indigenous humanoids of Pandora (and the only humanoids of the planet). Because he shares DNA with his brother he is able to "pilot" his brother's avatar (which share Na'vi and human DNA). A major human corporation funds the project as they want a rare ore found only on Pandora. The film closely follows the United States' history of resource exploitation and the relocation or eradication of indigenous people. The cues to this comparison are hardly subtle as the head representative of the company complains of providing the Na'vi schools and medicine while frequently referring to them as savages. The planet teems with flora and fauna with which the Na'vi people have a strong connection. Interestingly the connection is not only spiritual, but also neurological. The Na'vi and many of the non-humanoid characters



have a long tale-like appendage, called a queue. It extends from their heads allowing them to literally “connect,” which the Na’vi call a tsaheylu. The relationships between the Na’vi and Pandora serve as the primary site for investigating questions of the “animal,” however the avatars as well as the Tree of Souls also contribute to the film’s posthumanist overtones.

One of the primary plot points revolves around Jake becoming Na’vi, learning their way of life, including their customs and languages. One of their ways of life includes a tsaheylu—the connection via the queue. Neytiri, the chief’s daughter and Jake’s eventual love interest, instructs Jake in the Na’vi tsaheylu. She starts with the dire horse because it is one of the easier fauna with which to form a tsaheylu. The scene reveals two important aspects of a tsaheylu. First, the bond must be consensual. The Na’vi and the horse must agree to bond. Neytiri informs Jake he will feel the horse’s acceptance prior to the joining of their appendages. That is, the horse exhibits a sign for acceptance, which seems metaphysical in as the film never indicates the feeling is triggered via any of his sensory abilities. Although the horse accepts Jake, the bond quickly fails as Jake does not understand how to communicate with the horse. While pointing to her head Neytiri explains he must tell the horse to move. Clumsily, Jake shouts for the horse to move, which it does; however, he falls from its back. The primary scientist, Grace, states the bond allows signal transduction. The queue is a part of the nervous system, which explains how the connection is made and works. However, the film does not adequately explain how the neural signals are translated. That is, if species contain different sensory abilities and movements how does one think or imagine such behavior and translate it to action? This question raises interesting possibilities for interspecies communication and Umwelt, but does not receive much treatment. Rather, if the Na’vi rider thinks something the request is sent and processed by the dire horse. Despite this problem, the connection the Na’vi have with the flora and fauna on Pandora both materially and semiotically erodes boundaries between rigid binary categories like nature and culture or human and nonhuman (although technically both are nonhuman). The tsaheylu also indicates while different physiologically, all the living beings of

Pandora can send and receive signs, which leads to overlapping Umwelt as long as the bond is connected.

Second, the film demonstrates that the tsaheylu differs depending on species. His initiation into Na'vi culture continues after Jake successfully bonds with the horse and becomes adept in moving with it. Later in his trials, he kills a small predatory creature and then he offers a prayer of thanks, Neytiri decides he is ready to become a warrior. To do so, he must form a tsaheylu with an ikran, a dragon-like creature living high above terra firma in the floating mountains. As they ascend a dangerous path to the ikran habitat, Neytiri notes that bonding with one is not like a horse. Ikran bond for life. The dire horse on the other hand bond with multiple Na'vi, allowing anyone to ride any horse. Interestingly while the queue physically bonds the same whether dire horse or ikran, the choice is different. The reason for the difference isn't adequately explained, but the two differ even though the Na'vi can bond with and ride both. Once they arrive the area is swarming with ikran. When Jake prepares to choose his ikran Neytiri tells him he must choose it in here, pointing to his chest. She also notes not to look it in the eye and, like the dire horse, the ikran must choose him. He responds by asking how he will know that it will accept him. She notes that it will try to kill him. Unlike the scene with the horse, the sign that indicates choice for the ikran is fairly obvious. The first two Jake approaches make noises at him, but ultimately fly away. The one he eventually bonds with stands its ground and challenges him. Jake wrestles the ikran, tying its mouth shut to avoid being bitten, and eventually secures the bond, which as Neytiri shouts must happen quickly. Jake initiates his bond with his first flight with the ikran. As with the dire horse, his initial bond does not go well as they plummet to the ground. The reason is clear. Jake remains afraid and cannot think fly. His behavior causes the ikran to cease flying. Unlike the dire horse, which still moved although awkwardly, the ikran fails to perform a task it should do effortlessly. However, the bond and the rider alter its Umwelt, which rather charitably indicates the dissolution of the boundary between

humanoid and nonhuman. It also indicates that Jake has to understand the ikran's Umwelt—what flying means—before the shared duo can succeed.

While the tsaheylu exhibits a type of posthumanism—one based on material and semiotic connection, meaning, and interspecies Umwelt—it rests firmly on a foundation of humanism. In fact, the entire film at best supports a posthumanism more akin to Hayles than Wolfe for three reasons: Na'vi consciousness serves as the primary driver of material bodies in the tsaheylu; the Na'vi initiate the tsaheylu; and consciousness can be transferred into a Na'vi permanently. Following Cartesian philosophy, the film separates mind and body through the language of driver and vehicle. Jake uses this language while in his human body to refer to his avatar, which while “unoccupied” remains in a sleep state. The metaphor persists as Jake must “think” fly or run to “start” his mounts. Moreover, his consciousness overrides or supplants the dire horse and ikran, evident in the dilating and contracting of their eyes at the moment Jake bonds with them. The framing of the eye in each instance lends further credence to the human consciousness supplanting the nonhuman as, per Haraway and Wolfe, the eye is the primary humanist metaphor—seeing is the primary human sense. The film concludes with eyes—Jake's avatar eyes. Eyes reveal the “who” in control of a body.

Also following Cartesian philosophy only the Na'vi initiate tsaheylu despite the many inhabitants of Pandora who have the physiological capacity to initiate a tsaheylu. Material capacity versus agency in the film mirrors the body versus mind arguments that still persist in Western culture. The type of ability (physical versus mental) is further problematic as the only creatures the Na'vi tsaheylu with seem to serve an instrumental purpose—transportation or strategic military advantage. If it were not for Neytiri's emotional outburst over losing her ikran, the dire horses and ikrans in the film could be vehicles. In fact, although ikran bond for life, Jake leaves his bonded partner to ride the toruk, a larger more menacing relative of the ikran. Bonding with the toruk helps Jake unite all the Na'vi clans because of the symbolic power of the toruk (the last Na'vi to bond with one united the land) and the military advantage it provides.

Jake eventually sets the toruk free—it served its purpose. Again, indicating the dragon-like inhabitants of Pandora may bond for life with their Na'vi but Jake does not bond for life with them.

Finally, at the conclusion of the film the Na'vi help Jake transfer his consciousness from his human body to his avatar. In the end, his acceptance into the Na'vi is both cultural and material. Again, the language in the film underscores the Cartesian privilege of the mind over body, as while recording his final video diary he notes his birthday celebration is about to commence. The transfer of his mind becomes his new birthday, and his video diary his last human activity. The Tree of Life, the Na'vi's deity, inexplicitly can initiate the transfer despite Jake's human body lacking a queue. On the one hand, the Tree of Souls exhibits many of the posthuman characteristics listed by Animal Studies scholars—for instance, it links Pandora via a neural network via assemblages and it perceives and produces signs. On the other hand, the Tree of Souls is a singular deity. Unlike Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome, the film clearly indicates that if the Tree of Souls is destroyed the neural network of the planet is destroyed. Put another way, following Cartesian philosophy the Tree of Souls is the brain and the rest of Pandora the body. Even its apparent neutrality is questionable. When Jake prays to the Tree of Souls prior to the final battle with the humans, Neytiri informs Jake the Tree of Souls is only concerned with balance. Her claim seems to hold as the Na'vi and their allies lose ground and are soon in a seemingly desperate position. At the moment the Tree of Souls comes under real threat suddenly hoards of nonhumanoids join the battle turning the tide. This turn of events demonstrates that the Tree of Souls is of primary importance (its loss alone disrupts balance) and that it practices self preservation (it is aware its loss disrupts the balance). While *Avatar* certainly presents important environmental and environmental justice arguments as well as moments for posthuman considerations there are many moments that ground the film squarely in a humanist paradigm. The fact that the film ends with eyes—human conscious driven eyes—scores this point.

Dreamworks, *How to Train Your Dragon*, tells the story of a boy and his companion, a dragon. The film begins on a small Viking island (Berk) constantly under assault by various types of dragons. Nightly the dragons raid the village stealing the Viking's food (sheep mostly) and burning their homes. The villagers all attempt to repel the dragons, killing them if possible. Hiccup, a scrawny young Viking teen, works in the armory sharpening weapons. It becomes quickly apparent he is stationed there because of his lack of physical strength and size. He feels like an outsider, which is justified considering how he is treated. Even worse, he is the chief's son. The chief, a powerful and physically imposing man who wrestles dragons with his bare hands, only exacerbates Hiccup's feelings of inadequacy. In the opening battle with the dragons, Hiccup brings out an invention of his, a bolo catapult, which he uses to fire on the deadly night fury, a dragon who is the spawn of "death and lightning." The night fury is so fast and feared no one has ever seen one. Hiccup's invention works, although no one believes him as there is no evidence—no body. Hiccup eventually stumbles onto the fallen dragon and begins a relationship with it, which serves as one of the primary plot lines.

Initially afraid of the dragon based on his experience and his culture's stories of dragons, Hiccup decides he should kill it—after all that is what his people do, kill dragons. However, he cannot kill it so he begins feeding it. While this is happening his father decides despite Hiccup's inadequate physical attributes the boy should learn how to kill dragons. Thus he is enrolled in the dragon academy where the village children (teens) learn how to kill dragons. The juxtaposition of these plot lines reveals an important theme in the film, inadequacy is contextual. Once thought of as pathetic, Hiccup becomes a minor celebrity in the village—all because he can repel dragons by seemingly approaching them. Of course, this is not true. What Hiccup learns while feeding and caring for the night fury, which he names Toothless because on first glance the dragon appeared to have no teeth (they retract), is dragon Umwelt. His education is riddled with folly, and much of his intent backfires because the consequences of his actions produce unintended meanings. For example, early in feeding Toothless, Hiccup brings a

large thatch container of fish; however, instead of devouring the fish Toothless recoils and emits defensive sounds. Upon examination Hiccup discovers there is a smoked eel in with the fish, which is the source of Toothless's unhappiness. Hiccup uses this knowledge to appear able to ward off a large and dangerous dragon in training class by keeping an eel inside his jacket. The dragon could smell and see the eel, causing it to return to its pen. Frequently Hiccup intends one thing but because of his lack of understanding dragon Umwelt the meaning shifts as the result of unintended consequence.

However, Hiccup is not alone in perceiving and producing signs. Toothless does as well. While sitting on the ground Hiccup grabs a stick and draws a picture of Toothless in the dirt. Unbeknownst to Hiccup Toothless is watching him. Suddenly Toothless disappears, only to return with a small tree in his mouth. He looks at Hiccup and then drags one end of the tree around the dirt. Hiccup looks at the seemingly abstract collection of squiggles and while stepping back his foot covers one of the lines. Toothless quickly growls at him. Hiccup removes his foot from the line. Toothless stops growling. Hiccup intentionally steps on another line and Toothless growls again. Hiccup realizes he cannot step on the lines, but remains unsure why. He does not understand why they are significant to Toothless, but recognizes despite his lack of knowledge they are significant.

As his knowledge of dragons grows he claims all he knows about dragons from his Viking culture is wrong. Yet, this claim misses the mark. While it is true that the dragons are not mindless killing machines with fairly simple reactions to stimulus, much of what his ancestors have recorded is accurate in the right context. The Book of Dragons lists dragons by name, offensive weapons, and weakness. The information remains quite accurate. Certain dragons can only cast a certain number of fireballs before they must recharge, while others have a weakness to sunlight. Yet this information, like Hiccup's claim about his knowledge, only provides a portion of the rich world of dragons based on the context from which they are perceived. The implication of the film is that the title *How to Train Your Dragon* also provides

only a portion of the story. Hiccup is also trained by the dragon as it also produces signs which have consequences. Also, the possessive “your” also misleads as the dragons choose their riders—in fact, the dragons have far more autonomy than the ikran they often disregard their rider’s wishes.

The bond formed between humans and dragons in the film takes time, understanding, and care. Yet, the bond between Hiccup and Toothless not only results from these factors, but also from Toothless’s dependence on Hiccup. While caring for the dragon Hiccup learns Toothless has a serious injury as he is missing one of his tail flaps. Without it he is unable to fly. Hiccup uses his interest in building to create an artificial flap for the dragon; however, the flap requires dynamic movement. In a rather humorous scene of trial and error, Hiccup discovers he must ride the dragon because he has to control the flap (he shifts it with his foot like shifting gears on a motorcycle). Their practice flights require Hiccup and Toothless to understand and trust each other. Similar to Jake and his ikran, once Hiccup and Toothless successfully fly together their bond cements. The connection between them is more than emotional; however, it is physical as well. Hiccup becomes a part of the dragon’s sensory system, acting as the synapses and muscle that shifts the flap allowing the dragon a variety of flight options. They form an assemblage where human and nonhuman collide. Hiccup learns “to fly” and soon anticipates the dragon’s movements based on environmental features such as the wind or obstacles like rock spires. Moreover, unlike the other dragon mounts in the film, Toothless cannot fly without his rider. He cannot leave the island without Hiccup’s assistance. Hiccup also becomes reliant on Toothless as his new found dragon knowledge elevates his status in his community and, more importantly, helps transform the culture. By the end of the film dragons are no longer threats to Viking culture, they are companions that become part of the community. They live with the Vikings and participate in hunts and other community activities.

The community’s transition from dragon killing to dragon riding, however, is not smooth. Hiccup’s growing understanding of dragons teaches him that dragons are as not as universal in

behavior or as fearful as his ancestors believed. Yet, as he learns dragons and humans can peacefully co-exist his father sees the new information as a means to efficiently eliminate dragons. That is, even when presented with identical information about dragon behavior Hiccup and his father come to different conclusions on its meaning. This portion of the plot reinforces the type of cultural assumptions that circulate in animal themed arts. Hiccup as a youth sees the potential for more ethical relations with nonhumans, while his father remains unable to see such potential because of his unwillingness to detour from his culture's past. As with the youth in *Winged Migration*, one of the implications of Hiccup's narrative is that change is necessary and only the youth can see and eventually enact change. While a common trope in wildlife centered films, it does indicate movement—i.e. staying the course doesn't work—and that meaning does shift in time. The film does adhere to other, less posthuman, tropes. For example, the dragons share physical or behavioral characteristics with their riders. The heavy set youth rides a rather unattractive dragon that also appears rotund and sluggish. Like its rider, it is sluggish and awkward. The Viking twins ride a two headed dragon, which the heads perform different actions (one spits a gas that the other lights). Hiccup's eventual love interest is a ferocious fighter and a beautiful girl. Her dragon also is attractive (according to other humans) and quite deadly. Finally, Hiccup's primary nemesis, a brash and arrogant youth who constantly pokes fun at Hiccup, rides a large menacing dragon that engulfs itself in flames.

Although problematic, the way in which the characters bond with their companion dragons works far better than in *Avatar* for two significant reasons. First, the bond in *How to Train Your Dragon* requires time and understanding. There is a lot of give and take. The characters learn and chronicle (i.e. revise the Book of Dragons) the Umwelt of the varied types of dragons. This knowledge reveals that different dragons require different approaches. There is not one way to interact with a dragon. While they certainly share commonalities (fear of eels) they also have many differences. *Avatar* indicates that neurologically all living beings are very similar. As long as there is a queue there can be a connection. Also, the give and take so



important in Hiccup's relationship with Toothless is not present between Jake and his ikran. In fact, how the initial bond happens in *Avatar* could not be a starker contrast to *How to Train Your Dragon*. Jake assaults the ikran in a very violent scene. He attempts to physically and then neurologically subdue the ikran—to bend its will to him. Similar to Western scenes of breaking horses, the ikran eventually concedes, but Jake's success requires little or no knowledge of the ikran, only the overriding force of his will. The violence and subsequent subduing of the ikran eerily follow many of the critiques of the ethical treatment of animals by humans.

However, it is not only how they learn to ride their respective companions, but also why. In *Avatar* the reason is primarily cultural. Riding an ikran is a rite of passage where Na'vi (seemingly all males save Neytiri) become warriors. Similar in many respects to Western rite of passage rituals in hunting communities, Jake must pit himself against nature and come out on top. Although Jake does kill the ikran, if his neural system overrides the ikran's he it is now an empty vessel. That is, empty until he detaches his queue. In this respect the ikran become material metaphors, symbols of the rider's masculinity (acceptance into the warrior clan). Yet, the reason is also instrumental. As noted, the Na'vi use the ikran as transportation and for improving their hunting. The relationship between Na'vi and ikran hangs heavily out of balance. How the ikran benefit from the relationship does not materialize. Unlike Jake, Hiccup learns to ride Toothless out of compassion. He realizes his actions grounded Toothless, leaving him more vulnerable to predators. His plan to devise a tail wing for Toothless also requires a lot of trial and error as well as studying of dragon physiology. Unlike Jake, he does not attempt to subdue Toothless, rather he learns how to approach him and gain his trust. Like the Na'vi, the dragons on the island eventually become part of the culture (they open a dragon riding academy in the subsequent television series and include dragons in their cultural celebrations), Hiccup does not start from the premise that the dragon will benefit him culturally, nor does he let deterministic formulations guide his understanding. *Avatar*, however, employs a rather static and deterministic relationship between the Na'vi and the ikrans.

Comparing the films helps identify crucial differences between Wolfe's posthumanist posthumanism (*How to Train Your Dragon*) and posthumanist humanism (*Avatar*) through their treatment of Umwelt and meaning consequentialism, which dispels some of the problems posed by humanism by expanding what constitutes response and meaning. According to one of the central premises of meaning consequentialism meaning propagates—an point especially important when considering portrayals or use of animals in the arts. More specifically, what are the consequences/meanings of texts that include nonhuman characters? In the case of *Avatar* and *How to Train Your Dragon* the consequences might not be as evident as both films do not have real world counterparts. While generally the films might complicate or reinforce current dialogues about nonhuman animals, they might also be dismissed as not having any real impact on a particular real species of nonhumans. The following chapter not only attempts this, but also focuses on a particular species currently at risk; sharks.

## Chapter 4

### Is it Safe to Go into the Water?

#### The Intersection of Ethics, Politics, and the Arts in Human and Nonhuman Relationships

The ethical imperative concerning aesthetics, art, and animals is best exemplified by the representation and commodification of animals deemed “man eaters” who remain vilified and feared by humans, and yet celebrated because people respect them based on notions of power, usually infused with a sense of masculinity and violence.<sup>157</sup> These often displaced, destroyed, or disregarded animals demonstrate the more apparent and material semiotic consequences of human artistic representations and commodification of nonhuman animals. Humans employ a hierarchy of value for nonhuman animals, often based on anthropomorphic or aesthetic preferences, which are justified through economics, myths, and aesthetics (especially those grandiose in size or appearance or similar to Western aesthetic preferences like musculature and stature). Anthropomorphic aesthetic preference ensures that as Joy Williams notes we “Save the Whales, Screw the Shrimp,” thereby engendering a culture where anthropomorphism certainly benefits the attention to and advocacy for certain animals, like dolphins, and ignores others, like rats. The preferential treatment of some animals at the expense of others not only exists in the arts, but also in the sciences. In both cases the material consequences often become that treatment of one animal differs wildly from another. Because of the human dog companionship mistreatment of a dog remains deplorable, while the mistreatment of a rat, a pest, understandable. In fact the term mistreatment in this paradigm is contextual in that its meaning not only depends on the situation, but also the animal and its anthropomorphic, aesthetic, and cultural connection to humans.<sup>158</sup>

The complex relationship between how humans perceive and value animals remains difficult because of the competing narratives such as historical, philosophical, and political means of situating “the Animal” in Western culture. For instance, in Western culture a

paradoxical relationship exists between the valuation and devaluation of the animals termed “man eaters.” The common trope plays on the fragility of humans (usually as a result of acclimatizing to urban life where urban means emasculated) and the physical and mental challenges required to regain/strengthen themselves. Therefore, most often these animals serve as a reminder of the savagery and power of nature, or as a test of rugged frontier masculinity dulled by urban life. In fact, the popularity of “man eaters” has spawned a multitude of television programs like “When Animals Attack,” “World’s Most Dangerous Animals” and “Dangerous Encounters;” and films (both fictional and documentary) like *Shark Night*, *The Edge*, and *Lake Placid*; and literature (fiction and creative nonfiction) like *White Shark*, *Close to Shore*, and *Into the Grizzly Maze*. Even television programs like “Crocodile Hunter,” which attempts to incorporate more scientific knowledge than shows like “Animals Gone Wild” appeals to viewers who anticipate *The Crocodile Hunter’s* host, Steve Irwin, being bitten.<sup>159</sup> Part of the appeal stems from the fairly common human vs. animal theme that exists in the arts, while another part of the appeal stems from the desire, whether philosophical or metaphysical, to categorize animal behavior while separating it from human behavior—a seeming rejoinder that at their base level animals are wild, whereby wild means savage and unpredictable. Cynthia Chris provides an overview of the proliferation of what she deems “New Sensationalism” or “Fang TV” during the 1990s. During this period viewership gravitated toward “programs featuring top predators such as sharks, tigers, crocodiles, and grizzly bears, [viewers were] fascinated by the “violent natures” of the most spectacularly “fanged and clawed” species.”<sup>160</sup> While two decades later than the film *Jaws*, the relationship between the success of the film and the interest in predator “documentaries” is apparent as the film remains the comparative for violent and predatory animals. For instance, in a review of *The Trials of Life*, an early example of “Fang TV” “a New Yorker column described [it] as “a cross between ‘Jaws’ and ‘9-1/2 Weeks.’”<sup>161</sup> Moreover, similar to the plot in *Jaws*, Chris argues that the overarching theme of “Fang TV” is that “animals are barely containable threats to human safety, driven by instinct

toward vicious and seemingly random attacks; the coexistence of animal and human life is rendered as perpetual, life-threatening tension.”<sup>162</sup> The imperative for containment bolsters the humanist separation of humans and nonhumans or nature and culture. The fear of “white death,” or the jaws below demonstrates the fear of the tenuous boundaries erected via humanist ideology. The vision of the shark in films like *Jaws* parallels arguments of sublime nature because, as with the humbling encounter with a mountain the white shark is cast as both beautiful and terrifying because of its evolutionary “perfection” in its environment. Aesthetically, the sublime persists in regards to sharks, Western culture perceives them as sleek, powerful, explosive, and fearless. Their form influences design whether for aerodynamics (in automobiles and swimming apparel) or for sporty sex appeal (see the Hyundai Tiburon). Despite this, their size, jaws, and exceptional predatory skills terrify humans. An aesthetic of the sublime serves to provide both fascination and fear of animals deemed man eaters.

Popular culture has rehabilitated the image of some of these animals (like grizzly bears and orcas) through films (like *Brother Bear* or *Free Willy*) that highlight the close relationship between a human (or humans) and these nonhumans. Similar to the discussion of the opening scene of *Winged Migration*, the one of the common tropes in animal films is the connection between children and animals.<sup>163</sup> Because of their innocence and curiosity, children demonstrate the severed connection between adult humans and nonhuman animals. That is, the children remind the adults why animals are worth consideration, and per the trope of the wildlife film genre, worth saving. Films about Grizzlies, and Orcas certainly have examples of this trope. In said films, the image of the man eater, the beast out there, is rehabilitated via the connection between child and animal. Perceptions of sharks, however, have not received the same type of rehabilitation. There isn’t a Shamoo or Ben for sharks primarily because sharks are considered mindless machines, and sharks like the white shark don’t adapt well to containment. Also, sharks are still under the shadow of *Jaws*, which placed white sharks in a complex representation of a horrific, yet captivating, primal apex predator. In *The Devil’s Teeth*,

journalist Susan Casey argues that humans paradoxically revere and revile sharks because they “elicit a kind of universal awe—and not just because of their ability to snack on us. Grizzly bears can devour people with equal proficiency, and while they certainly command a healthy respect, it’s nothing like our primal response to seeing that black flag sheering the water.”<sup>164</sup> The fear incurred from the sight of a shark, like the horror genre, helps their marketability, albeit in potentially harmful ways.

As indicated, the seminal and most consequential representation of the Great White shark that contributes to most ideas about and the negative perception of all sharks is Steven Spielberg’s *Jaws*, based upon Peter Benchley’s novel of the same name. Benchley has denied the material consequences of his film for real sharks, noting “*Jaws*” was “entirely fiction.”<sup>165</sup> However, he does recognize that when he wrote *Jaws* his lack of knowledge about sharks contributes to objections to the film by shark advocates (of which he became one). His recognition of the inadequacy of authenticity surrounding the shark’s behavior lead him to state “Knowing what I know now, I could never write that book today, [...]Sharks don’t target human beings, and they certainly don’t hold grudges.”<sup>166</sup> He attributes the hysteria to hyperbole and the inability for readers to detach the world of fiction from reality. His wife, Wendy, emphasized this point noting that “Peter kept telling people the book was fiction, it was a novel, and that he took no more responsibility for the fear of sharks than Mario Puzo took responsibility for the Mafia.”<sup>167</sup>

However, *Jaws* did have dire consequences for many sharks because as renowned shark research Jack Musick discovered “after the movie *Jaws* appeared in the mid-1970s, in the United States the recreational fishery for sharks exploded. Tournaments proliferated as dauntless anglers strove to land the largest shark and amass the greatest cumulative shark poundage per day. After being photographed with their catches and perhaps removing the jaws as trophies, the fishers left the carcasses to rot.”<sup>168</sup> The impact *Jaws* had on Western

audiences, and consequently beachgoers, would be hard to overestimate. Dean Crawford goes as far as to say that:

in terms of sensationalism and destruction of species, nothing rivals *Jaws* [...] the Spielberg movie terrorized many millions more [than the book] from the Summer of 1975. [...] *Jaws* touched a nerve, evoking deeper fears and inciting an extraordinary response. It is no exaggeration to say *Jaws* launched a thousand ships, or at least a thousand charter fishing ships, all of them gunning (sometimes literally) for great white sharks. Shark-fishing tournaments sprang up. Charter boat captains like Frank Mundus, the model for Quint, saw their bookings explode. [...] The inspiration to catch great white sharks—whether a morbid fascination or a desire to assert mastery—took the form of catching, killing and then being photographed besides the open mouths of huge sharks, not viewing them in the wild.<sup>169</sup>

The overwhelming evidence from scholars like Crawford support Stacy Alaimo's argument in "Discomforting Creatures: Monstrous Natures in Recent Films" that "representations have material consequences" because of how horror films "wrangle in messy but piercing ways with fundamental issues of green philosophy and politics," "shape contemporary responses to environmentalism," and have "cultural potency."<sup>170</sup> Discursive actions or "performances" have material consequences, as the "performance" spills from the stage, screen, or gallery into venues where people react violently to any subversion of culturally constructed normativity. Benchley would disregard this argument, but the growing evidence indicates otherwise. While he dismisses his role in the shark hysteria (like tournament fishing) his subsequent marine animal fictional stories followed the same formula. *Beast*,<sup>171</sup> with a giant squid, and *White Shark*, with a human/shark hybrid, relied on the man versus animal motif in *Jaws*. However, in 2001 Benchley wrote *Shark Trouble*, a nonfiction look at sharks and ocean ecology. Two nonfiction texts about sharks followed. Benchley defended shark populations and highlighted the well engrained misperceptions. For example, in a piece titled "Misunderstood Monsters" Benchley states "My research for the book [*Jaws*] was thorough and good, for the time. I read papers, watched all the documentaries, talked to all the experts. I realize now, though, that I was very much a prisoner of traditional conceptions. And misconceptions."<sup>172</sup> Despite his denial of the material connections between his book, the film, and real sharks, he notes central problem of the film. The white shark, "Jaws," is rather unambiguously a villain. Benchley

realizes this problem when he states “the shark in an updated *Jaws* could not be the villain; it would have to be written as the victim, for, worldwide, sharks are much more the oppressed than the oppressors. Every year, more than a hundred million sharks are slaughtered by man. It has been estimated that for every human life taken by a shark, 4.5 million sharks are killed by humans. And rarely for a useful purpose.”<sup>173</sup> His implication is clear, categorized as villain, mass shark killings are justified.

The dominant cultural image of shark as villain relies on an aesthetic of singularity—focusing solely on the shark as predator of humans. The film contains many iconic images that all invoke death, including the gaping jaws of the white shark breaching the ocean surface and an unforgettable theme song that emphasizes the terror from below. The overarching narrative fits neatly in the monster movie genre, a nonhuman creature threatens humanity (even in this microcosm of Amity Island). In order to save humanity the creature must be destroyed. Alaimo argues that these films generally conclude with “humanity” (a rigid category of exclusion) reaffirmed through “vertical semiotics, signaling that humans are free to float above the nature of the beast.”<sup>174</sup> The final sequence of *Jaws* does, on the one hand, bolster her claim as the humans remain floating on the ocean while the monster sinks back in to the dark depths of the sea. The vertical hierarchy is also clear throughout the film as frequently the “creature” peers up at the human “victims.” The shark disrupts the hierarchical distinctions, however, by moving freely from bottom to top in an environment where it excels. This disruption of the vertical hierarchy terrifies humans by demonstrating how easily sharks propel themselves through it—especially because in this environment humans do not afford the same fluidity of movement. Thus, in many respects the hierarchy in this example is reversed. Sharks should prevail. Killing the shark then becomes the sole vision of humans remaining on top, signaling their place above the beast (this singularity of vision is, of course, the primary problem with films like *Jaws*).

On the other hand, rather than implying ascendance, the scene could indicate repression—pushing the monster back into the abyss, leaving the impression that the terror



could resurface (and does...four more times). The human does not move, but rather fights off the ascension of “monsters” who jeopardize human superiority. For example, in the film Brody tries to reach high ground by ascending the ship’s mast. The futility of his action, the ship is rapidly sinking, echoes the inability to overcome his “animality,” his inability to ascend out of the shared environment (he cannot escape from whence life originated, the sea). In the end, he can only float at the surface. In this respect the horror of the “possible” (i.e. a shark attack) becomes a phantom, a reminder much like the specter of “The Animal” in Berger and Lippit. *Jaws*, unlike Berger and Lippit, flips the ghost of a wild and primal animal, an animal that man shared proximity with, by crafting a villain so evil that it cannot be the lament of loss of innocence or an early time (which for both Berger and Lippit is a better time). Rather than starting with a dream, as the animal does for Berger, *Jaws* starts and ends with nightmare, one that continues to reverberate in contemporary representations of white sharks. In *Horror Films of the 1970s* John Muir argues that “*Jaws* is successful because it plays on the primeval fears of the ‘other,’ the creature we don’t understand. That horror is doubled because the battle is waged in a territory that is also unfamiliar, dangerous, and to be feared.”<sup>175</sup> *Jaws* becomes the quintessential “other” for all sharks as his primeval presence<sup>176</sup> is pushed below into the recesses of Western movie goers imaginations readily surfacing with the first image of a fin breaking the ocean horizon—a significant problem considering that the antagonist, while certainly highly fictionalized, isn’t an atomic by product or hybrid creation. *Jaws*, unlike many other horror movies, attempts to include a fairly accurate white shark. The film employed a shark expert, who helped craft the shark’s appearance and behavior. Yet, the shark in *Jaws* is wholly other “[...] because, in the final analysis, it works on a subconscious, mythological level. There is little doubt that the shark in the film is smarter than any animal has the right to be. It outthinks Hooper and Quint during the climatic battle, and is one tough critter. Throughout the film there is the very understated notion that the shark is a monster beyond biology. This shark,

a creature that turns and attacks when threatened, is, like Michael Myers in the *Halloween* saga, a symbol of pure evil. It isn't just hunger that drives this monster.<sup>177</sup>

Yet, Lev argues the film works on a much simpler level. He states, “*Jaws* is the perfect escapist entertainment, and any attempt to read too deeply into it wouldn't be fruitful. The film works because people are scared of sharks” and has a “great villain”<sup>178</sup> Certainly prior to the film people were aware of the potential of shark attacks, and the 1916 attacks along the Jersey Shore and in the Matawn Creek created a national panic—President Wilson even weighed in on the “shark epidemic”<sup>179</sup> The fear of sharks, however, wasn't as amplified, nor as specifically framed as a conflict between humans and sharks. The shark hysteria surrounding the 1916 shark attacks subsided as Americans dealt with the depression and war. Despite Lev's simplification of the film, analyzing the specific themes in it and the central conflict between man and animal remain important because as Alaimo argues these films have material consequences, which traditionally follow the protagonists' solution—kill the shark, even when they realize they “need a bigger boat.” In fact, Lev recognizes the resounding problem of the film, a problem for both Environmental and Animal Studies, “[...] suggest[s] that society's malaise can be solved by simple responses to physical threats.”<sup>180</sup> In this paradigm, physical threats to society are loosely defined through an economic matrix driven by Western capitalism. In order to restore profitability, the shark must die, a sentiment the mayor and councilmen in the film adamantly endorse. The material-semiotic intersections extend, however, as under this paradigm the justified elimination of sharks results in a better human world. Yet, the complex relationship between material-semiotics and meaning and consequence is neither singular in time, nor in its relationships between the assumed parties. Scholars have begun to assemble a lot of data that supports ocean health with sharks. The loss of sharks to an ocean's ecosystem has immediate and long term effects. Humans cannot “think like the ocean” in this respect.<sup>181</sup> Some shark species, like white sharks, have long sexual maturity phases and few offspring. Drastic changes in shark populations can have a boomerang effect for humans as the ocean

ecosystem changes with the loss of sharks as predators. And yet, rather than recognizing the ecological and long-term importance of sharks to humans from an anthropocentric perspective, sharks are primarily important as entertainment or as commodities. In both instances, the primary reason rests on the instance that humans and sharks remain in conflict. The hero must destroy the villain.

In *Jaws*, this conflict is central to the plot and stems from two central ideas that have less than positive consequences for thinking about white sharks (and sharks generally because of the shadow of the film's antagonist). First, a gigantic rogue shark endangers the profitability of a small tourist dependent beach town—animal stands in the way of commercialism. The rogue shark, according to David Ingram, in the film conflates entertainment at the expense of knowledge about white sharks because “[...]the idea that sharks claim small coastal areas as personal territory has been challenged by new research which suggests that they roam over large areas.”<sup>182</sup> The claim to territory helps sell the man vs. animal/nature conflict, despite its questionable veracity. But, the lack of shark knowledge is not the only problem with this idea central to the film's plot. One problem is in this scenario the film is less about a shark, and more a critique of capitalism, whereby the shark is a stock character opposing human hubris.<sup>183</sup> Another problem is the primacy of human interest over the shark—that is, human activity (and, more importantly for the film, economy) supersedes the shark's part in the ecosystem. The ideology in the film contains a strong anthropocentrism. However, Lev argues

[*Jaws*] is a film of some complexity, a film whose pleasure is not entirely an operation of transparent ideology. Consider, for example, the following quote from Spielberg: ‘...the third act was basically a man-against-beast tale. It could be called a celebration of man's constant triumph over nature—not necessarily for the good.’ [Lev argues the film contains] “an ecological awareness which, indeed colors the entire film.”<sup>184</sup>

Lev argues that Spielberg's statement indicates audiences should view the shark more sympathetically as the mayor and his cronies are acting out of greed. More specifically, they are ignoring ecology for short term economic gains. The triumph of “man over beast” in this sense is “not necessarily for the good” because of the collateral damage (both material and

psychological) that results from not shutting the beach. However, there is an irony in Spielberg's statement in that the same could be said about the film. The triumph of *Jaws* over movie goers has been "not necessarily for the good" of living sharks. The narrative, characters, dialogue, pacing, and shots make it difficult the shark should be viewed sympathetically; however, the film did inspire more funding for shark research and a new generation of shark scholars, and engender a newfound fascination with white sharks for laypeople. However, as mentioned, even the more benign interest in sharks, like eco-tourism, is linked to shark attacks on humans, thereby reinforcing the *Jaws* mystique.

The second idea central to the plot of the film is that the shark gains a taste for humans—man versus animal for survival. This motif relies on a distorted sense of masculinity, lack of shark knowledge, and the apparent "realism" of the "encounter." Scholars like Ingram argue that *Jaws* contains an inherent masculine narrative whereby the first victim adheres to the fairly typical horror trope of a promiscuous teenaged female who the monster assaults—a comment on the masculine voyeuristic gaze and aggressive predatory behavior of males (the shark is a male—Bruce). It is little surprise when the deaths lead boats full of men posturing for the most knowledgeable and capable of killing the shark. The three main male characters, Brody, Hooper, and Quint frequently bicker, with Hooper and Quint vying for alpha male status—one based on knowledge the other on experience, further supports readings like Ingram's. However, not only does the narrative reflect the masculine overtones of the film, but so does the choices made by Spielberg as the shark consultant of the film noted that a shark the size of "Bruce" would be a female, not a male (as female white sharks are larger). Spielberg wanted a male shark, hence "Bruce" was "born." Masculinity, therefore, becomes deeply intertwined with the ominous fin—erect, breaching the surface—and the jaws—the power to take life and emblematic of being an apex predator.

The title, *Jaws*, became doubly troubling for shark populations as shark jaws emblematic of one of the more memorable lines in the film where Hooper indicates "what we are

dealing with here is a perfect engine, an eating machine. It's really a miracle of evolution. All this machine does is swim and eat and make little sharks, and that's all."<sup>185</sup> The jaws of such an apex predator became a demanded commodity for trophy hunters. The jaws of the Great White shark represent a double death—the potential for death of both humans who venture into shark waters, and the potential death of the species itself from paranoia and commercialism. In fact, on the “Making of *Jaws*” feature contained on the *Jaws* dvd, Peter Benchley states that while struggling to title the novel he and his editor agreed “the only word we even think means anything, that says anything is *Jaws*, call the book *Jaws*.”<sup>186</sup> In order to alleviate the perception, and reality of the double death of the jaws/*Jaws*, people must recognize that the exacerbation of the shark hysteria post *Jaws* stems from several important ideas.

First, people must recognize the vast diversity in sharks. For instance scholars have identified

over 460 known species of sharks, ranging in size from the gigantic whale shark to the miniature dwarf shark, and they come in all manner of shapes, each adapted to its own peculiar niche in the sea. There are, for instance, flat-packed angelsharks that hug the sea bed, torpedo-bodied blue sharks that wander the open ocean, weird-looking goblin sharks with long, pointed snouts that dwell in the deep sea, eel-shaped frilled sharks, wobbegongs that resemble seaweed-encrusted rocks, highly-maneuvrable (sic) hammerheads with bizarre-shaped heads, megamouths with cavernous mouths and thick lips, deep-sea sharks that glow in the dark and thresher sharks with amazingly long scythe-shaped tails.<sup>187</sup>

Regarding the behaviors and actions of all sharks as those of white sharks (more importantly a fictional white shark) ignores the diversity in the shark kingdom. Also, the flattening of sharks to Shark often leads to an over-exaggerated self preservation argument—kill or be killed, a self-fulfilling prophesy. A significant amount of data indicates the how erroneous this argument is, yet it still persists. The singular vision of sharks also becomes a justification for commercial killing of sharks. In an interview in the film *Shark Water* (which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter) William Goh, the managing director of Rabbit Brand Shark Fin implies that the finning is a service to mankind because sharks are “very vicious”. Also, shark hunter Vic Hislop argues that he has saved countless lives by killing sharks.<sup>188</sup> This type of argument is not only

reductive in scope, but also is singular in its aesthetic approach. Sharks are reduced to jaws/Jaws. The bite, death, the material reality of their feeding becomes a semiotic singularity of their character. The vast number of images and film/episode titles illustrate the focus on jaws and death.

Second, as Xavier Maniguet claims, “our modern society is in the end less well equipped to separate myth from facts with regard to a film like *Jaws* than was the society of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with regard to the novel *Moby Dick*.”<sup>189</sup> Maniguet argues, similar to Berger, that humans are “no longer close to nature,” and therefore, are unable to encounter real sharks versus their fictionalized counterparts. That is, whalers, who encountered whales often knew “that whales could kill their hunters” but that they did not “devour a man deliberately.” Maniguet’s argument supports the problem with a Baudrillardian approach to nature, the simulated/fictionalized shark becomes the reality. It also supports the argument that more research needs to be done, and disseminated about sharks. A significant portion of the problem of how sharks are perceived is how little humans know about them. In fact, until the shark attacks along the Jersey Shore in 1916 very little shark research was done in the United States. While unfortunate for both sharks and the victims of the attacks, the one positive consequence of both the 1916 attacks and the popularity of the film *Jaws*, is the increase in shark research.

As mentioned, shark related films, literature, and art is no exception to the aforementioned problem of entertainment being superior to information (accurate). As mentioned, both Mitmann and Chris have documented the wildlife film industry’s forgoing of educational films for entertaining ones. *Jaws* (both the film and the novel) suffered from a propensity to entertain at the expense of informing. In fact, both the film and the novel eschew the types of explanatory passages in the creative non-fiction account of the 1916 attacks (from which *Jaws* is based) titled *Close to Shore*. However, that isn’t to say that the film or the novel was purely fictional. Both relied on expert knowledge. Spielberg employed a shark expert to consult on shark attacks, and, therefore, many scholars agree much of the attack sequences

and some of the trivia Hooper and Quint provide is accurate. Yet other information, like the rogue shark theory, singularity of biological and predatory drives, as well as, the over whelming focus the film's antagonist has on humans (the desire for human flesh) amounts to misinformation and misrepresentation from a desire to entertain, rather than to inform. That is, the white shark does rise from the depths, using its camouflage to surprise prey. Also, the white shark does attack close to shore, and does attack humans. The problem with the veracity of the shark related aspects of the film remains its singularity. That is, pseudo-scientist Hooper and pseudo-ordinary expert Quint disseminate false information about Great White sharks biology, behavior, and environments. The film demonstrates that even post 1916 humans knew very little about sharks. The "shark expert" Hooper and the experience shark hunter Quinn flatten the biological and behavioral aspects of the shark. As mentioned, Hooper reduces the shark to biological determinism via an aesthetic of singularity. All *Jaws* does is eat and breed. Such exclusionary language persists in Western views of white sharks. Moreover, the flattening by both characters had other consequences as for the Western mind this view of *Jaws* not only informed views on white sharks, but eventually all sharks. However, Hooper and Quinn are not the only aspects of the film that lead to flattening how sharks are perceived. The aesthetic shots in the film coupled with the lack of perceptual diversity in the shark (which has numerous sophisticated sensory systems that help them find prey) also contribute to the singular vision of sharks.

The ethical and political imperative of rethinking sharks post *Jaws* remains an enormous task. The film is of the most iconic American movies, making AFI's 2<sup>nd</sup> greatest "thrilling American film"<sup>190</sup> and their 56<sup>th</sup> greatest movie of all time.<sup>191</sup> The film spawned a franchise of three other films and a Universal Studio Orlando amusement ride<sup>192</sup> and remains the most popular cultural works where a shark has a significant role. Yet, there are other popular films and texts also contribute to the image of sharks. A close analysis of these other representations reveals a contradictory representation of sharks that oscillates between more

complex representations and problematic ones. Moreover, many of these works contain contradictory representations themselves, thereby both undermining and bolstering more fully developed aesthetic and ethical approaches to sharks. The significance of these works, however, is that at least they attempt to erode the singular vision that resonates in Western Culture from *Jaws*. For instance, in the classic Hemingway text *The Old Man and the Sea* the protagonist not only recognizes the differences between species of sharks but also wrestles with the ethical implications of killing fish (both a shark and a swordfish). Santiago raises a crucial question for the relationships between human and nonhuman animals when he asks himself:

[...]he thought much and kept on thinking about sin. You did not only kill the fish to keep alive and to sell for food, he thought. You killed him for pride and because you were a fisherman. You loved him when he was alive and you loved him after. If you love him, it is not a sin to kill him. Or is it more?<sup>193</sup>

Santiago wrestles not only the act of killing the fish, but also with his rationalizations for doing so. An issues that becomes more apparent when the fish he loves, even in death, is slowly devoured before he can return to shore. He is left wondering if it isn't a greater sin to have killed something he loves—especially when the act of killing is more about his sense of being—his pride, his love—not his survival.

It isn't that sharks are not without more benign cultural representations or attempts to rehabilitate how they are perceived, especially post *Jaws*. As early as 1976 the popularity of sharks produced counter narratives to the singular vision firmly rooted in the consciousness of the majority of Westerners who saw *Jaws*. Hanna and Barbera created a children's cartoon titled "Jabberjaw" that first aired in September of 1976. The show followed the formula of one of their most popular creations "Scooby Doo, Where Are You?" "Jabberjaw" was overly hokey, and contained numerous problems for rethinking human and animal relationships as it overly anthropomorphized the title character, frequently presented him (per the Scooby Doo parallel), as a coward, and who spoke like Curly from the Three Stooges (thereby undermining his intelligence and regulating him to comedic effect). While the premise of the show and relied on



an anthropomorphized shark it contained some interesting moments that countered the *Jaws* inspired paranoia of the 1970s, and examining these moments could help rethink how humans perceive and represent sharks.<sup>194</sup> Moreover, the show aired shortly after the release of *Jaws*, thereby providing a good indicator of one of the immediate impacts of the popularity of the film—i.e. sharks were already being marketed toward consumers—in this case as product for young children and to parents who wonder, post *Jaws*, “is it safe to go into the water?” The better question, per the immediate popularity and commodification of sharks post *Jaws*, isn’t the safety concerns of humans from shark attacks, but rather the safety for sharks from human attacks. *Jabberjaw* illustrates this as the main character is far more in danger of being attacked by humans/human inventions than humans are of him attacking them. Also, the choice of the White shark for the companion animal so shortly after *Jaws* signals a strong response to the shark hysteria the horror film helped engender. For instance, the choice of the Great Dane (i.e. a dog) for the companion for the human characters in “Scooby Doo” is consistent with prevailing cultural attitudes toward and relationships with animals. The dog remains a preferred companion, and as Haraway has explained for fairly complicated and important historical, evolutionary, and cultural reasons. The choice of a White Shark to stand in place of the Great Dane not only challenges the portrayal of White sharks in *Jaws*, but also eschews the prevailing human preferences for sea “companions” during the 1960s and 1970s. That is, if “Jabberjaw” was to imitate the successful “Scooby Doo, Where Are You?” model the stand in for the Great Dane in a sea faring story would be the dolphin, thanks in large part to the popularity of Flipper. At this period of time, humans afforded both dogs and dolphins legal protection (whether these protections were enough is another matter), while as *Jabberjaw* states throughout the show (imitating Rodney Dangerfield) he “gets no respect,” a not so subtle comment on sharks generally especially in the wake of *Jaws*.<sup>195</sup> In the world of “Jabberjaw” the disrespect the shark experiences stems from a society where people live under the sea in pods that are policed by robots (“shark ejectors”) programmed primarily to prohibit shark/human interaction. Although

Jabberjaw refers to himself as “the most futuristic shark” he still experiences exclusion and persecution. Jabberjaw’s trials of persecution highlights the perception of sharks post *Jaws* that has such significant material consequences for sharks because even in a technologically advanced society a talking, air breathing, and erect walking shark is feared via deep seated perceptions of his species—it is important to note that the robots are shark ejectors, not White shark ejectors, lending credence to the claims scholars have made that *Jaws* has influenced the way *all sharks* are perceived. In order for Jabberjaw to “participate” without persecution he frequently must pass via cross species dressing in order to evade the robots, thereby allowing him to stay with his “companions.”<sup>196</sup> Through the title character’s experience with exclusion the prevailing message is the lack of shark “respect,” which stemming from the hysteria of *Jaws* could not only refer to cultural perceptions of sharks, but also the type of legal protection afforded to dogs (Scooby) and dolphins (Flipper) but not sharks.

The attempts to rehabilitate the white shark image shortly following *Jaws* failed to resonate, at least with adults, as until 1993 White sharks had no legal protection. California initiated White Shark protection in 1993, which was extended to all US coastal waters in 1997.<sup>197</sup> Since *Jaws* appeared on the silver screen white shark legislation to provide protection for White sharks includes:

South Africa (1991), Namibia (1993), the United States of America (1997), Australia (1998), Malta (2000) and New Zealand (2007). These conservation plans were not based on scientific evidence about the White Shark population, but mostly on the observed decline in the number of large sharks caught by fishermen. White Sharks have been listed on the Appendix II list of CITES in October 2004.<sup>198</sup>

Considering the wide distribution and variety of habitat, the number of countries who provide protections for white sharks remains woefully inadequate. Moreover, even in the aforementioned countries protection remains tenuous as occasional shark attacks continue to hamper the image of white sharks and lead to calls for repealing the laws. For example, well known Australian surfer Ben Linden was recently killed in a white shark attack, which has caused “Western Australia [ to call] on the federal government to lift a ban on hunting Great

Whites after the fifth death in its waters in a year.”<sup>199</sup> While regrettable and certainly difficult for friends and family members, surfers remain the most frequent targets for white shark attacks because, as numerous studies indicate, the silhouette of a surfer paddling on his/her board closely resembles the silhouette of two of white sharks’ favorite prey, lion seals and sea turtles. Despite overwhelming evidence of this correlation<sup>200</sup>, surfers continue to enter waters where white sharks, and their prey frequent. For instance, the image below demonstrates the similarities between the outlines of a lion seal, a sea turtle, and a surfer. The bio-semiotic field in shark attacks on humans relates directly to perceptual and environmental markers. The human paddling prone on a surfboard triggers the audio and visual markers White sharks associate with seals, their favorite prey. The overwhelming percentage of attacks that are not fatal indicate the attack, or do not result in loss of flesh demonstrate attacks are misidentification, and once the shark realizes this they stop their attack and leave.



Figure 4-1 Surfer and Seal Outline from Below<sup>201</sup>

The overwhelming problem, both in the majority of the portrayals of white sharks post *Jaws* directly relates to the absence of a more complex aesthetic—both how sharks perceive and are perceived by humans. More importantly a more complex aesthetic should illustrate the material and semiotic connections, as well as the historical, evolutionary, and ecological connections enmeshed in the relationships between sharks and humans.

Yet the ongoing fear of a shark attack demonstrates the singular and overwhelmingly powerful image of the shark, so entrenched in Western culture by the *jaws/Jaws*. However, *Jabberjaw* challenges image, per *jaws/Jaws*, of white sharks' insatiable hunger for human flesh. His jaws "jabber" rather than bite, a powerful rhetorical choice so immediately after *Jaws*. Interestingly, the shift from bite to jabber is a shift from materiality to language (a shift consistent with material/culture arguments). The futuristic shark, via a strong humanist paradigm, "evolves" or transcends the image of *Jaws* by becoming more human, blurring his animality. Yet despite the transformation, many of the humans and machines still identify him as a threat. That is, sharks are perceived so negatively that even a human like shark is still a "Shark" (a strong statement on sharks considering *Scooby* and other popular companion animated animals garner acceptance). Also, by shifting away from biting by adding jabber before jaw the show's creators clearly attempt to alleviate both parents' current fears, and children's potential future fears. This is a clear marketing ploy aware of the looming shadow of Spielberg's *Jaws*. However, sharks do bite. Disregarding the material reality and biological workings of white sharks hinders thinking in more ethical ways about white sharks. Yet, the rhetorical move of naming could be read as more about shifting the meaning of shark jaws from the singular human death machine, to a more multifaceted shark. This is a vision for the future well versed in the past. While *Jabberjaw* is not overly successful in providing a "new" vision of white sharks (it is far too silly, anthropomorphized, and disregards many material realities of white sharks) the animated show contains moments that resist the representation of the white shark found in *Jaws*.

*Jabberjaw* also deserves consideration because it was one of the early attempts to market white sharks to children post *Jaws*. The choices, benevolent vs. malevolent, jabbering vs. biting, and social vs. solitary are striking differences and important for the marketability of sharks—sharks marketable in areas other than the horror genre. The term, shark, entered the marketing world far before either the novel or the film *Jaws* appeared.<sup>202</sup> However, sharks as

toys, characters in films, and the primary focus of fiction and nonfiction, were sparse and their representations primarily focused on the grandiose vision of sharks as larger than life, or foils for humans. They were readily present in advertisements, photos, and paintings, not as toys or cartoons. For Westerners, sharks had yet to breach the surface of the imagination, and certainly for children. Yet, the shift in shark behavior in Jabberjaw faltered for later animated sharks as animated films lack a white shark central character (certainly who isn't just a villain), until Disney-Pixar's *Finding Nemo* and then DreamWork's *Shark Tale*.<sup>203</sup> Both films fill an important void as Jabberjaw ignores the main character as predator. That is, the show ignores that he eats, and, therefore, what he eats. *Finding Nemo* and *Shark Tale* explicitly address the gastronomic drive of sharks, and the fear of being a shark's prey. In fact, for *Shark Tale* Lenny's eating habits are central to the plot, and to the overall message—acceptance. In *Finding Nemo*, the sharks provide comic support, as well as the urge to resist biological determinism. As with Jabberjaw both films clearly reference *Jaws*. Bruce, the white shark attempting to forgo eating fish (meat) in *Shark Tale*, is also the name of the Spielberg animatronic shark used to film close up scenes in *Jaws* (that is, Bruce is *Jaws*). Moreover, in *Shark Tale*, Bruce (jr.) states he didn't know his father, a comical allusion to the Bruce in *Jaws*. A significant moment considering it is his father's shadow and the biological determinism (according to the claims of the film) that he attempts to overcome. The image of shark post *Jaws*, a mindless eating machine biologically determined to only kill and breed, becomes the central conflict for the Bruce and his cohorts (including a shark named Chum) in *Shark Tale*. This idea explicitly moves to the forefront as the sharks, similar to an addiction group, pledge that "I am a nice shark. Not a mindless eatin' machine. If I want to change this image, I must first change myself. Fish are friends. Not food."<sup>204</sup> The implications of the pledge are clear. Sharks do not have to eat fish. This is an addiction, something that given the proper support and work can be overcome. Yet the film pokes fun at this idea as well, as one of the sharks named Chum continues to "slip up." Aside from the scientific inaccuracies, the pledge contains an interesting moment for thinking about

sharks. On the one hand, following a humanist paradigm, it is the animal that must change (i.e. become more human/civilized), not the human (in this case fish and the other undersea creatures) who must change her/his singular vision of sharks. On the other hand, this well could be a very strong and decisive critique to the human audience. The unwillingness to see sharks in any other manner, despite evidence of their complex behaviors, means that the shark must change because humans are too arrogant, stubborn, or short sighted to do so. The overwhelming parallels to addiction and biological determinism indicate the former, humanist message probably prevails, whereby the message becomes overcoming biological drives/desires via reason and transcendence. This is not a narrative of acceptance—but of transformation from “base” desire, a strong vertical hierarchy with reason as its apex and material drives at its base.

The opposite is true in *Shark Tale* where one of the main characters, a white shark named Lenny, finds eating meat revolting. Unlike Bruce, Lenny isn't trying to suppress his desire to eat fish, he is trying to be accepted for NOT eating fish. For Bruce, not eating fish is something to aspire toward, for Lenny it is a source of ridicule. The overt message in *Shark Tale* emphasizes the pressures of normativity—veiled in biological determinism, eating fish is “natural.” More specifically, many have argued the film presents a hetero-masculine normativity whereby what you eat is connected to sexual preference.<sup>205</sup> The protagonists' attempts to avoid eating meat become a comment on his sexuality (ironic considering some believe shark fin soup invigorates male sexuality). Surprisingly, the message of accepting difference is delivered via a white shark, whose legendary appetite for flesh is both the source of human's fear and fascination of the species. While white sharks are almost solely carnivorous (they have eaten other types of food, but usually out of curiosity or mistake) a six foot nurse shark, also primarily carnivorous, is an example of “life imitating art.” “Florence” stopped eating meat after an operation to remove a rusty fish hook trapped in her mouth, which is visible in Figure 4-2.

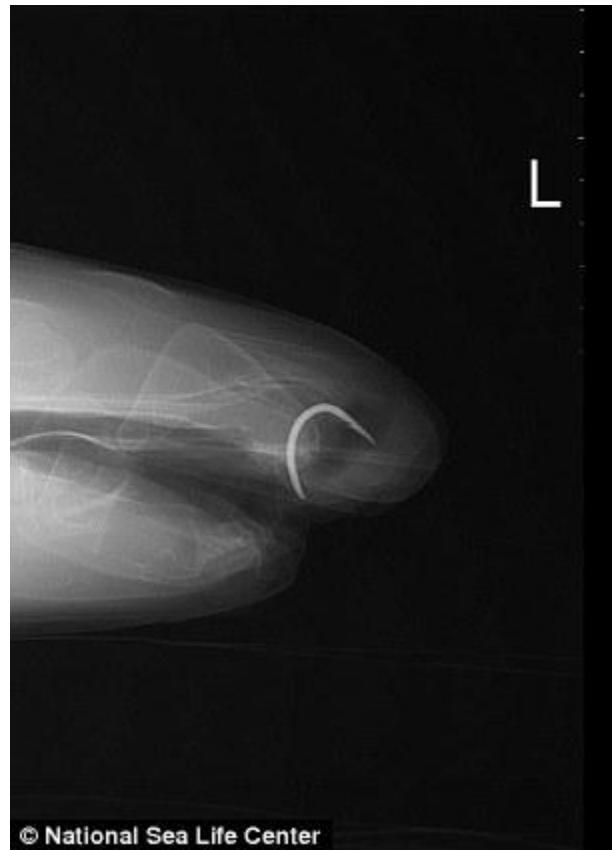


Figure 4-2 Florence X-ray

Similar to the ridicule the fictitious white shark, Lenny, Florence was subject to ridicule. While primarily a jest, Graham Burrows, the curator of the shark exhibit where Florence now resides, noted that “We just weren’t expecting her to go completely veggie. We wouldn’t want her to be an embarrassment to the other flesh-eating hammerheads and black-tipped reef sharks in the ocean tank.”<sup>206</sup> The pathetic fallacy aside, Burrows statement bolsters the vision of sharks as singularly an eating, and, more importantly, a killing machine. Scientifically, Florence is unique, both in her diet, and because she has “learned” to associate meat with the pain she suffered. However, like Lenny, her uniqueness is framed as more as a lack, a failure of species, than a positive transformative moment. Yet, Florence, like Lenny or Bruce, might inspire children to learn more about sharks just as *Jaws* did for a generation of adults.

And yet, because of the cultural resonance of *Jaws* even playful and seemingly harmless contemporary representations of sharks react directly to the film, a testament to the

influence of the film on contemporary culture. For instance, a children's Great White costume for Halloween is pitched to parents in this manner: "Cue the "Jaws" soundtrack. Your little shark prowls the neighborhood in a hooded gray bodysuit, complete with fin, tail and pointy teeth. Watch your hands when you dole out candy to him!"<sup>207</sup> Or, in a less benign representation aimed at children Mattel's play-set titled Shark Ship follows the rhetoric of man vs. shark, hunting, and violence. The shark in this set is portrayed with red eyes (not the black eyes real white sharks have) and "chomping jaws." Also, the advertisement prompts children to "rescue your diver from the jaws of an enormous shark."<sup>208</sup> These examples are but a few of many that demonstrate that even with the cultural fascination with white sharks (and sharks in general) t representations of them still remains tethered to the cultural legacy of representations like *Jaws*.

Therefore, despite the attempts to rehabilitate the image of sharks in animated films and toys, and their general rise in popularity, sharks, especially great white sharks, paradoxically remain one of the most maligned, yet captivating animals in art and film, and are an exemplary illustration of the urgency for scholars and artists to identify moments where ethics and aesthetics intersect in order to create opportunities to recast the relationships between human and nonhuman animals to include natureculture and materialssemiotic relationships. Moreover, not being "companion species" sharks humans deem sharks as outside human relationships. If the relationship between humans and sharks does not change, sharks may truly become "myths of the deep." As mentioned earlier, while humans fear sharks, sharks have more to fear as the number of sharks killed each year is staggering. For instance, "the UN Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that 100 million sharks are caught and killed per year, many of them slaughtered for shark fin soup."<sup>209</sup> The Shark Specialist Group states that "The total number of sharks killed and passing through the fin trade is estimated to be between 26 to 73 million, with and (sic) average (median) of 38 million killed each year."<sup>210</sup> The wholesale slaughter of sharks, or the incidental killing of sharks through long lines, continues because of the high profit margins in shark finning and the economic feasibility of long line



fishing, and because unlike dolphins or whales, people seem to care more about fictional sharks than actual sharks, a sentiment surely tied to the negative portrayal and cultural perception of all sharks. Yet, despite the lack of cultural sympathy for sharks (partly because the media hasn't generated a Flipper or Shamu for sharks<sup>211</sup>), sharks have become an increasingly popular subject matter for entertainment and educational purposes in documentary films and television programming.<sup>212</sup> In fact, one of Discovery Channel's most popular (and anticipated) events is Shark Week in February. Casey claims Shark Week is so popular that "has drawn as much as a 100 percent increase in viewers, and the network invariably schedules it during the sweeps."<sup>213</sup> Per the aforementioned shift from education to entertainment in wildlife documentaries at the turn of the century, shark "educational" programs aired on networks like The Discovery Channel reinforce the fear through singularity marketing the danger sharks pose rather than their unique abilities, roles in ecosystems, or the danger people pose to them. For example, the marketing blurb on the back of Discovery Channel's "Shark Week 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Collection" reads as follows:

Twenty-five years ago, a lone fin rose from the murky depths of the ocean—and Shark Week was born. With one gnash of its razor-sharp teeth, this apex predator parked itself among the favorites of Discovery Channel viewers, and this collection showcases the reasons why. Fishing out the most exhilarating episodes to date, this anniversary edition follows cage-free divers through the most shark-infested waters, looks at the true story that inspired the movie *Jaws*, uses high-tech cameras to hone in on a flying great white, and even invites another favorite, *Mythbusters*, to take a look at this ferociously fascinating fish. To commemorate the thrills shared throughout the years, Shark Week 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary collection is the best of the best of a twenty-five year adventure.<sup>214</sup>

The marketing ploy in this promotional relies on loaded terms that invoke the aforementioned fears, as well as, noticeably avoids any educational content. Entertainment sells. Sharks sell, if they bite. However, it would be unfair to extend this marketing blurb to the content of all the Discovery Shark Week episodes. In fact, the ploy could be a clever subterfuge as many of the episodes recognize their audience via titles like "Ocean of Fear," "Top 5 Eaten Alive," "Blood in the Water," and "Killer Sharks," while providing details about shark behavior and ecology. For example, in a Huffington Post article devoted to the release of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Shark Week,

the writer claims: "For the anniversary, Discovery has partnered with some conservationists in an effort to educate as well as entertain. The hope is to provide exciting programming, while spreading a message of conservation about these largely misrepresented -- but still dangerous - predators."<sup>215</sup> The titillating titles and shocking footage could serve as a means of subterfuge for the underlying educational message. Yet, subterfuge is probably too charitable as filmmakers, critics, scholars, and scientists generally agree that the entertainment value of Shark Week supersedes the informational value. In fact, Chris Palmer, author of *Shooting in the Wild: An Insider's Account of Making Movies in the Animal Kingdom*, and filmmaker Peter Kimball argue that "Instead of seeking to educate or to promote environmental conservation, these shows focus only on presenting graphic, sensationalized animal violence. Programs like those in Shark Week -- while they might garner high ratings and attract advertiser dollars -- all too often mislead the audience, exploit animals, and fail to promote conservation."<sup>216</sup> They contend that the violence and action is too simple and misses the important conservation issues like finning.

Sharks continue to captivate and generate tourist dollars for coastal areas near shark habitats, spectators' fascinations stem from the aforementioned reminder of the savagery and power of the creatures—the same qualities that are used as a rationale for their outright slaughter.<sup>217</sup> The current popularity of sharks, especially Great Whites, has literally chummed the waters in the form of tourism and film. And yet, the increase in entertainment and tourism has had as much of a negative impact as positive. Despite the legality, trade in shark jaws continues, shark fishing tournaments flourish, and tourism, via chumming the ocean increases in popularity (shark "tourism" is also being investigated as a reason for increased shark attacks because experts think the sharks associate boats and people with chum, not surprising considering the historical accounts of sharks following whaling ships for "chum" whether dead whales or sailors). More importantly, the increase in the popularity of sharks has done little to diffuse the negative perception of sharks in Western culture. The myth of the monster of the

deep, bent on killing and consuming humans persists. In fact, the popularity of the characterization of sharks as killing machines and the apex foil for humans drives media attention to them. Shark attacks, although rare, are headline worthy because of the readership they attract. The photos that accompany attack stories follow pretty standard aesthetic qualities: the gaping jaws breaching the water, the bite image (either of an inanimate object like a surfboard, or a bite mark on a human), and the singular fin interrupting the horizon.

The historical significance of shark attacks on humans, at least from a popular concern for those along the New Jersey coast remains a relatively new phenomenon in the United States according to Michael Capuzzo. In his text, *Close to Shore*, he argues that after the first attack in 1916 “profound shock had momentarily seized the people on the sands. They had no context for them to know that sharks, in other times and other lands, followed their human victims up onto land. It was unthinkable, alien [...]”<sup>218</sup> Partially responsibility for the overwhelming shock, he claims, is the large influx of beach goers from inland. However, he also implies through quoted sources that the prevailing attitude of sharks was that they “were considered too timid to threaten a live human being.”<sup>219</sup> However, those with little or no experience with the sea were the least surprising group to hold this idea. Capuzzo also cites scientists and “ordinary experts” like sailors who disbelieve that a shark could be responsible for the attack on a living human being. For example, Professor John Treadwell Nichols initially attributed the attack to an orca, while an “old-time fisherman insisted a shark attack was too farfetched to believe, that a swordfish, giant sea turtles, and a big mackerel were more likely man-killers than a shark.”<sup>220</sup> Yet, the potential threat of shark attacks caused “crowds [to flee] a sea monster, with its weight of evil, threat, and retribution.”<sup>221</sup> The hysteria, according to Capuzzo ushered in a new era in the relationship between humans and sharks. No longer were sharks absent in the minds of Westerners. In fact, the situation caused such a panic that President Wilson weighed in on the subject. Sharks became a national issue (interestingly, the material again gives way to the discursive, the Baudrillardian, as *Jaws* re-imagines and re-

ignites the fears of Americans). The absence of sharks in the minds of the inhabitants of the North Atlantic coast prior to these attacks is not; however, an indicator of sharks' place in the human imaginative sphere, nor an indicator of the lack of shark attacks on humans. Sharks have had a place in the depths of the human imagination since at least the Ancient Greeks.<sup>222</sup> The fear of shark attacks on humans, while not as exaggerated as in our overly dramatic and entertainment driven society, have been recorded throughout history. In fact, in a half a century of the 1916 attacks, there were numerous paintings, literary texts, and woodcuts that demonstrated Westerners were well aware of sharks and the danger they posed. Moreover, well known writers like Poe, Melville, and Thoreau included shark attacks on humans in their respective texts, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (Poe), *Moby Dick* and "The Maldive Shark" (Melville), and *Cape Cod Volume 1* (Thoreau). Sharks were, therefore, represented in many popular mediums. Interestingly, the common thread between all three authors' representations of sharks is twofold. First, all three were avid readers of current events, including sea faring exploits along the coast. Thus, the genesis of these representations were based on recorded events. The idea of shark and human encounters did not rise from the depths without material provocation. That is, while the 1916 shark(s) attacks did shift western contemporary views of sharks, especially for those living near the ocean, this moment was not "man's" first encounter with sharks attacking humans. However, the 1916 attacks engendered a sense of hysteria and hyperbole not evident prior to this time. Paintings from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and popular literature like Poe, Melville, and Thoreau indicate that people recognized sharks did attack humans, yet the perception of sharks was more of scavenger, whereby the shark was equated to dog. In Melville's *Moby-Dick* Ishmael states the sharks are "like hungry dogs round a table where red meat is being carved."<sup>223</sup> Sharks, to this point, were not represented in the arts as the rouge killing machine bent on eating human flesh appearance that circulates in current culture. In many works, sharks either attacked corpses dropped from ships, or humans who interrupted their feeding frenzies. Moreover, unlike the 1916 shark

attacks, the attacks portrayed or anticipated in paintings and literature were far from shore, with the exception of Thoreau's *Cape Cod Volume 1*. The title, *Close to Shore*, highlights one of the significant reasons for the hysteria surrounding the 1916 attacks—human hubris concerning mastery and control of “their” environments. The proximity and perceived intentionality of the attacks (i.e. a shark specifically targeting humans) were two of the significant differences between these earlier texts and the 1916 attacks and the fictionalized modern adaption, *Jaws*. In this respect the earlier portrayal of shark and human encounters were significantly different because most were out there on the sea and usually in regard to whaling or ship wrecks. The sharks in the sea faring tales of Poe and Melville were scavengers who followed the ships feeding off scraps, moored whales, and dead bodies thrown overboard. They navigated by opportunity for food, not following a particular person or ship.

For example, in Poe's “*The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym*” the protagonist encounters a number of sharks while stranded on a damaged ship. He and the remaining survivors experience extreme thirst, hunger, exposure to the elements, and exhaustion. Despite all this, they initially share a sense of ease about their situation as, while dire, it is less intense than their encounter with the “savages” that resulted in their current situation. For Pym, sharks are a significant concern but only in so far as their presence adds to the general gloom. That is, the sharks are another obstacle that if encountered without other obstacles (starvation, lack of adequate transportation, and dehydration) could be overcome. For example, Pym notes that because portions of the ship are submerged a shark is able to “board” the ship, “striking Peters violently with his tale.”<sup>224</sup> While the narrator states “the monster actually swam in upon us,” this section (July 25<sup>th</sup>) demonstrates two significant differences between Poe's and Spielberg's representations of sharks. First, the shark breaching the boat, thrashing toward its passengers genuinely surprises Poe's characters as an act of chance. In Spielberg's film the white shark already performed extraordinary feats, including dragging more barrels than expected. Unlike Poe's shark, Spielberg's attack on the deck of the ship stems from the shark's mythic

representation in strength, size, and drive. More specifically, the characters in *Jaws* face a daunting battle for their lives because of the shark's power. However, the characters in Gordon Pym battle a multitude of factors, including weather, starvation, and dehydration. The shark adds to the scenario, but only as another risk, not the sole risk. More importantly, the narrator notes that "in moderate weather we might have easily captured him [the shark]," a significant difference from the epic battle that culminates in a miraculous shot to overcome a seemingly hopeless struggle.<sup>225</sup> For Poe's narrator, sharks inhibit the castaways' ability to alleviate their suffering by bathing in the sea as "we were forced to use great caution, being afraid of sharks, several of which were seen swimming around the brig during the day."<sup>226</sup> Despite Spielberg's desire for accuracy, the shark in his film differs greatly from those in Poe's text. In fact, as Dean Crawford argues in Reaktion's books *Shark*, "the sharks depicted in *The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym* are not magnified or misrepresented [...] thus Poe the fabulist becomes the realist after all."<sup>227</sup> For Poe, sharks are one of the many challenges of life at sea. They appear when situations are already dire, thus adding to sailors' woes, not the sole cause of them.

Similarly, in Winslow Homer's famous painting titled *The Gulf Stream* the sharks appear as an additive, not sum of the stranded sailors' woes. Similar to his argument concerning Poe's realism, Crawford argues that Homer's painting "was (and is) a far more usual occurrence"<sup>228</sup> unlike the shark mindlessly attacking humans (as in another famous painting titled *Watson and the Shark*). Homer presents a sailor with an angry face, not filled with dread. The fear Poe's narrator expressed from the gravity of his situation is not present in the face or posture of Homer's sailor. The painting certainly exhibits dread in the tones of color and the framing of sharks, mouths open in the forefront. By staging the sharks in the forefront, Homer juxtaposes this dread with the perturbed face and yet relaxed posture of sailor. The result is powerful and telling. Despite the dread and drama, the stranded man's facial expression and posture does not reflect dread or drama—an important commentary on how humans, especially those with

little or no experience with sharks, view encounters with sharks. The sailor understands the sharks are not a concern unless the waves or water spout jettison him into the sea.



Figure 4-3 Winslow Homer, *The Gulf Stream*<sup>229</sup>

Unlike Poe's and Homer's opportune predators who appear when sailors are at their most vulnerable, in *Moby Dick* Melville presents sharks as vicious scavengers, who follow the whaling ships in order to feast on the flesh of dead whales tied to ships. He portrays sharks as unconcerned with humans, already following ships because of the cargo lashed to the hull, not the passengers aboard. Yet, in the chapter titled "Shark Massacre" Ishmael calls the sharks "foes" who are voracious in appetite and ferocious in attack. The description of the sharks in the scene coincides with the perception that sharks are mere eating machines, as Ishmael notes "they viciously snapped, not only at each other's disembowelments, but like flexible bows, bent round, and bit their own; till those entrails seemed swallowed over and over again by the same mouth, to be oppositely voided by the gaping wound."<sup>230</sup> The shark encounter in this brief chapter for those on the *Pequod* is less about the fear of sharks targeting and attacking humans (although Ishmael does indicate a shark pulled on deck is capable of taking a man's hand after "death) and more about the loss of their precious cargo, the whale. The anxiety for the crew

stems from a monetary loss then, not anxiety of the loss of their lives. Ishmael provides evidence that the sailor has a much different perspective on seeing these sharks than those unaccustomed with the seas. He states “any man unaccustomed to such sights, to have looked over her side that night, would have almost thought the whole round sea was one huge cheese, and those sharks the maggots in it.”<sup>231</sup> In this case, the crew moves quickly to protect their cargo, unaffected by the appearance of the sharks. Interestingly, the language of the text also contributes to the uncertainty of how sharks were perceived prior to the 1916 shark attacks. While Ishmael does indicate the sharks attack with viciousness, and portrays them as more instinctual or mechanical in their frenzy, the chapter title “Shark Massacre” and Ishmael’s statement that two of the crew “kept up an incessant murdering of the sharks” complicates whether the sharks demise is wholly justified.<sup>232</sup> As the whaling-spades cleave open the sharks’ skulls, the “murdering” and excitability of the crew seems to mirror that of the sharks. The sharks feed, as does the crew, on the whale. There is nothing monstrous about them in this scene. In fact, the monster in the text, at least from Ahab’s perspective, is *the whale*, not other whales or the sharks.<sup>233</sup> The sharks’ fervor and insatiable hunger isn’t a significant problem for the characters safety in the text. In fact, the sharks serve more importantly as metaphors. For example, Fleece, the cook, forgives the sharks viciousness and voracious appetite because he doesn’t “blame [them] so much for; dat is natur, and can’t [they be] helped.”<sup>234</sup> Nature, in Fleece’s perspective, is something that if overcome can lead to spiritual ascendance. He notes that “if you gobaern the shark in you, why den you be angel; for all angel is not’ing more dan de shark well gobaerned.”<sup>235</sup> In the cook’s famous speech he equates sharks with humans, especially Stubb, thereby shifting the discussion about the sharks to a veiled discussion about race and power. According to Fleece, Stubb is shark like, the primary comparison being that both “tearin’ de blubber out of your nieghbor’s mout [...] and, by Gor, none of you has de right to dat whale; dat whale belong to some one else.”<sup>236</sup> Crawford argues that Melville depicts the sharks in the chapters titled Stubb’s Supper and Shark Massacre in a disrespectful manner.



According to Crawford Fleece's "sermon" "[objects] not to their scavenging nature or their devouring of the whale carcass, but to the noisy 'smacking of their lips' as they feed."<sup>237</sup>

Crawford argues the comparison is unfavorable because they sharks are compared to people with "poor table manners" or, in the case of the maggots and cheese metaphor, "insects that live on carrion and rotting things."<sup>238</sup> While Crawford is correct that the reproach here is unfavorable, the sharks are "forgiven" by Fleece because his real target of reproach is Stubb's and his men. The anthropomorphism of the sharks in this scene is primarily concerned with human behavior rather than shark behavior. Crawford is more charitable to Melville in this respect as the sharks, while a historical fact—they did follow the whaling ships to gorge on the carcasses—are more a plot device than actual sharks. Moreover, the aesthetic qualities of the sharks are hardly developed, and when developed are more anthropomorphized than of actual sharks.

Nature, or the nature of animals and humans, becomes the overriding theme in these brief sections. Sharks, for better or worse, are controlled by their nature, just as humans are. However, sharks, at least for Fleece, can be forgiven for their nature. Man, unlike the shark, can overcome the viciousness, the taking of his neighbor's food. That is, sharks, unlike man, are beholden to biological determinism. Yet, sharks, for Melville were more important as part of the human tale, the exploration of the human condition. Despite this, unlike the belief about sharks according to those interviewed after the 1916 shark attacks, Melville recognizes sharks can and do attack humans, but is not overly concerned with this detail. In fact, sharks are more of a nuisance than a danger. They interfere with earnings and cause extra work. Unlike Melville's sharks that interfere with whale hunting, Victorian artist Edouard Travies' work titled "La Peche Du Requin" (Shark Fishing) humans hunt sharks. The image in Travies' work avoids the anthropomorphism and biological determinism in Melville's, and, more importantly, the primary concern of the image is relationship between humans and animals, not a comment on race and human behavior. The shark in Travies' work is also far more sympathetic, the shark looks

docile. Placing the shark's belly facing out also contributes to its vulnerability. This shark is not the mashing, smacking mindless monster portrayed by Melville.



Figure 4-4 Edouard Travies "La Peche Du Requin"<sup>239</sup>

Despite Melville's knowledge and experience with whaling and the sea, the sharks in his works are less "realistic" than they are in Poe's text or Travies' work. In *Moby Dick* they are more a stock plot device less concerned with the aesthetic qualities of the sharks.

However, that is not to say that Melville wasn't aware of or respectful of sharks as animals rather than merely as metaphors. His poem, "The Maldive Shark," where the narrator observes a shark in the Maldive Sea, provides a more aesthetically crafted shark. In the poem Melville more fully develops its appearance, behavior, and perceptions. Yet it is not without problems for thinking more respectfully about sharks, especially the last couple lines; however,

it does indicate that Melville recognized the shark as more than mere symbol for contemplating something about human nature. Also, the inclusion of the pilot fish in the poem creates a more accurate portrayal of the shark as not mere killing machine, thereby recognizing the cross-species alliances important to philosophers like Deleuze and Guattari. The pilot fish and the shark, like the wasp-orchid, are exemplary examples of their idea of becoming. Or, the relationships between the shark and the pilot fish demonstrates that Haraway's "Companion Species" extends outside human/animal relationships as well—an indicator of the biological and semiotic connections across species.

About the Shark, phlegmatical one,  
Pale sot of the Maldivian sea,  
The sleek little pilot-fish, azure and slim,  
How alert in attendance be,  
From his saw-pit of mouth, from his charnel of maw  
They have nothing to dread,  
But liquidly glide on his flank  
Or before his Gorgonian head;  
Or lurk in the port of serrated teeth  
In white triple tiers of glittering gates,  
And there find a haven when peril's abroad,  
An asylum in jaws of the Fates!  
They are friends; and friendly they guide him to prey,  
Yet never partake of the treat--  
Eyes and brains to the dotard lethargic and dull,  
Pale ravenger of horrible meat.<sup>240</sup>

Unlike his portrayal of sharks in *Moby-Dick*, this is a specific shark (not the ubiquitous and generic Shark that stands for all sharks). Melville provides this shark with a specific habitat, near the Maldives in the Indian Ocean, and identifies particular physical characteristics of the shark. However, Melville uses language that invokes dread or fear because the shark is, after all, "a pale ravenger" with a "saw-tooth" mouth to whom, Melville implies, all but the pilot fish should "dread." Yet the very idea that the pilot fish should not dread the shark because it finds protection in the jaws of "Fate" creates a more complex representation of the shark, the pilot fish, and their relationship. Moreover, the anthropocentric relationship between the two, they are "friends" after all, is one of mutual acceptance rather than merely negatively aligned with poor human table manners as in *Moby-Dick*. Melville imagines (and most likely encountered) a shark

that cannot easily be reduced to a singular idea, even less so a single over arching metaphor. For example, Jack Morgan's brief mention of the poem in *Biology of Horror: Gothic Literature and Film*, uses the poem as an example of the uncanny humans experience in "otherness" because "the shark's single-minded predatory purpose is foreign to the profile of mammals, which invariably are possessed of other more complex dimensions and of richer character. The dim, mechanical livingness of the [...] shark are uncanny to humans."<sup>241</sup> The shark to those who do not regularly encounter it would be uncanny, and Melville does identify it as dull; however, the relationship between the two and the juxtaposition of the descriptions of the two fish engenders a more complex relationship—either in purpose or in meaning. Also, the dread Melville creates from his word choice for the shark starkly contrasts that of the pilot-fish. The poem then seems more ambivalent because like Poe, it is more "realistic." The poem provides an interesting introduction into the complex relationships between materiality and semiotics, as well as, meaning and consequence because not only is the relationship between the shark and the pilot-fish about connections, but also the poem itself serves as a historical record of the "knowledge" of said relationship. It relies on many important observations about the relationship between the two fish. The two fish are associated with one another, in fact, though not named, the shark is most likely an Oceanic Whitetip as this species matches the description (pale and slow<sup>242</sup>), location, and is commonly accompanied by the pilot fish.<sup>243</sup> However, the poem, while attempting to describe the shark, the pilot-fish, and their relationship accurately, is rife with significant inaccuracies. For instance, the narrator of the poem relies on the idea that the pilot fish guides the shark, an idea once thought of as fact. However, the current belief is that the pilot-fish does not, in fact, lead the shark to prey.<sup>244</sup> Also, the pilot-fish does "partake of the treat" as part of the symbiotic relationship between them is that the shark provides food and protection from predators, while the fish removes harmful bacteria from the shark.<sup>245</sup> Melville's representation (more realistic) along with the historical and observational information about this shark provides a good point of comparison for thinking about sharks in a less "sensationalized"

manner and illustrates how intertwined the material reality of sharks (and other animals) are with the cultural perceptions and representations of them. “The Maldive Shark,” however, like both *Moby-Dick* and *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* presents sharks that are not close to shore. Therefore, while indicative that people were aware sharks posed some danger to humans, they are not the type of stories that would seem to inspire the type of terror that the 1916 shark attacks or the film *Jaws* did for beachgoers.

This does not mean that prior to 1916 people were not aware of the danger of shark attacks to swimmers near the shoreline. For instance, in *Cape Cod* Thoreau muses on the presence of sharks off the coast. In a brief passage in the section titled “The Beach Again” Thoreau states even in hot weather no bathing occurs “on the Atlantic side, on account of the undertow and the rumor of sharks.”<sup>246</sup> The rumor—like the fictional shark in *Jaws*—holds sway over the populace as residents of the area claimed “they would not bathe (sic) there ‘for any sum,’ for they sometimes saw the sharks tossed up and quiver for a moment on the sand.”<sup>247</sup> The rumor then becomes the overriding perception of sharks surrounding Cape Cod, an idea that persists today. In fact, after hearing “tough stories of sharks all over the Cape” he notes that he does not “presume to doubt [them] utterly.” Despite the stories, he concludes that “one shark in a dozen years is enough to keep up the reputation of a beach a hundred miles long.” His claim remains important for thinking about sharks in a more ethical manner as the myth of the shark, strong enough to last a dozen years, persists to this day. In fact, the image of sharks engendered by the story of *Jaws* has persisted for over twenty-five years. Thoreau, however, takes a more pragmatic, and biologically accurate approach. He recognizes that sharks attack humans. As mentioned earlier, marketing sharks as vegetarians or human companions fails to register with humans because of the material reality that sharks can, and do, attack humans. Yet, Thoreau recognizes the problem with attributing one attack in twelve years with all sharks—a rhetorical strategy shark advocates still employ. For instance, current scholarly texts like *Sharks and Their Relatives* and *Sharks* contain sections where shark attacks are discussed

in great detail. Common to all these sections and Thoreau's *Cape Cod* is the comparison to number of attacks over time, which always is framed as statistically insignificant, especially when compared to other threats to human life (like heart disease or lightning strikes). What Thoreau lacks in this brief section is the type of biological differentiation presented earlier in his text. That is, he identifies and differentiates other sea creatures and plant life, but not sharks. What this oversight indicates, of course, is the relative little knowledge people had on sharks prior to the 1916 shark attacks. While there were "shark" experts (two famous ones deliberated on the 1916 attacks), there was little knowledge of species, habitat, or behavior. Interestingly, Thoreau was familiar with the sea as he descended from a sea-faring family,<sup>248</sup> yet sharks are discussed generally and in a more literary (rather than scientific) manner in this section. Also important is the relative brevity Thoreau provides to sharks in this section. The local fear of bathing not only does not dissuade him from entering the sea, but also provides little concern about the "mystery" or lack of knowledge about sharks. They are far less captivating, it seems, than the grass growing on the beach.

The stories of Poe, Thoreau, and Melville generated minimal hysteria, partly because sharks are not the central character or, in the case of Poe, are more important as allegory rather than as actual sharks. Also as mentioned, in two of the three encounters are "out" there, versus close to shore. That is, there is a double distance in Melville and Poe because sharks are out there in the deep dark recesses of the sea, and because humans attacks are of chance, mistake, or opportunity not targeted as the reports of the 1916 attacks and the fictional representations of shark attacks in films like *Jaws* and its sequels. Moreover, as Thoreau indicates a single shark can inspire fear that doesn't reflect the material reality of the coast. While he does attest sharks probably did overturn boats and such, he is far more concerned with the dangers of the undercurrents along the shoreline. The significant break between these stories and the numerous historical accounts gravitates around notions of place, space, and humans in two important ways. First, places are historically, materially, and culturally intertwined

“contact zones” whereby human and nonhuman animals collide in ways that shape and are shaped by their relationships. What these stories demonstrate is that “human” place overlaps nonhuman space as both human and nonhuman animals interact in shared environments. In Melville and Poe, the open seas are shared spaces. Thoreau extends these shared places to the shores, an important shift for thinking with and about human and nonhuman relationships. More specifically, sharks are a part of the boundaries between sea and shore, and ships and the fishing industry. However, prior to the 1916 shark attacks the tourism industry around the beaches deems the shallow water as human space, an abstract construct based upon entertainment, escape (from the city), and notions of class. In this construct the “animal” has no place unless as harmless “decoration” for human observance. The nature the city dweller expects to encounter in this type of socially constructed space is observed, not an observer, and harmless to humans. Sharks, especially those that have attacked humans, defy this idea, thereby engendering the hysteria surrounding sharks. However, Poe, Melville, and Thoreau write about sharks that are at the very least indifferent to humans (that is attacks are about opportunity not species) and, in the case of Thoreau, if understood and respected, are not a threat to humans. Yet these familiar texts had little influence on the shark hysteria that exploded during the early twentieth century and then resurged after the release of *Jaws*. Modernity, with its move to further humanism via a strong separation between humans and nonhumans through areas like culture (animals are deemed devoid of it), manufacturing (animals are separated from the products they become, like food or leather goods).

Hemingway. Like sharks, his life is surrounded in myth. His name evokes admiration, and vexation, to name a few reactions. His *The Old Man and the Sea* is no exception, especially when read from an Animal Studies perspective. This well known text, published in 1952, was well circulated by the time Spielberg’s *Jaws* fascinated and frightened American audiences. In Hemingway’s text sharks play a significant role in the second section. While the sharks serve as

antagonists for Santiago, his ability to differentiate between types of sharks offers an entry point to rethinking animals in literature.

By naming and differentiating between the two shark types, Santiago calls *dentuso* and *galanos*, Hemingway illustrates difference rather than generality, and an affinity for difference based on encounters with animals in their habitats. The descriptions of the two types of sharks and their behaviors differentiates them in a way that resists the general belief in contemporary culture, especially post *Jaws*, that all sharks are Shark. For instance, the following description of the Mako/*dentuso* highlights the physical beauty and grace of the fish, as well as how it differs from other sharks as far as its jaws/teeth are concerned. Santiago's knowledge is neither overly scientific, nor is it overly general. He balances his approach with observable "facts" and respect. However, he also respects the Mako because of the thinly veiled comparison between himself and the shark. He sees himself like the Mako, a hunter, not a scavenger. Unlike the *galanos*, the *dentuso* is a noble fish, one to be admired and mourned. The following passage describes the Mako's first appearance:

Sometimes he lost the scent. But he would pick it up again, or have just a trace of it, and he swam fast and hard on course. He was a very big Mako shark built to swim as fast as the fastest fish in the sea and everything was beautiful about him except his jaws. His back was blue as a sword fish's and his belly was silver and his hide was smooth and handsome. He was built as a sword fish except for his huge haws which were tight shut now as he swam fast, just under the surface with his high dorsal fin knifing through the water without wavering. Inside the closed double lip of his jaws all of his eight rows of teeth were slanted inwards. They were not the ordinary pyramid-shaped teeth of most sharks.<sup>249</sup>

The shark's physicality and sensory ability engenders a sense of wonder and respect in Santiago. Even the jaws, the one feature that Santiago doesn't find beautiful, are described accurately and fairly ambivalent in comparison to the sharks in Melville (saw-pits and smacking). The Mako is handsome and unwavering. The language clearly reflects Santiago's respect for the shark, while his distaste for the shark's jaws is less aesthetic than pragmatic—he recognizes that the jaws will ruin his catch. Santiago recognizes the shark's sensory ability, coloring, texture, and movement, the combination of which provides the shark with more than



just the stock mindless killer description in horror movies. In fact, Santiago respects the Mako so much that he attempts to rationalize his killing of it, something he does not do after killing the galanos. Santiago reflects on killing the Mako “[...] you [Santiago] enjoyed killing the dentuso, he thought. He lives on the fish as you do. He is not a scavenger nor just a moving appetite as some sharks are. He is beautiful and noble and knows no fear of anything.”<sup>250</sup> Santiago rationalizes the Mako’s death; however, he realizes the difficulty of doing so. He thinks: “You killed him in self-defense [...] and I killed him well. Besides, he thought, everything kills everyting else in some way. Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive. The boy keeps me alive, he thought. I must not deceive myself too much.”<sup>251</sup> Similar to the sharks in Melville, Santiago recognizes sharks are not voracious predators scanning the ocean for human victims.

Santiago’s ethical dilemma, along with his perception of the Mako serves a good entry point for thinking more in a more posthuman manner. Although not completely successful, his process avoids generalizing sharks. Santiago reveals two important aspects for thinking about animals more ethically. First, like Derrida, there are animals, not The Animal. More specifically, even in a species, like sharks, there is difference (unlike the post-*Jaws* hysteria about sharks generally). Second, animals have perceptual abilities that can differ from humans (i.e. humans are not the base for comparison) and they are a part of, not apart from, those with whom they share places, which includes humans. The text is also a good entry point for discussing complicated material and semiotic connections as Santiago’s preference for the Mako rests upon a historical, cultural, and material confluence of ideas. His reverence for the hunter, not the scavenger, not only is a cultural bias, but also ignores the very “circle of life” or part of the ocean rhetoric he employs when praising the Mako and defending its killing. That is, the galanos as scavengers are a part of the ocean. In this respect, Santiago’s logic wavers from why the dentuso should be admired and the galanos should be admonished. Also, while Santiago situates the Mako outside the problematic Cartesian mind/body duality, he firmly situates the galanos as examples of mindless eating machines, reacting to any movement or

objects as a potential meal. The differentiation is important, as it avoids generalizing, but the criteria for the mindless behavior of the galanos seems more a result of Santiago's bias, than his objective experience, which is evident from his word choice when describing them:

[he] watched the sharks come. He could see their wide flattened, shovel-pointed heads now and their white-tipped wide pectoral fins. They were hateful sharks, bad smelling, scavengers as well as killers, and when they were hungry they would bite at an oar or the rudder of the boat. It was these sharks that would cut the turtles' legs and flippers off when the turtles were on top of the surface, and they would hit a man in the water, if they were hungry, even if the man had no smell of fish blood nor of fish slime on him. [...] They came. But they did not come as the Mako had come. One turned and went out of sight under the skiff and the old man could feel the skiff shake as he jerked and pulled on the fish. The other watched the old man with his slitted yellow eyes and then came in fast with his half circle jaws wide to hit the fish where he had already been bitten.<sup>252</sup>

In this passage Santiago reprises three problems consistent in Animal Studies discussions. First, the comparison between the two sharks, dentosu and galanos, relies on the dentosu as the standard for comparison and the comparison is judgmental, not objective. Second, Santiago attributes human emotive qualities to the galanos (like he does the dentoso,) as a way of valuing the sharks' worth. Therefore, humans are also part of the standard of comparison, and the Mako, just happens to have more human admirable qualities than the other sharks. If not problematic enough, these qualities become a part of the justification process for Santiago's actions. His ethical choices reflect his base of comparison. The galanos in this case are not to be mourned, or even really considered. Third, Santiago views the fish as "his," and that he has a right to it that the sharks do not. While he rationalizes this in respect to the Mako, they are both hunters who kill to sustain themselves. He sees the scavengers, like Fleece who admonished the sharks in *Moby-Dick*, as taking something that isn't theirs. This is more than mere bad table manners, but theft. As in *Moby-Dick*, the major issue is loss of livelihood because of loss of material goods (Santiago, however, respects the fish and is reflective and remorseful about killing it). There are, however, two positive aspects of this scene. First, Santiago recognizes that most sharks do not attack humans, unless fish blood and slime are present. This brief moment serves as a counterstatement to the *Jaws* inspired

hysteria that sharks target humans because of a taste for human flesh. Second, like the sharks in Melville's *Moby-Dick*, these sharks are unconcerned with the human and only attack when provoked (although Santiago does note they can attack even when unprovoked). This is not a man vs. animal tale in the sense that Santiago and the shark are mortal enemies, or that the sharks are attempting to kill Santiago. The story does not center on a rouge shark (or sharks) tracking Santiago across the ocean to exact revenge for a wrong (probably the worst film of the *Jaws* franchise<sup>253</sup>), or on sharks hungry for the flesh of man. Rather, they are, as Santiago notes part of the natural cycle of the sea and, more importantly, they follow the blood from the fish. While Santiago fears the loss of his fish, of his economic livelihood, he does not fear for his life. Similar to the accounts of the sailors in Poe's, Melville's, and Homer's works, Santiago views the sharks more as a nuisance. They do not rise from the depths of his sub-consciousness invoking a primal fear; rather they are a part of life at sea, in fact, a rather common occurrence. Like Santiago, they are adrift in the sea, following the currents, and are drawn to the fish that sustain their livelihood.

Hemingway's tale fails, however, to avoid the anthropocentric valuation of animals (in this case per a masculine hunter dynamic), and does little to explicate the connections between the sharks and their lived environments. In fact, while real sharks are important to the narrative and plot, like Melville they serve more to highlight the protagonists' struggle than the lived realities of the sharks themselves. Hemingway is less concerned with the sharks' habitat and sensory experiences Hemingway's sharks exhibit the type of problematic representations of animals that contemporary art and animal scholars Steve Baker and Ron Broglio argue against using artists Olly and Suzi's performance work on/with animals. Both Baker and Broglio devote a significant amount of space to Olly and Suzi's work in *The Postmodern Animal* (Baker) and *Surface Encounters* (Broglio). The underlying theme in both texts is that Olly and Suzi's work attempts to demonstrate the deficiencies of anthropocentric ideologies that either ignore or diminish animals as subjects interacting with their habitats. In order to accomplish this, Olly and

Suzi eschew the traditional studio for their subject's habitat. They encounter the animals they paint in their environments rather than imagine them in a studio. They argue in order to raise awareness of live animals in their habitats (who might not be there much longer without shifts in human practices), they document the "performance" (Gregg Williams photographs the projects) and "persuade" the animals to participate, which remains the primary interest for Animal Studies scholars. Through the encounter, the animals demonstrate that they "act" and interact with the artists work, marking and altering it in a way that is not only participatory, but also blurs the boundary between subject/object, art/artist, and the material/semiotic. Moreover, their message is clear. Animals are here now...they might not be in the future if humans do not change their practices and perceptions of them. For instance, in 1997 the artists entered the realm of one of the most maligned and feared predators in the world, the white shark. As the project concluded they reflected on their experience, noting that "as our understanding of the shark grew we came to realise [sic] that they were in fact not the random killers of man that we had been led to believe, but are in fact intelligent and selective feeders. They would often inspect our cage, probing us with their sensitive noses, curious about the alien visitors to their submerged world."<sup>254</sup>

Both Broglio and Baker offer sophisticated readings of Olly and Suzi's works (their performance piece with sharks is titled Ocean Trip—Shark on Olly and Suzi's website) whereby the performance of both the animals (human and nonhuman) disrupts an overly simple subject/object binary (human/subject and animal/object). While Broglio and Baker focus on different aspects of these works and employ different methodologies (postmodern for Baker, phenomenology for Broglio) both agree Olly and Suzi's work contributes to the ongoing project in Animal Studies of rethinking relationships between human and nonhuman animals through art. More specifically, both argue that Olly and Suzi's work presents a different kind of "animal" lacking in most art—especially non-contemporary art. This "animal" is a subject, not object, who interacts with its habitat, which includes humans who are a part of, not apart from them. In this

respect Olly and Suzi's work rejects the Cartesian categorization of animal as simple machine, an object lacking subjectivity. Both Baker and Broglio identify many of the positive aspects of Olly and Suzi's work for rethinking the relationships between humans, nonhumans, and art.

Olly and Suzi's work with white sharks overcomes some of the limitations of Hemingway's vision of sharks in their habitat as they shift the focus from humans to nonhumans. More importantly, they attempt to promote more ethical behaviors toward sharks.<sup>255</sup> While Hemingway certainly broaches the ethics of interacting with nonhumans in shared environments, the primary concern of *The Old Man and the Sea* remains the human struggle to survive, not the increasing struggle for nonhumans to survive because of human practices, like longline fishing or the commercialization of shark finning. However, Hemingway's text could be read as similar to both Berger and Lippit's mourning of the loss of "the animal" via industrial culture. The old man clings to a more personal interaction with the sea and the fish, an interaction lost in commercial fishing where machines and human labor collect products for human use (the Marxist overtones in both Berger and Lippit support this type of reading). In relation to contemporary fishing practices, Hemingway's text could be read as a condemnation of current practices as the old man and his way of life are subsumed by current fishing practices. Regardless, his text still primarily focuses on humans, not the nonhumans who they encounter. Baker and Broglio argue the encounter should be about *the interaction between humans and nonhumans*. According to both an encounter with nonhuman animals should provide humans with a more ethical and less anthropocentric perception of animals.

However, Baker and Broglio do have a significant difference in the focus of their work with respect to Olly and Suzi. Baker argues Olly and Suzi's work exemplifies what he terms as the "postmodern animal," insofar as the delineation between human and animal in Hemingway's story are rarely in jeopardy. Baker argues that contemporary artists work to unseat the deeply ingrained perceptions of the vast divide between what constitutes human and animal by challenging the rigidity of material and discursive categories, primarily by challenging Cartesian

notions of the boundaries between animal/human. For Baker, artists accomplish this through what he argues via Lyotard is challenging expert thinking. In order to “become animal,” via Deleuze the category of animal must be run asunder by proliferating multiplicities (via Deleuze and Guattari), where human supremacy is unsettled whether by unpredictable encounters, alliances, or mutations. For sharks, especially white sharks, Baker argues artists Olly and Suzi’s processes, performances, and product signal a postmodern animal, one who participates in rendering art that challenges the very categories employed in “expert” thinking. The artist, like the philosopher for Deleuze, undermines calcified concepts of “animal” via creativity—deterritorialization—that (re)thinks relationships between humans and nonhumans.

Broglio also argues that Olly and Suzi’s work challenges how humans think about animals; however, he focuses on how the “surface encounter” demonstrates human’s inability to access animal phenomenology. More specifically, Broglio asserts that humans cannot know what it is to experience what is “under the surface” of animal being. Through a synthesis of Jakob von Uexküll and Mary Louise Pratt, he contends that access to animal “interiority” remains closed to humans. Animal hides conceal animals’ interiors and “interiorities” the latter the phenomenological experience of being for animals. While a different approach, the end result, like Baker, is that “expert” thinking fails. For Broglio “expert” thinking fails to penetrate what the animal hide hides. In relation to Olly and Suzi’s work Broglio contends that the performances are indicative of a contact zone (Pratt) where human and nonhuman animals encounter one another “on the surface.”

Despite their differences, both employ Olly and Suzi’s work with sharks as an important example of rethinking human and nonhuman animal relationships. As mentioned, Olly and Suzi’s performance illustrates two important points for both Baker and Broglio: environment and interaction. Yet because of their different methodologies and primary objectives of their projects Baker and Broglio offer two moments where their readings of Olly and Suzi’s work diverge. Baker juxtaposes the position of the human and nonhuman animals in human created and

controlled environments and the habitats of nonhuman animals. Broglio focuses on the latter, identifying encounters in habitats as “contact zones.” The difference between the two contributes to how each formulate a means of rethinking how humans conceive animals and their relationships with them.

Baker poses the following questions while referring to Olly and Suzi’s work: “What would it be to reverse the usual movement and direction of cagedness, to put the artist in the place of the animal, the place habitually occupied by the animal? To reverse, to put it concisely, art’s animal movement.”<sup>256</sup> Baker proceeds to describe Olly and Suzi’s 1997 shark project in which the artists produced paintings of white sharks while submersed in metal cages. While Baker never explicitly states this project “puts the artist in the place of the animal,” the implication is clear. He views their cagedness as a philosophical shift in thinking about animals. While his analysis is creative, and certainly important for thinking about animals, it falters in that it flattens animals to the general Animal as cagedness in this scenario is applicable to animals in general (while many animals are captive in zoos or aquariums, white sharks are a notable exception); and it disregards the material reality of the situation, which the artists so willingly admit—they fear being eaten by the white sharks. While cagedness in Baker’s analysis works well metaphorically, it is less successful materially. The cage is primarily a safety measure, not a theoretical move on Olly and Suzi’s part. In fact, Broglio classifies the cage, scuba gear, and all the other adaptive or safety equipment as part of an understanding of the “other.” His reading is more charitable as he argues that the cage and gear are an indication of the artists recognizing shark behavior/environment. While this is true, the cage circumvents a more complex understanding of shark behavior. That is, while humans cannot fully access shark phenomenology, through encounters in contact zones people can better understand “animal communication.” For example, there are many divers and shark photographers and cinematographers who swim with White Sharks sans the cage (see a wonderfully touching example of this in Disney’s *Oceans*). These people assert that swimming with white sharks is

safe as long as people understand the movements, behaviors, and “communicative” signals of sharks. The cage allows people to disregard these details. Olly and Suzi’s use of the cage seems more about fear than respect or an understanding of shark phenomenology. For instance, Olli and Suzi remark that they feared the sharks even while in the cage. More importantly, the material reality of “cagedness”, with a notable exception at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, indicates white sharks are not captive animals, and therefore, not in “the place [cage] habitually occupied by the animal.” The problem, therefore, with this example is that it, like others in Baker’s text, makes arguments based on a rather generic Animal, not specific animals. To be fair, this is not Baker’s purpose, as his text is titled *The Postmodern Animal*, not animals, and it presents salient arguments that serve as important entry points into the discussion of animals and art (in fact, both his *The Postmodern Animal* and *Picturing the Beast* are texts all Animal Studies scholars interested in art should read). However, in this moment, the white shark is not the best example for his argument as it is the exception, not the rule.

The applicability of the cage as a philosophical reflection on human practices towards animals is not as significant a problem as both Baker’s and Broglio’s readings of animal “participation” in Olly and Suzi’s work. Scholars like Baker and Broglio embrace Olly and Suzi’s work because of the interesting and complex ways in which the animal subjects are just that—subjects, not objects, who participate in altering the works via marking (urine, biting, slithering, and scratching). The animals’ participation not only indicates that they are not passive creatures in their environments, but also indicates how human and nonhuman worlds are interwoven and how encounters between them leave “traces” or “marks.” In this respect, it is little wonder why scholars are so enamored with Olly and Suzi’s work as it provides opportunities to revisit and recast traditional notions of “the animal” in art. Both Baker and Broglio present complex and convincing readings of Olly and Suzi’s work, and make strong cases for the attention it receives from scholars.



However, one of the difficult issues that arises from Olly and Suzi's work, isn't the finished product per se, but the process in which they create these works. Both Baker and Broglio are less concerned with the artists' process, Broglio concedes that "it is certainly possible to read Olly and Suzi as a naïve, hopeless effort to engage animals in a project of which the animals have no interest [...] perhaps they are simply baiting the unwilling animal for a theatrics of value only (or mostly) to the humans concerned in the project."<sup>257</sup> Broglio argues that "while the art and artists are vulnerable to such critique, their interests lie with other questions."<sup>258</sup> However, Broglio's defense of Olly and Suzi exemplifies a significant problem with meaning and consequence whereby arguments for meaning are framed in a matrix of intentionality.<sup>259</sup> The extreme form of this approach allows artists like Vargas to display a starving dog because his intention is not to harm the animal, but rather to highlight the hypocrisy of Western culture towards dogs.<sup>260</sup> Moreover, his intention—using art to express meaning—overrides other meanings (for the animal and the audiences) and consequences. Therefore, although not even remotely as horrific as Vargas's *Exhibition No. 1*, by focusing more on the product rather than the process of Olly and Suzi's work, the meaning of the works overshadows how said meaning comes to fruition.<sup>261</sup> In the case of Olly and Suzi, their animal encounters are semi-manufactured. That is, the level of participation is asynchronous. The process of prompting the animals to participate can have both material and semiotic consequences that negatively affect animals by reinforcing traditional views that human interests outweigh nonhuman interests, or that humans have sole knowledge of animals' interests. Again, with Olly and Suzi, the animals not only participate in different ways, marking via urine versus a bite but are enticed to participate in different ways. Charitably, these differences indicate the difference in the animal kingdom, and an understanding of animal behavior and biology. However, not all the animals who participate are enticed in an overly ethical manner for different reasons. For instance, in their work on anacondas, the large snake who slithers across their canvas, leaving a hauntingly beautiful image (the detail of the scales is incredible), is "enticed" to participate by

being dragged out of its resting place and plopped onto the canvas. Its marking is extremely staged, and indicative of the less than desirable human practices toward animals. Interestingly, the slithering is a moving away versus a moving toward (“Shark Bite” is the opposite), a possible commentary on the animal/human encounter (despite movies like *Anaconda* these animals do not overtly target or hunt humans). Similar to the arguments Uexküll makes concerning the trigger markers for a tick, Broglio argues the canvas becomes a part of the anaconda’s “world,” and, more importantly, a contact zone between humans and nonhumans. While his reading is interesting and theoretically progressive for rethinking human and nonhuman relationships in the case of Olly and Suzi’s shark work, his reading is less so in their anaconda work. Unlike smearing blood on a floating canvas in the shark encounter, there is little or no evidence it’s a canvas in the mud is a sensory marker for a snake that is plopped on it by the artists’ crew. While it is a contact zone, the less than charitable reading is that the zone reaffirms the grossly asynchronous power relations that currently exist between humans and nonhumans. More specifically, the snake does not wander onto the canvas it is dragged from the river and placed there.

Olly and Suzi’s work with sharks also employs a less than desirable ethic of human and nonhuman relationships because in order to attract the sharks they chum the water and in order to entice the shark to “participate” in the work they coat the bottom of the canvas with chum—or more specifically, in order to garner attention for rethinking human animal relationships they attract an animal by using animal matter (the argument then becomes what matter matters). The result of the chumming is two-fold. On the one hand, the work potentially reinforces one of the significant fears of sharks—they are indiscriminate eating machines who will attack anything, including inanimate objects. Also, chumming the water is a practice that is coming under much scrutiny for whether or not it conditions sharks to associate boats and people with food, and whether or not it results in more sharks congregating in areas they normally do not.<sup>262</sup> Their work titled “Shark Bite” demonstrates these problems—not only the image, but also the

title. The cultural significance of the work is its uncanny relationship to the classic *Jaws* moment. The white shark's head breaching the water with jaws fully open is an image that strikes fear in humans (especially because of the film). Also, the title of the piece reinforces the material and semiotic problem of reducing shark to jaws/*Jaws*. The aesthetic appeal of the shot is a cultural expectation (shark images of the jaws/attack) and, therefore, commercially successful. This image has had a paradoxical impact on sharks as people are attracted to sharks and shark images and yet terrified by them. "Shark Bite" potentially reinforces this terror as the shark is so indiscriminate in its eating habits that it attacks a canvas. The *Jaws/jaws* in the image could be a haunting reminder of the cultural fears of entering the ocean after Spielberg's film.

On the other hand, the work garners attention because, as Baker argues, it also challenges more traditional notions of "the animal." For example, Broglio's animal phenomenological reading of Olly and Suzi's work offers an alternative to the traditional notions of "the animal" because the shark attacks only because several sensory markers are triggered. The sight of the canvas could resemble a seal while the scent of chum and the vibration of the boat could entice the shark to take an exploratory bite (the fact that the shark bit once aside shark research that argues sharks are curious animals that take an exploratory bite support this reading rather than the indiscriminate eating machine myth). Unlike the anaconda work, Olly and Suzi's work on sharks better supports Broglio's phenomenological analysis. The image of the shark breaching the water with its jaws open preparing to strike *a canvas with an abstract image of a shark* also challenges the more traditional notion of "the animal" and entrenched notions about sharks (especially whites) for three significant reasons. First, the image could be read as satire because of the oddity of the intersection of shark and painting. That is, the image could be read as poking fun at the idea that sharks eat anything. In this respect, rather than an image that invokes terror it invokes laughter or at the very least a skeptical scoff. The wonder and horror of a shark breaching mouth aghast is undercut by the silliness of the floating image

of shark. Second, the meta-commentary of the shark attempting to sever or erase the abstract image of the shark contributes to the ongoing discussions of animal images, real animals, and agency. In this case, the image could be read as the real shark attacking the image of shark, or the act demonstrating that codified meaning, as in human (mis)perceptions of sharks, are unstable and subject to attack and alteration.<sup>263</sup> The image eschews realism, thereby reminding the viewer that the painting is not “a shark.” An idea the real shark reinforces through its presence and “tracks”—the remainder of the encounter. The image demonstrates that real sharks exist and that artists can resist representations of sharks that hinder their existence. Interestingly, it is the artists’ names that the shark attack removes with its bite. This is not only a comment on the participatory nature of the art (the shark as artist/participant too), but also a reminder that artists do not control the meaning of their works. Third, the image avoids segregating humans from animals, and, in fact, illustrates the growing “encounters” between humans and nonhumans, whereby human artifacts (in this case the painting) are likely to invade animal habitats. This is a strong statement against the “out there” or “devoid of human” arguments that still circulate in nature/culture discussions, preservation arguments, and many wildlife films.

Damien Hirst’s *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* remains a controversial work in relation to ethical practices in art. The artist’s suspension of the tiger shark in fluid and the open gape of its jaws provide a suspension of disbelief. The shark seems larger than life, alive, and prepared to strike. Hirst wanted the shark to terrify, to press into the deep recesses of the human mind. In fact, he wanted the shark to appear real, a consistent theme and theoretical problem in Animal related films, art, and literature because of its troublesome relationship to Mimesis (which will be discussed further in the following chapter). Furthermore, the pose and intent to terrify in addition to Hirst’s demand for realism serves to reinforce the aforementioned fears instilled by doubly focusing on the jaws/*Jaws*, the moment of attack, rather than some other behavior. The jaws of the tiger shark become the focal point for

the philosophical quandary to which the title of the work refers. That is, the jaws induce fear and the physical impossibility of understanding death in the *human* mind whilst confronted by the “Other.” This quandary not only requires a metaphysical understanding, but also, per a posthuman approach, a phenomenological understanding from both subjects, the human and nonhuman animal. However, Hirst’s concern is only with the former, the metaphysical understanding from a *human mind*, a position that only serves to sever human and animal, flesh and mind. The Cartesian overtones of the project’s purpose, and its presentation (sterile and scientific—though less so than his “opened” animals) remain explicit

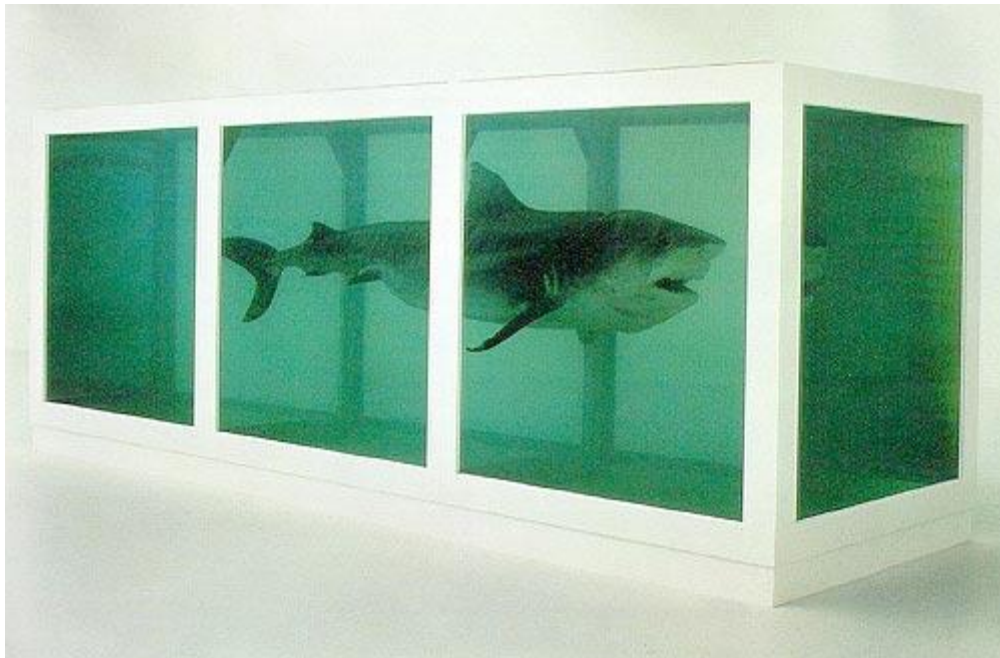


Figure 4-5 Damien Hirst “The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of the Living”<sup>264</sup>

Despite the significant ethical and philosophical problems with Hirst’s work, Broglio in *Surface Encounters* offers a more charitable reading of Hirst. Broglio argues Hirst “seems interested in preserving a place for the animal interior as something separate from the human world, something not to be opened” thereby “the reflexive interiority of the human subject does not gain access to the animal interior.”<sup>265</sup> Broglio’s reading collapses the fairly rigid boundary between interiority (mind) and interiority (guts) in the fact that by not sawing the shark in half to expose its “interiority” Hirst suggests that “the dead shark ‘knows’ something that is ‘physically

impossible' for the 'mind' of the human viewer." Broglio also collapses interiority here by using the term in both the material sense (the guts and other interior matter) and in the more cognitive or conscious sense (the "knowing"). In some respects, this rhetorical move challenges the Cartesian separation of matter and interiority (mind). In other respects it muddles interiority by further suggesting some matter matters more—i.e. the surface, that which we can encounter is somehow knowable and detached from the interior. Yet the shark's hide, eyes, gills, and other exterior—that matter on the surface of the encounter—matters as well from a bio-semiotic or phenomenological approach. Also, the complexity of the environment and other inhabitants (also, at least simply, on the surface) is informed by and informs the shark's phenomenology. While Broglio's reading is theoretically interesting and complex, like the Anaconda example, Hirst's shark falters as an exemplary example of animal phenomenology for a very simple reason, but one that bolsters the arguments concerning the instability of meaning. Hirst doesn't want us to "access the interior" because a sawn in half shark mitigates the fear he intends to instill in his audience. Hirst does not show the same concern for other animals he presents in his work (sheep and cows are sawn in half, exposing the interior). Therefore, it is the shark, not the generic Animal that is significant in Hirst's choice of leaving the shark "intact." In fact, by not sawing the shark, the only way in which a human would have access to the animal interior is through the jaws/*Jaws*, reaffirming the fears of sharks, rather challenging the Western stigma for sharks. A more posthuman (actually inhuman) reading of Hirst's shark would include the consuming of the human as a tangled mess of cross species and environmental connection. Hirst fails in this accord as well because the shark is killed by man, rather than the other way around, which illustrates the primary ethical issue with his work—killing a tiger shark for art, a more powerful indicator that even with the "power" to kill another being humans cannot access the "animal interiority."

Unlike Hirst's and Olly and Suzi's works, three contemporary works *Close to Shore*, *Shark Water*, "When Sharks Smell Blood," and *Hungry, Hungry, Shark* more closely align

ethical concerns of process and product while demonstrating the postmodern and phenomenological approaches Baker and Broglio advocate. These examples also serve as an entry point to the next chapter. While not above reproach, like Baker's and Broglio's work these three offer a more complex relationship between art, animal, and human paradigms (especially humanism). Moreover, these works address many of the critical questions that circulate in Animal Studies and resist the generalized vision that overshadows sharks in the wake of *Jaws*. These works are also a diverse selection of medium (literature, film, music, and a children's book) targeted at a various audiences. While none of these works adorned gallery walls like Oly and Suzi's work, or created such a media storm like Hirst's work, they deserve attention as they offer insight into thinking about sharks and rethinking the relationships between humans and sharks.

As mentioned, Michael Capuzzo's *Close to Shore* retells the 1916 attacks of the Jersey shore that left five people dead. The text stands in stark contrast to the film inspired by these attacks, *Jaws*, because Capuzzo provides a great amount of scientific data, historical evidence, and, most importantly attempts to provide the shark's point of view from the perceptual systems of a white shark. For instance, Capuzzo describes the attack on Charles Vansant in 1916 from Vansant's and the shark's perspectives (as well as witnesses and Vansant's dog). The shark's perspective includes biosemiotics as well as shark biology and behavior. He writes:

Far out at sea, swimming steadily, the young shark received a faint signal. Currents were washing against the thin steel cable that rooted the diving platform of the Engleside Hotel to the bottom, causing it to vibrate and issue infinitesimal waves of sound [...] These waves exploded seven miles out to sea in less than eight seconds [...] reaching a sensitive line of nerves embedded in the head of the fish, the head turned slowly side to side to improve the chances of favorable reception. [...] Emerging from the deep, in perhaps fifty feet of water, the shark sensed something different. Long, powerful, irregular noises began to batter its conical head, a wild mixed signal. [...] The shark could detect microscopic urine particles in the water: *Mammals*. [...] Fifty feet away, in deeper water, the great white was mulling whether to attack. Far from our image of a mindless killer that overwhelms its victims, the great white takes no chances when challenging prey.<sup>266</sup>

The appearance of the white shark in this example starkly contrasts the cold lifeless killing machine in *Jaws* that strikes without fear and with impunity. Capuzzo presents a shark more

akin to Broglio's phenomenological "contact zone," while also recognizing the insufficient historical knowledge that partly contributed to the sensationalism of these attacks. In *Close to Shore*, Capuzzo attributes a multitude of historical, environmental, biological, and cultural factors for the attacks and subsequent hysteria. Unlike Spielberg's monster, the white shark (or presumed white) in this text demonstrates complexity rather than generality. Moreover, Capuzzo ends the text with the reminder that despite renewed interest in and more protections for white sharks humans still exist "in whispers in the unconsciousness."<sup>267</sup> A reminder similar to Thoreau that one shark can instill fear for years and a call for viewing white sharks differently—more fully including shark behavior and sensory systems.<sup>268</sup>

Like Capuzzo's text, Barry Black's (Eric Bachmann) album titled *Tragic Animal Stories* also attempts to provide animal perspectives (generally emotive). The album contains songs like "Dueling Elephants, Drowning Spider, and "When Sharks Smell Blood." The songs are instrumental and devoid of human voice. In "When Sharks Smell Blood" the sounds of the various instruments attempt to evoke a sensation of being "shark," and, interestingly evoking smell, tactile movements, and sight through sound. As Broglio argues, this "encounter" remains on the surface. However, the strength of the piece is its ability to avoid the stereotypical ominous or frenzied sounds associated with sharks thanks largely to famous film song composer John Williams. Rather, Bachmann's song emotes curiosity and a sense of movement. Rather than deep repetitive beats that escalate in tempo, this track haunts with the subtlety of piano and violin. In this respect, the music is shockingly different as the type of feeding frenzy generally associated with a bio-semiotic trigger like blood is largely absent (the song does have moments where the tempo increases, but they are much more subtle). While the shark's world is, as Broglio argues, largely unknowable to humans, Bachmann's song offers an imaginative way to attribute "the surface" of being shark into a perspective that allows humans to re-imagine their preconceived notions of sharks. The track also provides some sense of shark knowledge, as the "smell of blood" is a drawn out affair. The duration of the song demonstrates the



perceptual powers of sharks who smell blood at great distances, and then travel great distances to reach the potential meal, unlike *Jaws* who appears suddenly and violently. In fact, per tempo, duration, and tone the track couldn't be more different than *Jaws*' well known theme song. Yet, both songs indicate a shark has located prey and is moving toward it. However, Bachmann's song ends with a strange noise in the background that sounds like rope or boards creaking, rather than the "strike" (the crescendo of the baritone beats) of the film's theme song. Bachmann's track, therefore, like Mellville's "Shark Massacre" could have another, more sinister meaning for the material consequence of shark and human encounters. Like the brutal massacre of sharks by humans, "The Smell of Blood" could represent the chumming that entices sharks closer to human ships, where they are then caught for their fins. While possibly a stretch, the absence of any human associated noises (human voices or ships) until the very end of the song isn't without importance. Also, the album title, "Tragic Animal Stories" could indicate the sharks (the primary focus of the song) are in for a tragedy.

Tragedy for sharks at the hands of humans is also the primary concern of Rob Stewart's *Shark Water*, a documentary film that demonstrates the horrors of the finning industry. The film addresses most of the issues discussed in this chapter, including the misrepresentations of sharks that have led to dire material consequences for them at the hands and hooks of humans. The film primarily provides strong appeals to pathos by capturing both the beauty of sharks and the ocean, and the senseless and cruel slaughter of sharks for their fins. Stewart shows little concern for the voices of dissenting opinions, as those included are clearly fringe voices that come across as ignorant (primarily by juxtaposing comments of those against sharks with those of highly educated specialists supporting sharks). While heavy handed at times, the strategy is nonetheless quite effective, especially considering the historical information (including military footage) that is clearly misinformed. These moments help to illustrate the inadequacy of "expert" knowledge devoid of research, contact, and understanding of environmental and biological factors in sharks habitats. In many respects, the "expert"

knowledge the film undermines further demonstrates how more research about sharks is needed. The real strength of the film rests on Stewart's ability to assemble a more complete vision of sharks. More specifically, he provides details on shark behavior, perception, and habitat as well as human encounters with them, beliefs of them (both rightly and wrongly), and the consequences of these intersections. The film, therefore, does not attempt to separate sharks from humans, nor disregard the roles of sharks and humans in the larger ecological framework of the ocean and the planet. This is a story of duration, one where "human" time compresses and threatens ecological time—that is, the film clearly indicates sharks long tenure on the planet, a tenure threatened by a fairly recent (in light of the existence of humans interacting with sharks) issue. The film successfully blends the multiplicity of factors (like sensory experience or global capitalism) in both grand and petite narratives, highlighting the capacities of human practices both short and long term to impact sharks and ecological systems. For instance, in one scene Stewart indicates sharks sensory systems are so acute that they "feel" his heart beat. Moreover, per a communication across species sharks cue on the rate of his heart—they approach if his heart beats slowly, evade him if his heart beats rapidly. The film also highlights the collective power of ordinary people to enact positive change for issues like shark finning. For instance, his crew and that of the Sea Sheppard are well known ocean activists, yet they were unable to alleviate finning in Costa Rica. However, the local populations did by taking to the streets and protesting shark finning. These people, not the "experts" or television personalities, helped force the government (that only months prior threatened to arrest Stewart) into tighter restrictions on finning and more action against those who violate the restrictions. Like many Environmental Justice issues, local people serve an important role in revising human actions, which often are not only profit driven (hence the case for long lines in fishing), but also standard practice often based in cultural perceptions (sharks are aggressive man eaters, therefore their extinction is justified).

The film is not without criticism, as some have argued the film is more about Stewart who is self-promoting. For instance, in one scene Stewart is confined to a hospital bed. A bacteria infection threatens his life, an interesting and strange moment in a film about shark preservation. The narrative shifts from sharks to Stewart. Tangentially the connection is if he dies sharks have one less advocate, the primary concern is his life (i.e. a human life). Yet, the scene does have another, more shark-centric reading that bolsters one of the reoccurring themes in the film. Sharks rarely kill people. In fact, Stewart is frequently around sharks, yet a bacteria infection, not a shark, is the reason he clings to life. His case is a very personal and emotional response to both the Japanese executive and the Australian shark hunter that insist sharks are the primary concern for humans in the ocean. Also, the scene is about scale. A microbe, not a sixteen-foot shark, endangers human life. The focus in this scene shifts from *Jaws/jaws* to something so miniscule there is no notice—no fin breaching the surface, no gaping jaws. Quint and a fleet of ships cannot detour this “assailant.”

The film also succumbs to reducing all sharks to Shark. As mentioned, there is great diversity among sharks in areas like biology and habitat. For instance, the sensory abilities of sharks differ in degree or kind depending on species and habitat. The hammerhead shark has much greater electromagnetic detection than the white shark. The whale shark has a significantly different diet and “hunting” strategy than the oceanic white tip. The differences are certainly important for a greater understanding of sharks and their connections between habitats and humans, but the filmmakers do not seem unaware of these issues. Rather, they are intentionally grouping sharks into Shark for ethical and political reasons. Stewart argues that currently the greatest risk to sharks is the practice of finning. He also argues that this practice threatens most shark species. Generalization becomes a pragmatic and important political tool for his cause. Moreover, as the film indicates, sharks are reduced to fin, and therefore, the difference becomes (im)material for those profiting from finning. Stewart attempts to (re)materialize shark bodies, sensory systems, habitats, and behaviors to the image of the

lopped fins by providing images of sharks with and without fins—that is, he shows sharks prior to and after finning in order to associate fins with sharks in a more compassionate and understanding manner than the piercing dorsal fin in horror movies like *Jaws*. Also, Stewart employs a recent trend in Environmental and Animal Studies of associating food with its sources and processes.

Joanna Cole's *Hungry, Hungry, Sharks!*, part of Random House's "Step into Reading" program, targets children between First and Third Grade at reading level 3, or "reading on your own." At this level the texts provide "engaging characters, easy-to-follow plots, and popular topics." Initially, the text follows a similar formula to the Discovery Network Shark Week programs (as discussed earlier). The cover of the book contains a large white shark, jaws open rising from the depths, while the title focuses on the gastronomic drive of sharks—written in red (blood) at an angle that seems as if it is dissipating in the water.

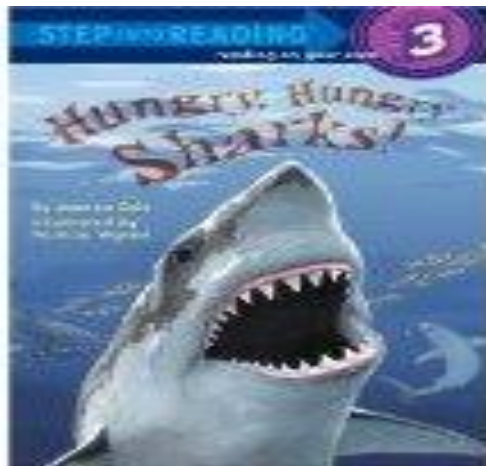


Figure 4-6 Joanna Cole *Hungry, Hungry, Sharks!*

Therefore, initially, the text aimed at children conjures up the type of entertainment and fear generated by *Jaws*. However, unlike the Discovery Network's Shark Week this is where the connection ends. The rest of the text carefully addresses shark factoids, including the vast diversity of the species, and that sharks like the whale shark, won't bite people. More importantly, unlike *Jabberjaw*, the text indicates sharks can and do bite people (even eat them), but that attacks are very rare (similar to the discussion of frequency in educational shark texts

mentioned earlier in this chapter). Like *Shark Water*, the primary argument is cause and effect. People hunt sharks (not vice versa), therefore shark populations are at risk. For instance, the closing passage of the text notes: "There are many things we do not know about sharks. But we do know that sharks are in danger. That is because people hunt them for food. And often sharks die just by getting tangled up in fishing nets. So the number of sharks is getting smaller. Many people are trying to save them. Sharks are amazing animals. Oceans would not be the same without sharks."<sup>269</sup> This closing passage also highlights at least three of the primary issues discussed early in this chapter. First, similar to Baker's and Broglio's arguments this passage is reminding children of the limits of human knowledge, especially when concerning nonhuman animals. While not as a sophisticated analysis as Baker's or Broglio's, the argument is similar, human knowledge is limited. Second, human practices have dire consequences on nonhuman animals, whether those practices are deliberate (hunting sharks for food) or accidental (caught up in longlines). This argument echoes the arguments in *Shark Water*, as well as the arguments about materiality, semiotics, meaning, and consequence.<sup>270</sup> Also, by framing sharks as "amazing animals" and not hunters of humans, the text avoids the man vs. shark language often used to justify both intentional and unintentional human actions. Third, the final lines indicate sharks are important to the ecology of the ocean, an argument similar to Leopold's "Thinking Like a Mountain" in that connections and time are important aspects of the consequences of human actions toward nonhuman animals.

Art, literature, and film; therefore, should approach the relationships between human and nonhuman more fully and from multiple perspectives. In this paradigm, human and nonhuman perception co-constitutes encounters, as does the context and environments where the encounters happen. Generalizing representations of nonhuman animals, or reducing them to mere symbol of the human condition ignores theoretical ideas concerning the connections between material and semiotics as well as meaning and consequence. Human relationships with and representations of sharks serve as an example of the ethical imperative for

reconsidering human and nonhuman animal relationships, especially those shaped by literature, film, and art. The material and semiotic connections can have dire consequences for these beings. In order to alleviate such asynchronous power relations in how animals are perceived, artists, authors, and filmmakers should develop a more fully integrated sense of the connection between ethics, aesthetics, and the multitude of factors that shape said relations (including both nonhuman and human perceptions and environmental factors). The following chapter addresses the problems identified in this chapter by more fully developing a(e)s(th)et(ics)—the convergence of ethics and aesthetics—in literature, film, and art concerning nonhuman animals and their relationships to humans and environments. The chapter begins with an overview of the challenges for the terms art and aesthetic in a posthuman perspective of ethics and aesthetics. Recasting the terms under a different paradigm is essential because sharks (and other nonhuman animals) desperately need human action in order to curve the rapid depletion of populations, food sources, and habitat. A(e)s(th)et(ics) is a start.

## Chapter 5

### A(e)s(th)et(ics)—the Convergence of Aesthetics and Ethics

The previous chapter identified the material and semiotic consequences of the representation of sharks (primarily white sharks) in the arts. The trajectory of shark representations in popular culture post *Jaws* has generally been detrimental to sharks. While post *Jaws* there have been positive consequences, like more shark research and legal protections, even attempts to garner more positive representations (like Olly and Suzi's work with sharks) and positive readings (like Baker's and Brogolio's) potentially reinforce the very negative representations they eschew, or overreach by attributing fairly universal claims about animal experience. Artists (broadly conceived) and scholars primarily reinforce these negative portrayals through a variety of means, including championing message (semiotics) over materiality and product (work) over process. More specifically, the previous chapter focuses on why scholars and artists contribute to the negative material consequences for sharks. Shifting from why this happens, this chapter focuses on how to mitigate the negative consequences and potentially engender positive material consequences for nonhuman animals, such as sharks. The loci for how to mitigate the negative consequences for animals are the many moments where aesthetics and ethics converge in the arts, or a(e)s(th)et(ics). The theoretical foundation for this term began with the analyses in the proceeding chapters. This chapter will continue to build upon this framework by adding specific art and aesthetic theories as well as ethical arguments regarding animals in art (both live and representations). The term, a(e)s(th)et(ics), is plural because per the discussions of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomes and becomings throughout this project a(e)s(th)et(ics) is neither singular (or at the very least Singular), nor subject to a strict hierarchal organization.

Like becoming, a(e)s(th)et(ics) is a passing through, not a passing from. Also a(e)s(th)et(ics) is neither a priori nor disentangled from the encounters of subjects in shared places.<sup>271</sup> The participants/spectators afford and are afforded (or in some cases denied)

experience based on interactions with one another and the environments they share. For instance, Joseph Beuys' well known performance piece titled "I Like America, and America Likes Me" portrayed an experience of both the artist's and a coyote's sensory systems in a shared space. While the work also contained numerous symbolic elements, the relationships developed over three days shifted from general apprehension, especially on the part of the coyote, to at least tolerance (Beuys was able to hug the coyote at the conclusion of the work). However, the audience also contributed to the aesthetic experience(s) of the work as their presence contributed to the shared environment between Beuys and the coyote (at times adding to the anxiety of the coyote). The work demonstrates that both the human and the nonhuman are more than mere objects for reflection and, more importantly, that the interactions between them—between the recognition of one another in a shared space—shape the work. Unlike Olly and Suzi, Beuys' work exists outside the "natural" habitat of his subject. However, the a(e)s(th)et(ics) of the work invoke a similar sense of the importance of place. The "America that Loves Me," refers to the myth of the coyote in the west (similar to the timeless birds in *Winged Migration*), not the living coyote that through habitat loss and ranching faces significant challenges. In this regard the work signals not only the importance of place, but of shared place. Beuys in the role of a Shaman, encounters the coyote, but on more equal terms (and yet the work still signals the asynchronous power relations between humans and nonhumans). The work also demonstrates one of the premises of meaning. In *The Postmodern Animal*, Steve Baker offers an insightful reading of Beuys' performance piece:

A quarter of a century later, the power of the piece has little to do with the validity or otherwise of Beuys's political analysis (he saw the interaction as a means of addressing the 'unworked-out trauma' of modern America's relation to the American Indian). It is the materialization of that analysis, the week-long confrontation itself, which continues to fascinate—a confrontation of human and animal through which, Beuys suggested, 'the roles were exchanged immediately.'<sup>272</sup>

Baker's statement reflects the discussion of the inability to dictate meaning (via intent) as well as the reverberation of meaning throughout time and context. As Baker notes, twenty-five years after Beuys' performance its meaning has significantly shifted. The focus on the relationships



between humans (European and Native Americans) changes to the focus on the relationships between humans and nonhumans (interestingly the shift in both also relates to place and supports Wolfe's argument about speciesism's relationship to other isms, like racism). His statement also reflects the posthumanist material and semiotic encounters.<sup>273</sup> While Beuys' claim that the "the roles were exchanged immediately" overextends the ability to understand "animal phenomenology" (per Broglio) and the asynchronous power relations between humans and nonhumans, his claim does indicate an intersection between materiality and semiotics via an encounter. Also, the work addresses the ethics of the relationships between humans and animals (or per the artist's intent the ethics of the relationship between America and Native Americans), by placing the subjects in such close proximity and by highlighting Beuys' patience and understanding.

A(e)s(th)et(ics) is a messy confluence of a multitude of factors passing through one another in a particular moment and context. Works, like Beuys', highlight the knotted relationships (per Haraway) and yet are subject to change—to lines of flight (per Deleuze and Guattari) while passing through new contexts and into the purview of new spectators. Beuys is only one example among many (for example, Olly and Suzi's work also addresses these messy connections—including place/habitat in really productive ways) where animals become (even if not intended) the primary concern of analyses. The common thread among works that fall under the purview of a(e)s(th)et(ics) is the earnest ethical interest in nonhuman animals, their actions, and interactions with humans. Scholars like Haraway advocate the multi-sensory understanding of the encounters between humans and nonhuman animals via theories like "situated knowledges," which she extends to dogs in her later works. Contemporary artists have begun to extend ideas, like Haraway's, to art in exciting ways in order to highlight the connections between humans and nonhumans while decentering the human—especially in regards to perspective. In Palgrave Macmillan's edited collection titled, *Deleuze|Guattari & Ecology*, Matthew Fuller's essay, "Art for Animals," focuses on artists who "address the ecology of

capacities for perceptions, sensation, thought and reflexivity of animals.”<sup>274</sup> For instance, Fuller cites Paul Perry’s installation work in which “a robotic device [sprays] bobcat urine high up a tree to stimulate an imaginary of pheromone responses” as a means of “setting up actual, multi-scalar and imaginal relations with animals that involve a testing of shared and distinct capacities of perception.”<sup>275</sup> Fuller’s reading of artists like Perry suggests that in order to de-center the human (per Wolfe and Haraway) art must challenge the perceptions and perceptual abilities of its patrons. Yet Fuller’s reading of Perry, and the project itself, falls short of integrating an a(e)s(th)et(ics) approach because it neither addresses the historical (both material and semiotic) factors of perceptions, places, and humans and nonhumans, nor does it address the cultural issues fraught with humanist paradigms in the product and process of Perry’s work. For instance, Fuller addresses the similarities to the work and hunting practices (that both employ technology in order to “communicate” with animals), but doesn’t extend his analysis beyond the comparison. That is, unlike Haraway or Shukin, Fuller generally ignores the intermeshing of the biological and technological, as well as the material consequences of such meshing. In fact, Fuller notes that Perry is not concerned with whether or not the animals are stimulated by or have any awareness of the marking. Perception in this sense remains rather disconnected to the larger knotted mess of human and nonhuman encounters addressed by scholars like Haraway. While the scope of Fuller’s analysis ignores these issues the work does address them.

Fuller is correct in highlighting the significance of the work for three important reasons that relate to a(e)s(th)et(ics). First, the work provides a less materially consequential mode of inter-species communication—a connection between aesthetics and ethics. Unlike hunters, who use urine and other markers in order to entice animals into the range of their weapons, Perry attempts to identify animal sensory systems for better understanding not better chances for killing. His work would be more akin to nonlethal approaches to keeping deer out of gardens—a deterrent only. In this respect, his work does attend to the historical interactions between

humans and nonhuman animals by signaling the types of encounters that have stemmed from humans expanding into animal habitats. The work also attends to the potential of nonhuman species expansion—more specifically, the addition of nonnative species into new habitats as the result of human actions (and technology). Because Perry uses bobcat urine in an area where bobcats do not exist, the inhabitants of the forest smell an unfamiliar marker. The “bobcat” exists in a new habitat, much like pythons in Florida. The implications of such “movement” cannot be easily ignored in contemporary society where discussions of concerns like invasive species continue to flourish.

Second, the mechanical “bobcat” loaded with real bobcat urine aligns well with readings like Haraway’s of OncoMouse © or Wolfe’s of GFP Bunny because as with OncoMouse© and GFP Bunny the “bobcat” demonstrates the entanglement between the material and technological, between human and nonhuman. As mentioned, Fuller carefully notes that Perry’s work eschews typical science approaches because he neither records data, nor does he care whether animals respond to the urine. Yet, like Haraway and Wolfe, Fuller recognizes the interconnection between technology, materiality, and the instable line between human and nonhuman. In fact, the three “works” fit fairly well on a continuum between science and art as OncoMouse© is primarily a science experiment, then GFP Bunny is a science experiment turned art work, and “bobcat” is an art work like a science experiment. The underlying message of each supports the material semiotic arguments and “natural” versus “cultural” arguments in contemporary theory.<sup>276</sup> These works are neither “pure” nature, nor purely cultural. Per Haraway, each is a knotted node of historical, biological, and technical encounters between humans and nonhumans.

Third, Fuller convincingly argues that the robots “marking” signifies a materially perceptual narrative. The confluence of narrative in both the material (urine) and the semiotic (meaning/perception) of the robot’s actions serve as examples of the type of narrative theories—material semiotics and narrative as well as meaning consequence and narrative.<sup>277</sup> The robot

and its human controller “participate” in the narrative by marking as does the animal inhabitants in their reactions (or lack there of) to the markings. Per meaning consequentialism the marking although meaningful, may or may not purport meaning as Fuller notes Perry doesn’t check whether or not animals respond to mechanical bobcat markings.<sup>278</sup> However, with the folding of technological with material, historical with biological the project engenders the knotted node of narrative akin to Haraway’s exposition on companion species. Furthermore, the narrative in this project is neither a priori, nor enduring—rather, per Pratt the work creates a “contact” zone, a place of potential tension, or per Deleuze and Guattari rupture. Yet, despite the potential Perry does not document the consequences for the nonhuman inhabitants. Instead, the consequences of the work are more identifiable in the human spectators (viewers or readers). In this respect, the work eventually falls short of the a(e)s(th)et(ics) paradigm proposed in this chapter. A(e)s(th)et(ics) attends to the collisions of the types of messy mixes between human and nonhuman encounters, not just human responses to the use of animals, or the manipulation of them. Too many works address meaning by either dismissing or diminishing the importance of the material animal bodies and their lived environments.

However, before proceeding with a(e)s(th)et(ics)—how scholars and artists can begin to alleviate this problem—a significant issue must be addressed. Similar to Wolfe’s argument in *What Is Posthumanism*, in order to dislodge the humanist foundation that permeates Western culture the following terms must be reexamined: art, aesthetics, and ethics. These terms need reexamination because, similar to Wolfe’s claim about enlightenment rationality, “[these terms] stop short of applying [their] own protocols and commitments to [themselves].”<sup>279</sup> Without applying the type of rigorous examination to these terms, as Wolfe does to enlightenment rationality and humanism, art will potentially reinscribe the very humanist paradigms artists concerned with animals purport to reject. Rather, these terms need recasting from a posthumanist paradigm (more akin to Wolfe and Haraway than Hayles) in order to create the foundation for a(e)s(th)et(ics).

Thus, while the field of Animal Studies contains many discussions of documentary film, art, photography, and literature in relation to whether the “animal” presented is an imitation /culturally constructed animal or a “real” one, most discussions start from the premise that terms like art and aesthetic are self-evident. Rarely raised is the question, “what is art” in regard to the relationships between animals and humans (although Wolfe asks what does art add to Animal Studies discussions). Even rarer is any discussion of the relationship between aesthetics and art in works about, for, and from animals. As indicated, these terms frequently reinforce the very humanist paradigm that the artists purport to undermine. In *What Is Posthumanism* Wolfe provides a useful schematic for thinking about the distinctions between posthumanism and humanism whereby scholars, such as Derrida, are evaluated not only on their subject/focus (i.e. nonhuman animals are the general concern) but also on their approach (humanist versus posthumanist). While helpful, in *Artist/Animal* Steve Baker argues that the distinction between posthumanist posthumanism and posthumanist humanism in regard to Wolfe’s categorization of Coe (posthumanist humanism) and Kac (posthumanist posthuman) remains tenuous because “both make work that is, at least at times, characterized by (and welcoming of) contradictions, failures, uncertainties, and ambiguities. Both work at the blurry boundary of art and on further blurry that boundary.”<sup>280</sup> Baker’s point is salient. The line between posthumanist posthumanism and posthumanist humanism remains difficult to define, at least in respect to the examples Wolfe and Baker address. Not surprising, Baker’s statement about the difficulty of classification systems, like Wolfe’s, echoes discussions concerning the line between humans and nonhumans. He cites works like Mark Dion’s *Scala naturae* as examples of artists highlighting the insufficiency of classification systems. However, classification systems are only one of the many ways in which contemporary artists address the knotted mess between humans and nonhumans. For example, the material semiotic interconnections not only illustrate the material cultural connections of works like *Winged Migration* and *The Making of Winged Migration*, but also the unclear line between the “human” and the “animal.”<sup>281</sup> Authors and Artists such as

Margaret Atwood and Patricia Piccinini also explore the boundaries between humans and nonhumans through science, materiality, and consequence. Both Atwood and Piccinini dehumanize the human via humanizing the nonhuman—yet without the anthropomorphism of children’s illustrations or animated movies. These are science-fictions, yet not fictitious as OncoMouse© and other genetically altered animals already share material narratives with humans. Piccinini’s “The Young Family” (see image below) both literally and figuratively makes such a move. More specifically, the work signals these connections in appearance and in composition. The work consists of silicon, acrylic, human hair, leather, and timber. The human, the material, the animal, and the technological all collide to create a haunting image of the intersection of human and nonhuman.



Figure 5-1 Patricia Piccinini “The Young Family”<sup>282</sup>

Nancy Hightower elaborates on the connections between humans, nonhumans, and technology (and, more importantly, use of animals) in Piccinini’s work in her essay, “Patricia Piccinini’s Mythic Imagination.” Hightower writes,

Piccinini states that “the idea behind this piece is that here is a creature which has been bred to provide replacement organs for humans, an idea that springs from the very real prospect of doing so using genetically modified pigs.” While the creature is certainly pig-like, instead of the customary hooves, it has large, man-like hands and hairy forearms. Looking at them, we cannot think “pig” or even “woman.” Yet both of those words almost fit when regarding the brood suckling at her nipples.<sup>283</sup>

The fictive here, as Hightower notes, is not far from the factual. Moreover, the fictive family created from genetic manipulation remains a common trope in both Science Fiction and Horror. Paccinini's vision of human manipulation blurs the boundaries between human and nonhuman and raises ethical concerns of genetic manipulation as well as animal use. These themes also remain unclear in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, which is an important example as it signals back to both Berger's and Lippit's arguments about the connection between children, animals, and innocence—themes present in "The Young Family" as well. According to both Berger and Lippit children have access to a sense of connection and wonder adults lose through industrial and consumer culture. Children envision connections, where adults create chasms. For instance, in *Oryx and Crake* a young Jimmy thinks "he didn't want to eat a pigoon, because he thought of the pigoons as creatures much like himself."<sup>284</sup> In fact, Jimmy's visit to the pigoon holding pen eerily echoes Piccinini's "The Young Family." Atwood writes,

When Jimmy went to visit the pigoons he had to put on a biosuit that was too big for him, and wear a face mask, and wash his hands first with disinfectant soap. He especially liked the small pigoons, twelve to a sow and lined up in a row, guzzling milk. Pigoonlets. They were cute. But the adults were slightly frightening, with their runny noses and tiny, white-lashed pink eyes. They glanced up at him as if they saw him, really saw him, and might have plans for him later.<sup>285</sup>

In this scene, Jimmy's experience highlights how ethically fraught the station of "the animal" is in dystopian society. That is, part and parcel with a dystopian society with genetic engineering at its foundation is the inability to control, to master, nonhumans. The asynchronous power relations are readily apparent as the highly organized and contained pigoons are monitored by the human scientists. While less a(e)s(th)et(ic)ally loaded (the perceptual abilities of the pigoons are less apparent in this example), this scene provides an encounter with both human and nonhuman experience. For Jimmy the experience is sympathy, which similar to *Winged Migration* relies on the common trope of children sympathizing with animals.<sup>286</sup> However, Jimmy's sympathy also reveals another common trope in animal related works, he is more drawn to the young pigoons based on an aesthetic of cuteness—animal babies remain a cute consumer commodity, whether on film or in calendars. The convergence of aesthetics and

ethics becomes an ethic of the young, the cute—rather than the old, terrifying. Similar to contemporary theoretical discussions of nature, such an ethic can have detrimental consequences for animals, especially as they age.<sup>287</sup>

However, Atwood also provides another convergence between aesthetics and ethics—sympathy of the reader. The clinical description of the scene invokes fragility through sterility and containment. The suit Jimmy dons protects the pigoon, not him—an ironic twist considering his future encounters with the pigoons.<sup>288</sup> The pigoons' running noses signal contagion, not only for the pigoons but also between humans and nonhumans. The leaking fluid parallels the leakage between bodies, cells, and organs—between categories. The comically oversized suit also symbolizes the inability to contain such leakages. As Jimmy discovers later in the text, such attempts are laughable.

The speciesism underlying the ethical considerations of the uses and representations of nonhumans in *Oryx and Crake* resonates with Hightower's comments on Piccinini's work. She writes,

Piccinini then pulls the grotesque, rhetorical move when she asks, "How would you feel if in her or her offspring grew the heart that your baby daughter needed to live? If it came down to a choice between her life or my son's it would not be a difficult decision for me to make" (Orgaz and Piccinini). The undeniable truth of that statement indicts us—we love nature and honor it, but use it as well, and not without consequences.<sup>289</sup>

The consequences of hybridity are left to the imagination of the audience in "The Young Family;" however, in *Oryx and Crake* the consequences are quite apparent. While Piccinini employs a rhetoric of sympathy, Atwood begins with a rhetoric of sympathy that soon transforms to a rhetoric of horror. The pigoons become the stereotypic horror monster, more intelligent than humans deem animals should be and with a taste for human flesh. The ethical implications are striking, as in Piccinini's case, killing animals for human benefit remains suspect, while in Atwood's the killing of the pigoons follows a fairly typical trope.<sup>290</sup> Kill or be killed—the monster must be destroyed, a not so subtle metaphor for "human" ascension rhetoric. That is, Piccinini succeeds in blurring the line between human and nonhuman to the



point where killing “The Young Family” will invoke guilt, while killing the pigeons will invoke a sense of justification. Despite this difference, both works address the cognitive and emotive process humans go through when confronted with killing nonhumans—a process fraught with humanist overtones, according to scholars like Wolfe. These works are no exception, and as Baker astutely argues, difficult to place in Wolfe’s quadratic criterion.

While the lines between concepts like posthuman posthumanism and posthuman humanism remain unclear, the examples addressed above indicate Wolfe’s primary point that humanism’s inability to apply its protocols to itself remains a significant issue for scholars in Animal Studies. For instance, many artists using sharks in their works do so with less concern for or focus on sharks, but rather with forwarding a humanist message (Piccinini and Atwood could support and/or resist such a claim). This act subjugates matter to meaning, the latter not only of primary importance, but also generally subsuming matter into generic “being” (the particular animal doesn’t matter).<sup>291</sup> A(e)s(th)et(ics) rectifies the imbalance between matter and meaning by highlighting the importance of both, the connections between them, and the various other factors that constitute and are constituted by interactions. Texts such as *Oryx and Crake* as well as art works like “The Young Family” raise ethical questions concerning the representations or uses of nonhuman animals in popular culture and concerning what constitutes art about or for animals in a posthuman paradigm. More specifically, how are art, aesthetics, and ethics conceived in a posthumanist paradigm. The following sections flesh out these terms from a posthumanist paradigm.

#### Art—About, From, and For Animals: What Is Art in Posthumanism?

Plato and Aristotle laid the foundation for discussions of art in Western philosophy by agreeing that art, like poetry, was a product of “mimesis [...] that is in some sense or other an ‘imitation’ of reality.”<sup>292</sup> While they disagreed on “their diagnosis of the effects”<sup>293</sup> of art on audiences<sup>294</sup> discussions of art and representation begin with Plato and Aristotle as both identify art as imitation for better or worse (in Plato’s view, worse as the art cannot capture essences

and, more troubling, can unduly influence the populace). Artists have since challenged their definition of art. However, imitation still circulates as a primary mode of representation in discussions of animals and art as artists attempt to identify and represent the “authentic” animal. Authenticity is a significant issue for animal studies. Briefly, “authenticity” via mimesis (in its many forms—i.e. the mirror can be material likeness, or a characteristic or behavior) creates two significant problems: exclusion (as evident in the wild vs. domestic animal disputes) and universal animals, whose “essence” is enduring and containable (that is, not a combination of factors that intersect in fluid or permeable manners as the New Materialists rightfully argue)<sup>295</sup>. For example, in animal documentary films and wildlife photography imitation serves to validate the “authentic” animal. Similar to Plato’s vision of mimesis and the arts, these works attempt to capture the essence of animal via “authentic” images and habitats, as well as scientific taxonomies—yet unlike Plato, who believes essence cannot be fully “copied or captured,” animal documentaries purport to capture the essence of the animals they track. Their focus is often framed in commonplaces (like the wild animal out there devoid of the taint of human culture) that attempts to define what constitutes real animals. For instance, the opening scene of *Winged Migration* illustrates the “universal” enduring and timeless “animal.”<sup>296</sup> Projects similar to *Winged Migration* purport to identify an “authentic” animal in its habitat. Yet, as Mittman and Chris argue, the advent of animal filmmaking includes an entertainment aspect that reinterprets what constitutes nonhumans based upon box office receipts rather than scientific veracity. Therefore, the cultural concepts of animals become foundational aspects of authenticity. That is, the “essence” of the animal reflects human cultural qualities via “imitations.” If not problematic enough, extending the animal via these humanist paradigms ignores posthuman perspectives where not only is the animal the primary focus, but also recognizes the differences (and connections) between aspects like animal habitats and sensory perceptions. In many instances, the “authentic” animal follows a limited focus on a particular nonhuman perspective, such as sharks and smell of blood, and a primarily humanist aesthetic. What remains missing in the

discussions of the messy interplay between animals, art, and aesthetics hinges on the (mis)understanding or assumption that art and aesthetics as concepts are easily understood, and readily identifiable. Although this might be true in some instances, in relationship to animals these terms remain primarily tethered to humanist paradigms, generalized aesthetics, and, therefore, often result in dire consequences for nonhumans.

Contemporary artists and scholars continue to challenge mimesis in the arts. In fact many of the examples Steve Baker uses in his three important texts on art and animals eschew mimesis. Yet, artists still purport to present some “authentic” idea of animals. For example, Olly and Suzi’s interactive works are “real” animals in “real” habitats. While their work does address living animals in their habitats, subscribing authenticity to animals and places often serves as a means of exclusion versus inclusion. This is certainly not Olly and Suzi’s purpose as they are highlighting material beings in a world of representations. However, just as Baker argues the line between posthumanist posthumanism and posthumanist humanism remains difficult to identify, the line between material and semiotics remains difficult to identify for authenticity. In regards to Olly and Suzi’s work, their experiences interacting with animals in shared places help designate what constitutes an “authentic” animal. However, juxtaposing a work like *Winged Migration* with *The Making of Winged Migration* reveals the folding of a multitude of factors like material and cultural issues (the Monument Valley scene folds historical, biological, evolutionary, and cultural issues), which makes claims of/about authenticity difficult if not impossible (rather authentic is relative and multiple, per Deleuze and Guattari).

Authenticity (via mimesis) arguments remain problematic, especially through two distinct approaches toward creating and/or reading art—art about and for animals. Both approaches shift the primary focus from humans to nonhuman animals, thereby attempting to alleviate the irreducibility of animals and animal bodies to human issues. However, like the aforementioned discussion of the unclear boundaries between categories like posthumanist posthumanism and posthumanist humanism, each of these approaches remains unstable as

issues like subjectivity and materiality complicate placing works strictly in one approach. For instance, a work deemed art for animals might also be deemed art about animals and vice versa (however, they are not synonymous, just as art and aesthetics are not synonymous). Art about animals is the broader category, and art for animals generally falls under its purview (just as aesthetics is the broader category that art generally falls under). More importantly, the categorization of a work might change over time (as previously mentioned, Beuys' work with the coyote is an example of such a shift).<sup>297</sup>

The first approach focuses on art about animals. While relatively as simple as it sounds, this approach frequently is more loosely applied than art for animals. Yet, while relatively simple, art about animals can become less about animals and more about humans in relation to humans, whereby human concerns or issues supplant any discussions about animals. The distinctions between whether works are about humans or nonhumans are not always clear. For instance, Yann Martel's *Life of Pi's* ambiguous ending (Martel states he wants the reader to choose which ending they believe) exemplifies the difficulties of neatly categorizing works as about animals or simply as about humans with animals serving as symbols or metaphors for human issues.<sup>298</sup> Martel intentionally subverts a singular reading, and, more importantly the two endings provided both address ethical issues frequently discussed in Animal Studies scholarship. In the first ending, Pi's experiences on the sea are with Richard Parker (a Bengal tiger) and other real/living animals. This version of the story illustrates hope as Pi and Richard Parker become allies of sorts working together for their mutual survival. The interactions between Pi and Parker further demonstrate the ability of humans to understand and communicate with nonhumans on some level. Pi learns to interact with Parker, and vice versa. This version is hopeful—especially as an allegory for human and nonhuman relationships.

In the second ending, Pi's experiences on the sea are not with any "real" animals, but rather with humans whom he provides animal counterparts. The first ending then (the one with the nonhuman animals) becomes a coping mechanism for the fractured psyche of an

adolescent boy who witnesses the savagery of humans firsthand. In this version, Pi and Richard Parker are one in the same. The killing of animals and subsequent eating of them then in the first story covers the murder and cannibalism in the second. While the first story provides hope, this version provides only dread. While Martel intends the reader to choose which version to believe, the officers who interview Pi choose to believe that he was adrift with a menagerie of animals because the other choice animalizes humans. Their decision underscores the long held belief that only animals (or humans who are more animal than human) could participate in such “uncivilized” behavior (and supports the discussions of the popularity of “animal attack” programs).<sup>299</sup>

Art about animals, as framed for this project, includes connections between humans and nonhumans, not just animals or animals as symbols for human issues. More importantly, the connections art about animals addresses includes the types of knotted nodes discussed by Haraway, thereby raising ethical questions about said connections. For instance, artist Allison Hunter’s installation piece “I Remember Fireflies” calls attention to the disappearance of fireflies in heavily urban areas like Houston, Texas. Hunter is not alone in recognizing the decline in fireflies in the Houston area. Houston Chronicle reporter Allan Turner notes that “Bug experts from Switzerland to Thailand have watched as firefly populations dropped. Explanations range from habitat loss to pesticides and light pollution.”<sup>300</sup> Hunter’s work addresses these historical and cultural factors by creating “fireflies” in an area they rarely exist. The “fireflies” are not real living fireflies, they are a mix of wire, clay, and lights. Their “existence” stems from the consequences of human practices on actual fireflies, as well as the artist’s desire to raise awareness of fireflies (and the lack there of) in the Houston area. However, unlike viewing real fireflies in a park setting, Hunter’s installation requires that spectators peer in a box in order to see the them. According to Hunter the strategy, “reverse[s] the cultural subject position of the non-human versus human. The insect is inside (a shelter) while the human is outside in “nature.” The non-human watches the film at a scale more suited to insects than humans. The

tiny peep hole amplifies the size of the human compared to the insect. The human tries to see but cannot see what is going on inside. The intimate life of insects remains a mystery.”<sup>301</sup> The scale of the work highlights the impacts of humans on smaller scale nonhumans and mirrors the shrinking habitat of the fireflies in the Houston metro area. As the city and its suburbs expand, the box contracts leaving the fireflies constrained. And yet, the shrinking box also becomes the last bastion for the darkness the fireflies require in order to communicate with one another. In this respect, Hunter’s work, while certainly magical, contains a hint of despair.

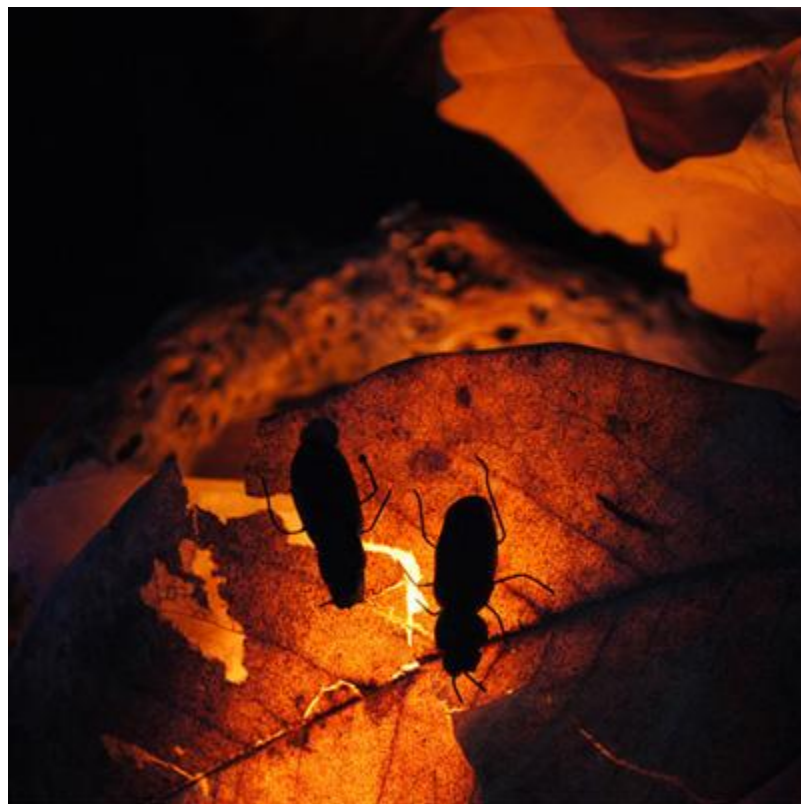


Figure 5-2 Allison Hunter “I Remember Fireflies”

The emotional content, whether wonder or despair, depends on memory (as the work’s title notes). The connection between human memory of nonhumans, place, and time has been well covered by scholars such as Berger, Lippit, Burt, and Chris. Hunter’s installation not only provides the wonder and mystery that Berger argues was essential to the human and nonhuman “sphere” of relations, but also provides an answer to his famous question “why look

at animals (or in this case insects)?" Hunter's answer is simple—look before they cease to exist, before they are only memories or dioramas in a museum—yet in an era of rapid species extinction and environmental upheaval her answer is significantly important. Her work also challenges Berger's disdain for animals (like pets or those in zoos) who do not fit his "pre" 19<sup>th</sup> Century framework by identifying a problem for real nonhuman creatures in a particular location at a particular time via the assembled fireflies. The staging of the image highlights the problem in relation to time as the background is lit up (the past) not the bugs (present). Like the light from the Houston metro area, the light in the background of the image drowns out the light of the fireflies, leaving them as shadows of human technological advancement and habitat encroachment. The miniaturization of the work also serves to illustrate this point as the human spectator really has to focus through the tiny aperture in order to see the fireflies. The message is clear. Human practices have had material effects for nonhuman animals. These are specific practices in a particular place and at a particular time. More importantly, the work indicates a particular species who suffers the impact. The work does not, as many can, generalize the practices or the nonhumans.

"I Remember Fireflies" requires viewers to search for and make connections between the impacts of human practices on nonhumans. Because the work uses the contrast of light and dark in a miniaturized scale the spectator is required to make connections and draw conclusions. Roz Mortimer's blog titled "The Flayed Horse" displays images far less subtle (which isn't a critique). Unlike Hunter's whimsical images fireflies, Mortimer uses an image of "a flayed horse had been left in the waste bin of the car park opposite [an] office" in order to highlight the impact human practices have on nonhuman animals.<sup>302</sup>



Figure 5-3 Roz Mortimer image on her blog titled “The Flayed Horse”

Mortimer’s work also highlights an important disjuncture between works addressing human practices and nonhuman animals—Hunter’s work demonstrates the unintended consequences of human practices for nonhuman animals while Mortimer’s the intended consequences of human practices for nonhuman animals. While intentionality doesn’t absolve the practices, juxtaposing Hunter’s work with Mortimer’s raises questions about how the “human” connection and practices factor into art “about” animals. As indicated, works about animals earnestly focus on nonhumans animals, but also recognize their specificity (i.e. per Derrida’s animot, that animals are a more heterogeneous group than they appear in discussions of “the Animal”) in relation to the complex connections between them and humans. Both Hunter’s and Mortimer’s works are about animals in this sense. However, Mortimer’s work has the potential for a broader scope (not a critique of either Mortimer or Hunter) in that the practice of killing animals and discarding the carcasses could apply to more than just horses. Moreover, the image might be more shocking to Western viewers because of the affinity for horses in Western culture (like dogs invoke strong sympathetic responses)—even when contradictory information or practices occur (like horse meat). Despite these differences both works are about specific relationships



between humans nonhumans in a way Evaristti's "Helena" is not.<sup>303</sup> The goldfish are fairly immaterial for the work, in fact, viewers learn nothing about goldfish and little human's practices or relationships to them ( from an "about animals" perspective at least the work affords that killing a goldfish is a moral conundrum—or should be). The work could use frogs, other fish, or worms for instance. "Helena" also fails to account for the historical connections between humans and nonhumans like Hunter's "I Remember Fireflies" does.

The second approach advocates art for animals. As mentioned above, Matthew Fuller promotes art for animals, which he defines as art where "animals [are] intended as its key users or audience [and] makes a direct address to the perceptual world of one or more nonhuman animal species."<sup>304</sup> Fuller admits there are few works that are *for* animals because some objects do "not usefully fall into this current are objects such as dog-kennels by celebrity architects (such as Frank Gehry<sup>5</sup>) or housings for birds."<sup>305</sup> According to Fuller, the central issue with classifying a work as art for animals (rather than just art) is whether it "attempt[s] to engage with animals' behaviours [sic]" in earnest. Such a distinction, however, remains tenuous as Fuller admits demarcating whether an artist's project engages with animals' behaviors is difficult. For instance, Figure 5-4 is a "large, breathable structure [bat house] was designed by architecture students Jorgen Tandberg of Oslo and Yo Murata of Tokyo, acting on a design concept put forth by local artist and bat enthusiast Jeremy Deller."<sup>306</sup>



Figure 5-4 Jorgen Tandberg and Yo Murata “Bat House”

The design team decided to create a large structure to accommodate several species of bats native to the area. They designed the interwoven cuttings as an ample shelter for bats to perch and as an interesting aesthetic for human spectators. However, as art for animals, Fuller argues the piece “largely address animals in terms of ergonomics, making spaces that physically ‘fit’ them” and, therefore, does not fall under the category of art for animals.<sup>307</sup> Fuller is correct that the work was commissioned to “fit” bats; however, the Bat Conservation and Management Inc. noted the fit is more than mere ergonomics. Bats need a habitat away from light, with sufficient ventilation, a large space with dark recesses and near water.<sup>308</sup> Similar to Baker’s argument that the line between posthumanist posthumanism and posthumanist humanism remains difficult to identify, Fuller recognizes art for animals remains difficult to define. He states, “At the same time, because many animals experience and shape a locale by literally inhabiting it, there is no absolute distinction between what is proposed here as art for animals and work that produces scenarios that animals live in, work on, and complete, or render definitively unfinished.” Per this statement, the bat house, despite Fuller’s statements otherwise, could certainly be art for animals. Of course, the problem with such distinctions is that art is contextual (including time—like ancient cultural objects that are considered art now because they are from the distant past). Fuller’s concern with engaging the perceptual abilities of nonhuman animals aligns well with

Wolfe's analysis of Temple Grandin in his text *What Is Posthumanism*. Wolfe identifies Grandin's ability to envision the spatial and perceptual abilities of cattle as an example of posthumanism. While Grandin's reworking of cattle chutes for more efficient and humane cattle movement is not art, it does consider the perceptual and behavioral aspects of cattle. In this respect, Fuller's art for animals, fits well in Wolfe's posthumanism. While the bat house doesn't allow its human spectators to know what it is to "be a bat," it does recognize nonhuman behaviors as legitimate concerns in human and nonhuman relationships.

The scope of Fuller's essay does not cover art by animals, which he specifically notes. However, art for animals can be art for animals. For example, zoos and aquariums have enacted enrichment programs that engage animals in behaviors "to keep animals physically and mentally stimulated."<sup>309</sup> Such programs can be as simple as "toys" for animals to play with, or providing pheromones (similar to Fuller's discussion of the mechanical bobcat) to engage animals in more "natural" behavior (sensing prey or predators). Other programs employ art processes in order to engage nonhuman animals in "natural" behaviors.



Figure 5-5 Sloth bear enrichment program

The program tries "to structure animal art lessons to draw as much as possible on natural behavior. For instance, sloth bears feed by blowing away dirt on the forest floor and sucking up

termites (see Figure 5-5). In order to duplicate this behavior keepers gave the bears an oversized straw-like apparatus that they could use to blow paint onto the canvas. The ursine artists often pause, admire their work, and continue painting while the other bears sit and watch.<sup>310</sup> While the end product might not be art for animals (rather by animals), the process addresses what Fuller's description of art for animals as the Sloth bear program "intends to address the ecology of capacities for perceptions, sensation, thought and reflexivity of animals."<sup>311</sup> The sloth as "artist" also provides another way to answer Wolfe's question of what does art add to discussions about human and nonhuman relationships. More specifically, the sloth as "artist" highlights "the capacity for art is part of the rather mobile boundary line that performs the task of annihilating the animal in human and in demarcating the human from animality."<sup>312</sup> By assailing the distinctions between human and nonhuman animals, this work also undermines the overly rigid categories of nature and culture and suggests a type of animal agency.<sup>313</sup> Fuller argues this point stating "engaging animal cultures and sensoria, [art for animals] also make art step outside of itself, and make us imagine a nature in which nature itself must be imagined, sensed and thought through. At a time when human practices are rendering the earth definitively unheimlich for an increasing number of species, abandoning the human as the sole user or producer of art is one perverse step towards doing so."<sup>314</sup> Yet art stepping outside itself raises an important question—the question posed at the beginning of this section. What is art in a posthuman paradigm? Simply put, if art can step outside itself, what is it stepping out from?

What is art may seem a relatively simple question. However, as Noël Carroll argues in *Philosophy of Art*, defining art has a long and storied history with no certain answer. The primary issue, according to Carroll, is that art is either too inclusive or exclusive. Art, also entangled with semiotic and material couplings, is better thought as a response to works via a narrative (per Carroll). Art, for Carroll, emerges from narrative connections through the "virtue of their ancestry, where ancestry is explained by means of a narrative or genealogy."<sup>315</sup> Works of

art are identified under a narrative theory via conversation. In fact, Carroll argues the history of art is akin to a conversation. For instance he argues “[...] identifying narratives end; they end with the production or presentation of the artifact in question.”<sup>316</sup> Under a narrative approach art isn’t easily defined, but rather identified through linking and conversation.

Returning to Duchamp’s Fountain, the work can be labeled art precisely because it responds to a history of art—material and/or discursive. The work does not materialize in a vacuum, rather it responds to a rather rich history of arts, and in fact, attempts to make a bold statement about the definition of art (including context) and artists’ processes and intended meanings (i.e. an everyday object takes on new meaning with new context and little work from the artist). Yet, narrative as a theory for art also invokes a fairly entrenched humanist paradigm (especially with its relation to language) that needs recasting. Narrative is as a theory of defining art works via connections, rather than definitions. For Carroll, whether something should be considered art relies more on its relationship to art as a history of relations rather than its inherent characteristics. Simply put, art responds to what came before it. Duchamp’s fountain is art because it responds to previous works, movements, or theories. Meaning in relationship to Duchamp’s fountain is contextual—shifting with new “encounters” and in new paradigms (similar to the shift discussed in readings of Beuys’s work with the coyote—from animals as symbol only to about real animals).

Recasting narrative as a theory for posthuman arts requires theorizing narrative insofar as narrative includes material and semiotic considerations as well as extends to nonhuman animals through relationships to humans. That is, “conversation” becomes a thorny term when considering issues like material discourses or biosemiotics. Embodied worlds, intra and inter actions, and situated knowledges require that Carroll’s use of conversation extends to the other than human (and between humans and nonhumans). Also, unlike Carroll’s version of narrative as genealogy (descent), per Haraway’s companion species and Alaimo’s trans-corporeality, narrative theory in a posthumanist paradigm includes the historical, biological, and cultural

folding of encounters between humans and nonhuman animals. History in this sense, like Haraway's and Alaimo's contributions to rethinking materiality, is the confluence of and passing through of a multitude of factors—it is not merely descent. Rather, the material and semiotic connections flow through and across—a messy mix of vertical and horizontal movements more akin to Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome. Art is no exception. Animals, both materially and discursively have influenced and been influenced by artistic processes and products. Art, as a field and as a mode of production cannot separate product from process, or more importantly, subject from subject matter with any sense of certainty for ethical reasons. Again, narrative extends to bodies, similar to Susanne Antonetta's *Body Toxic: An Environmental Memoir*, bodies contain a "history" of encounters (as many of the New Materialists convincingly argue via data like chemical testing for bodies). These histories, however, are in constant flux—i.e. changes with exposures, contacts, contagions. Rather than being static, the environmental history of bodies is more akin to Deleuze and Guattari's "becoming" in that as with Tuana's "viscous porosity" there is permeation, leakage, a "passing through" rather than descending from, especially with the emergence of more interdisciplinary approaches to art about animals. A narrative theory of art in relationship to animals is both about and includes material and symbolic animal bodies, whether as subjects (both live and dead), or as material for processes (there are a lot of art materials made from animals and insects) are apart of not a part from the material and semiotic narratives of bodies and environments and natures and cultures.<sup>317</sup> Animals, therefore, are not easily separated from art—a domain usually afforded only to the human. The complex entanglement of material and semiotic factors for animals in art extends toward capital, or as Nichole Shukin deems Animal Capital. "The animal" remains closely tied to art in that a narrative theory cannot overlook the folding of material and semiotic "renderings" of animals in the arts. A narrative theory of art devoid of these interconnections woefully misrepresents the uses of animal bodies both in and as products of artistic endeavors. Furthermore, the interconnections problematize Carroll's claim that discursive narratives end

(i.e. stories end)—when in fact, they extend, permeate, and, at times transgress boundaries. For example, similar to Alaimo's analyses of material memoirs, nature and culture not only intersect, but persist through families and places. Unlike Carroll's discursive narrative approach to art, a posthuman perspective recognizes that material and semiotic narratives continue whether inscribed on or through bodies.

Using conversation as the prevailing metaphor for narrative also remains problematic because the "participation" of animals in art becomes an idea fraught with ethical conundrums as participation broaches new ways to think of animal agency, and yet in many ways fails to escape the asynchronous power relations that are unfavorable for nonhumans. For example, in Olli and Suzi's work with sharks even supposedly benign "participation," which seems fairly animal-centric, demonstrates potentially asynchronous power relations and ethical considerations—chumming remains a debatable practice. Because of the overwhelming connections between animals in art and the dire material consequences for them (both as subjects of and the material substance of art) ethical considerations of the arts in relationship to animals should garner more attention. The difficult task then remains identifying these inter/intra-connections between materiality and semiotics as well as between humans, nonhumans, and shared places. Because of overly complicated and densely packed connections in relation to the portrayal or use of animal bodies art is rarely devoid of ethics.

Art from a posthumanist paradigm includes material and semiotic connections via narratives from topical clusters like art, history, biology, evolution, culture, and nature. Art, for the purposes of a(e)s(th)et(ics) reflects the knotted nodes Haraway identifies in material semiotic intersections. However, art in a(e)s(th)et(ics) also requires a rethinking of aesthetics—an overarching idea that influences and is influenced by art. That is, aesthetics exists outside art, however, most art does not exist outside aesthetics (some art theories argue art can be devoid of aesthetic experience, yet, even in such cases they require aesthetic choices or processes). Such distinctions are important because too often the terms appear as synonyms.

Although aesthetics, like art, can highlight nonhuman perceptions and the importance of place, these terms intersect or overlap but do not mean the same thing.

#### Aesthetics—Reframing Aesthetics to Include Nonhuman Perceptions

Noël Carroll argues historically aesthetics, like the term art, has been a rather amorphous term that remains difficult to isolate a particular meaning without being too inclusive or exclusive. The balance between exclusivity and inclusivity remains a problem for analyzing the relationships between humans and animals. Moreover, as mentioned, the term aesthetic too often becomes a synonym for art (especially in regards to concepts like beauty or taste—both primarily from Western humanist perspectives, which often reinforce rigid “authenticity” claims). While Carroll states that the two terms, art and aesthetics, are related they are not synonyms because art can have semiotic properties whereby the aesthetic issues are secondary, or insignificant<sup>318</sup>. Or, artifacts and everyday objects might have aesthetic properties and afford an aesthetic experience like art, but are not art. For instance Carroll argues the distinction between the two terms is evident in the following example:

Natural objects and events, like the starry sky at night and storms at sea, provoke aesthetic experiences and possess aesthetic properties. A philosopher could develop a theory of the aesthetics of nature without ever mentioning art. Thus, at least in principle, “art” and “aesthetics” can be viewed as different theoretical domains of study: *art* is primarily the theoretical domain of certain objects [...]; whereas “*aesthetics*” is primarily the theoretical domain of a certain form of receptive experience, or perception, or of response dependent properties which are not necessarily unique to artworks.<sup>319</sup>

Carroll’s example serves only as a starting point; however, as the language he uses fails to provide a more complex posthuman perspective of aesthetics. For instance, deeming art “the theoretical domain of certain objects” could further reinforce the Cartesian separation between humans and nonhumans (nonhumans are devoid of thinking, especially abstract thinking, in this paradigm) and issues raised by Berger when he reminds readers that animals “look back,” and therefore are not merely objects. In this respect, art and aesthetics are separate because, like the mind body dualism forwarded in Cartesian theory, art is strictly a human endeavor (e.g. the mind), while aesthetics is afforded to both humans and nonhumans (e.g. the body). Also,



Carroll's use of the term "natural" could reinforce the natural/unnatural binary many scholars attempt to undermine.

However, aesthetics cannot be separated neatly from the multitude of participants, places, and environmental factors (even for things as seemingly simple as paint). Both aesthetics and art are truly messy entanglements of a multitude of factors. Thus, the relationship between these two terms is significant for discussions of animals in art, film, and literature because it parallels the relationships between nature and culture or materiality and semiotics. Similarly, art theory, like critical and literary theory has shifted toward semiotic theories at the expense of materiality. As scholars in Environmental Humanities, Animal Studies, New Materialism, and Feminism have advocated a (re)turn to the material (without ignoring the discursive) art requires such a turn. Carroll argues traditional views of aesthetic experience focus on the sensory aspects of art (much like formalism in literary studies), while the more contemporary views primarily focus on the semiotic features (where interpretation of cultural content is the only important aspect). According to Carroll, the latter view dominates discussions of art, however, just as Barad argues "matter matters," especially when considering the use of animals in art, or the material consequences for animals by animal-themed art. Carroll argues sensory experience is important, yet not capable of defining what constitutes art by itself.

Aesthetics, for the purposes of art concerning nonhuman animals (both live and representations) must first revisit the "Greek word, *aesthesis*, which means 'sense perception' or 'sensory cognition.'"<sup>320</sup> This starting point provides an avenue for the arguments of animal participation and phenomenology offered by Baker and Broglio. Both theoretical approaches consider the connections between humans and animals from a more multi-disciplinary and multi-subjectivity perspective. That is, they take seriously animals' roles, perceptions, interactions, and such in a complex web of relations. In this respect both address material and semiotic issues and extend such issues to art and aesthetics. Their approaches to art, aesthetics, and animals is more akin to Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic thinking in that the

artists they champion resist, and in fact rupture, humanist thinking about “the animal” in Western Culture. Their approaches champion connections, including inter-species connections that are a passing through, rather than a passing from (horizontal versus vertical). Rather than define art via mimesis their work is that of refraction, not reflection. Deleuze and Guattari’s wasp-orchid example demonstrates this idea because not only does the orchid not reflect the wasp (or vice-versa), but also both co-evolve via the relationships between one another that also includes aspects like environmental factors. More specifically, they do not reflect one another but are refracted via a passing through of numerous factors, including their direct interaction. Aesthetics is also a factor of, and factored by these complex interactions. The sensory system of the wasp, the appearance of the orchid, and the environmental factors are all aesthetic aspects that co-constitute one another.

The interplay of aesthetics between species (between kingdoms in the wasp/orchid example) demonstrate a central problem for revisiting aesthetics outside a more traditional humanist perspective. As Carroll argues, “aesthetics remains difficult to define because scholars and artists have imbued the term with very broad meanings, like preferences, to far narrower meanings”, [like] aesthetics as only “address[ing] sensory perception and low-level forms of cognition.”<sup>321</sup> Aesthetics already remains a thorny concept in the arts, attempting to recast it in a more posthumanist framework only further complicates the term and potentially reinforces the very humanist foundation that requires revision. For instance, the narrower meanings of aesthetics (low-level forms of cognition) could reinforce the very arguments of animal lack—that is, further separate the definition of animals from humans—without careful consideration of posthumanist relationships between humans, nonhumans, and places. More specifically, sensory perception and “low-levels” of cognition stem from diverse beings that influence and are influenced by interactions with inhabitants of shared environments. Sensory perception and cognition are not at work in a vacuum, nor are the shared environments and inhabitants passive data for the “subject” to consider. The interaction, in what Haraway terms

“the encounter” or Pratt terms “contact zones,” eschews deterministic or overly singular subject orientated approaches. For example, the Umwelt of two species in shared spaces can, and often does, impact the sensory experience, even if minutely, of both.

Also, the interactions between species extend via evolution and history through material and semiotic relations. Aesthetics as it intersects art, also contains these complex intersections. The posthuman aesthetic needed to challenge humanist conceptions of animals requires attention to connections. For example, in *Art as Experience* (1934) John Dewey compares art with flowers in so far as one can enjoy flowers without understanding them, a key point in his theory of aesthetics and art. He argues that in order to understand flowers one must be “committed to finding out something about the interactions of soil, air, water, and sunlight that condition the growth of plants.”<sup>322</sup> He concludes via this comparison that “to understand the aesthetic in its ultimate and approved forms, one must begin with it in the raw; in the events and scenes that hold the attentive eye and ear of man, arousing his interest and affording him enjoyment as he looks and listens.”<sup>323</sup> While Dewey’s ideas interject connections between the world humans share with nonhumans and extends art and aesthetics into these areas via experience, his theory of art and experience risks being too inclusive. That is, his theory is part and parcel with Carroll’s critique that certain aesthetic experiences are not necessarily art. Again, according to Carroll art and aesthetics are not synonyms. Also, like Carroll’s description of art and aesthetic, Dewey’s theory is only an entry point as the language he employs reinforces many of the humanist arguments discussed thus far. Terms like “understanding” need wrestling from humanist paradigms, and human vision and hearing are only two types of perception and of particular range of ability (for example, while a peregrine falcon also has eyesight, it differs in great degree from human eyesight<sup>324</sup>). Yet, Dewey affords nonhuman perspectives worth considering because, like Aristotle, he argues that humans differ from animals by degree not in kind as they share:

basic vital functions with them and has to make the same basal adjustments if he is to continue the process of living. Having the same vital needs, man derives the means by

which he breathes, moves, looks and listens, the very brain with which he coordinates his senses and his movements, from his animal forbears. The organs with which he maintains himself in being are not of himself alone, but by the grace of struggles and achievements of a long line of animal ancestry.

Dewey's approach embraces the evolutionary connections between human and nonhuman animals. More importantly, human here resists the singular "I," the dominant subject severed from "nature" via culture and cognition. For Dewey the connections between humans and nonhumans not only reside in the past, but also in the present. This aspect of his aesthetic, like Wolfe's posthumanism, comes before and after, via material and semiotic interactions with in environments (much like Wolfe's use of Luhman). Dewey states:

The first great consideration is that life goes on in an environment; not merely in it but because of it, through interaction with it. No creature lives merely under its skin; its subcutaneous organs are means of connection with what lies beyond its bodily frame, and to which, in order to live, it must adjust itself, by accommodation and defense but also by conquest. At every moment, the living creature is exposed to dangers from its surroundings, and at every moment, it must draw upon something in its surroundings to satisfy its needs. The career and destiny of a living being are bound up with its interchanges with its environment, not externally but in the most intimate way.

The important aspect of Dewey's theory of aesthetic is the interconnection between "earth, soil, water, and sunlight" and the sensory perception of an agent (human or nonhuman). In this respect, aesthetic is not static. Rather, it is fluid because of the shifting factors like evolution and environmental changes, therefore, also contextual and relative (which does not mean that it does not overlap with others, just that it is not identical even in species). Levinson makes a similar argument that illustrates the material and semiotic connections that shape aesthetics. He argues, "aesthetic values must be viewed in their cultural and historical contexts" because aesthetics are "a messy mix of art, artifact and nature, and it is inextricably intertwined with our everyday, practical lives."<sup>325</sup> Levinson's scope pertains to landscape, but as Dewey indicates, human and nonhuman animals are a part of their environment. Levinson argues this connection between "the aesthetics of landscape is a matter of the experience of landscape or, in other words, the interaction of subject and object."<sup>326</sup> However, the relationship between aesthetic and landscape is more interrelated than Levinson suggests as he reinforces a tired subject

object binary whereby the subject (human) interacts with the object (landscape). This binary is rather unbalanced as well because human is set against everything else “contained” in a landscape (including other humans?). Levinson seems to recognize this problem, yet rejects an alternative.

The only other conceivable replacement for landscape would be *place* because the meaning of place is at least partly defined by the values of insiders (Relph, 1976). It does, however, seem quite odd to speak of the aesthetics of place. This is because—as is the case with environment—place does not necessarily involve perception.<sup>327</sup>

Although Levinson could be correct in stating that landscape and place are not interchangeable, he is incorrect in stating place does not necessarily involve perception. For example, In *The Future of Environmental Criticism* Lawrence Buell argues that:

Place is succinctly definable as space that is bounded and marked as humanly meaningful through personal attachment, social relations, and physiographic distinctiveness. Placeness, then, is co-constituted environmentally, socially, and phenomenologically through acts of perception. Place connotes not simply bounded and meaningful location but also dynamic process, including the shaping of place by outside as well as internal influences.<sup>328</sup>

Unlike Levinson, Buell defines place more complexly and more closely to the relationship between place and the material and semiotic factors that are defined by and define it.<sup>329</sup> Again, place as part of aesthetic theory can become too inclusive; however, aesthetic theory can be too exclusive, thereby rejecting work like readymades. For example, according to Carroll, an aesthetic theorist would argue that Duchamp’s Fountain cannot be considered art because “he was clearly not intending to engender aesthetic experience”.<sup>330</sup> Yet, Carroll’s argument falters on two important ideas, the intersection and interaction of material and semiotic factors and the inability to control meaning (via intentionality). Duchamp’s Fountain engenders both cultural and material meanings through material and semiotic experiences. Carroll is correct that Duchamp intends to comment on the state of art by placing the urinal in a different context (and thereby, changing its meaning). However, the urinal still can invoke a material response, an embodied response that could illustrate the connection between culture and bodies, as the urinal abides by Lacan’s urinary code—a marker of gendered bodies and identity politics. Moreover, the shift

from lavatory to gallery space could, rather than speak of the state of art, criticize puritanical bathroom rights in a very material sense, creating an aesthetic of uneasiness. The mixing of semiotic and material factors engenders a more complex aesthetic experience than Carroll defines it—as “the detection of aesthetic properties and/or design appreciation.”<sup>331</sup> Embodied experience not divorced from semiotics leads to aesthetic experience and art that is, as Carroll argues, response dependent.<sup>332</sup> Yet, response in this sense aligns with the critical questions Derrida raises in regards to what it means to respond. A critical area of inquiry considering the aforementioned Greek etymology of the term aesthetics often devolves into simple reaction arguments—i.e. sensory perception is a reaction, not a response, to stimuli. The primary difficulty with sensory perception for Animal Studies remains the opposition of response versus reaction. This division stems from and still adheres to Cartesian thinking (see Wolfe’s critique of Dennett in *What Is Posthumanism?*), whereby only humans can respond, or per thinkers like Dennett know they are responding (or recognize what respond means, or...). Yet, per posthumanist agency, and meaning and consequence aesthetics includes responses to the arts—not simple reactions to them. Baker and Broglio support the response to works from human and nonhuman “participation.” Animals’ markings on and across canvases indicates a response to material and semiotic markers in their environments. For example, sharks are curious and “test bite” objects in their habitats, yet other times completely disregard similar objects. The interaction of animals and art not only recasts ideas of aesthetics, but also highlights the importance of recasting ethics as these test bites challenge the avaricious and undiscerning “nature” of sharks. Simplistic representations, whereby sharks are cast only as mindless killing machines, have had tragic consequences for sharks because humans use this idea to justify practices like shark finning.

## Ethics—Overcoming the Divide Between Artists' Right to Expression and the Need for Ethics

In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* Ludwig Wittgenstein provides a philosophical point of entry for the intersection of aesthetics and ethics when he boldly declares that, “it is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental. (Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.)”<sup>333</sup> However, there are two significant problems with his bold claim. First, collapsing the two terms into synonyms flattens both terms rather than recognizes different moments exist where the two intersect and become inter-tangled. For instance, the use of the color blue in a work certainly is an aesthetic choice; however, it might have no ethical significance. Yet such seemingly innocuous decisions like color can extend, like Shukin's *Animal Capital*, to animal bodies. For example, the use of something as simple as “natural hair” brushes, which are from farm raised or trapped animals like sables, raises complex questions similar those in *Animal Capital*. Like the previous discussion of aesthetics as a messy concept, the intersection of aesthetics and ethics is also messy and difficult to define. Also, the generalization of terms like ethics disregards the multiple stakeholders and perspectives. As stated, these terms escape universal or easy definitions—they converge and diverge with one another, the participants, and other factors like environmental influences. In these moments (encounters between humans and nonhumans in shared spaces) the terms must be considered in relation to one another in a specific context—including time. For example, In “Ethics as Style: Wittgenstein's Aesthetic Ethics and Ethical Aesthetics,” Kathrin Stengel argues that,

Wittgenstein's dictum “Ethics and aesthetics are one” has often been misunderstood as stating the ontological identity of ethics and aesthetics. To be blunt: this reading is simply wrong, both logically and grammatically. If Wittgenstein had had the identity of ethics and aesthetics in mind, he would have written: “Ethik ist Aesthetik” or, alternatively “Aesthetik ist Ethik.” [...] I suggest reading the dictum as signifying that only in conjunction, in their complex unity, can ethics and aesthetics be considered individually at all. In this unity, ethics shows itself in terms of an aesthetic ethics and aesthetics in terms of an ethical aesthetics.”<sup>334</sup>

While Stengel is not addressing the relationships between animals and aesthetics and ethics, the difficulty of defining either term without considering their relationships parallels many of the problems of erecting distance between concepts that remain intertwined through issues like

materiality and culture.<sup>335</sup> Unity, however, over extends these relationships, as the relationships between ethics and aesthetics does not always “unify” them—rather, per contact zones or transcorporeality, the intersection of factors like chemicals and embodied beings can disrupt rather than unify. Also, arguing for ethical aesthetics, or aesthetic ethics does not fully support how importantly interconnected these terms are for Animal Studies because by using the terms in this structure (ethics aesthetics and aesthetics ethics) still situates the terms in a noun/modifier relationship, which posits one term as primary, the other secondary (yet, important). Such a relationship is problematic as at these moments of intersection one term is not primary while the other is secondary because they are too interrelated. Such a relationship could support claims like Dion’s that animal death might be an important “tool” in an artist’s repertoire because one term (aesthetics) is more significant than the other (ethics). As indicated in the aesthetic section, animal death is not only “art,” but also an aesthetic. While overly obvious, Dion’s discussion of animal death in art exemplifies the intersection of art, aesthetics, and ethics. His proclamation of the usefulness of animal death obscures the relationships between art, “tools and toolboxes,” and nonhuman animals. The death of an animal for artistic expression certainly garners attention, and rightfully so, yet the countless animal deaths for “tools” like brushes or paint demonstrates the “Animal Capital” present in artistic endeavors—the often hidden or overlooked animal bodies in art.

Second, as Steve Baker argues in his recently published text *Artist|Animal* ethics, rather than converging with aesthetics, can restrict it. Baker’s primary concern about ethics, per Badiou and Derrida, is that:

ethics is about regulation, control, holding back, not doing: the avoidance of irresponsible action. The alternative (as both of them [Badiou and Derrida] acknowledge in passing, without elaborating on the idea) is to be found in some kind of poetic invention, creative action, and imaginative recognition of unregulated possibilities. And this, of course, is very close to Jean-François Lyotard’s conception of the postmodern artist, whom he enigmatically describes as someone “working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done*.”<sup>336</sup>



For Baker, these theoretical positions support his primary concern throughout the text—that artists abide by their creative impulses without overly restrictive parameters that hinder creativity. Baker requests that people trust artists to engage with animal questions “responsibly” and “imaginatively.”<sup>337</sup> For Baker, the difference between ethics and responsible engagement is the difference between prohibiting and proclaiming. His test case for proclamation versus prohibiting is none other than the aforementioned Mark Dion “Some Notes towards a Manifesto for Artists Working with or about the Living World.”<sup>338</sup> As mentioned, Dion purposely avoids declaring animal death in art irresponsible because, like Baker, he views artists’ choice as paramount to not only the work, but more importantly its message. Yet responsibility does invoke a set of standards, despite Baker’s claim otherwise. More specifically, for there to be responsible engagement the opposite must exist—i.e. otherwise responsible and irresponsible would be irrelevant. The crucial distinction then seems choice. The choice of the artist to pursue his/her message. Those who responsibly do so Baker holds as respondents to Wolfe’s question what does art add to the question of “the animal?” Moreover, the intersection of art, animals, and responsibility is relational, not transcendental—i.e. per Badiou ethics is only an ethics of, not transcendental—and resists, not adheres to, universal criteria. This theoretical move Baker employs has significant ramifications that on the one hand adhere to the very knotted material semiotic relationships between humans and nonhumans Haraway advocates. On the other hand the theoretical move has significant ramifications that sever such relationships (Dion’s tool box response is indicative of such a severing). By categorizing ethics as relational Baker recognizes the instability of categories like Wolfe’s posthumanist posthumanism and posthumanist humanism because of difficulty of defining concepts like meaning. The instability of such categories has underpinned Baker’s work at least since *The Postmodern Animal*, and exemplifies his answer to Wolfe’s question what can art add to the question of the animal.

For instance, Catherine Bell’s performance piece, *Felt Is the Past Tense of Feel*, involves the artist on stage coating herself with the ink of recently caught squid (40 of them).

She contends the work highlights her grief of losing her father as well as the subsequent emotions of dealing with the loss. Similar to Dewey's conception of aesthetics, Bell's work begins in the raw—the stark emotional grief of losing a parent.



Figure 5-6 Catherine Bell's performance piece *Felt Is the Past Tense of Feel*<sup>339</sup>

However, rather than a more inclusive aesthetic that includes learning about the natural world and its processes like Dewey advocates, Bell's aesthetics remains anthropocentric, almost completely devoid of nonhuman considerations because the audience learns little about squids (a critique similar to Haraway's protest of Deleuze and Guattari's becoming with wolves), or any relationship between them (specifically) and humans. In fact, unlike Levinson or Buell, this work disregards the larger aesthetic world of the squid (i.e. place, habitat, and landscape). The squid remains important to the work, but primarily because of the ink and the smell. Aesthetics then does play an important part, but only from the human observers' sensory experience. The shamanistic qualities of the work (which Baker notes) could be as effective with another animal (blood substituted for ink for instance) and the animals' materiality primarily serves to broach the emotional state of the artist and, in turn, the audience. The void between human and nonhuman aesthetics signals the ethical issues in the work. More importantly, the void in the work is not that the aesthetics of human and nonhuman are separated, but rather that one exists while the

other remains absent. Baker concedes the work could be read as posthumanist humanism—i.e. more about decentering human subjectivity rather than a rethinking of the relationships between humans and nonhumans. The similarities between Bell's work and Damien Hirst's *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of the Living* support such a reading.<sup>340</sup> Both artists pay a fisherman to catch their "subjects", which are subsequently killed. Also, both works address emotion through encountering animal materiality, deal with death or potential death of humans, and depend on the "realism" of the subject matter (both Bell and Hirst require the animals look alive in death). Despite these similarities the works are quite different in how they, as Baker argues, creatively and respectively address animals. Unlike Hirst, Bell more closely adheres to concerns about the divisibility of the binary of human and nonhuman. Her work attempts to breach the boundary between human and nonhuman via partnerships in experience and embodiment. The squids' ink serves as an evolutionary device for survival and as a means of expression for both human and nonhuman animal. Bell survives her grief by disappearing from the stage, blending into the darkened background. While Hirst's work confronts mortality, and therefore materiality, the work conforms to the overly commercial and overused narrative of man versus animal post *Jaws*. That is, the work retreads the aforementioned preconceptions of sharks post *Jaws* rather than offer a new or surprising interpretation of the relationship between humans and nonhumans, especially sharks. Bell's work at least attempts to breach the gap Hirst so readily embraces. She argues her work, "[...] emphasiz[es] the body, embodiment, shared experience and transmutation. Animals are the partners for these ideas and I am conscious of how my contact with them breaches the bodily boundaries of both human and animal. [...] The squid's ink disguises my identity and facilitates my escape into the darkness."<sup>341</sup> However, the partnership here seems rather tenuous as Bell, not the squid, experiences something in/from the work (the squid are dead prior to the production). In fact, Bell's use of "partnership" seems dubious as unlike Deleuze and Guattari's wasp/orchid example, the alliance between Bell and squid remains overly asynchronous. While Baker

correctly identifies her work as a “line of flight” per Deleuze and Guattari, the rupture or escape seems more applicable to aesthetics in art (especially as Baker notes in regards to her being swept up in the work), rather than posthumanist posthumanism. Her use of the animals is of instrumental value for her—what is the instrumental value (or better yet, intrinsic value) of this encounter for the squid? The humanist foundation of the work still persists despite as Baker notes the “unfamiliar materials, affects, and assemblages”<sup>342</sup> because the “rigorously Deleuzian” approach primarily applies to the human or humanist in the work. More specifically, the unfamiliar materials refer to the composition of the work, not the human/animal relationship as it remains strongly tethered to an instrumental ethic—how the use of animals benefits humans not nonhumans. The convergence of aesthetics and ethics in Bell’s work identifies a larger issue in discussions of art and animals that resonates throughout this project—the use of animals for meaning making, or the privileging of meaning over materiality. In *Art & Animals*, Giovanni Aloï poses an important question not only applicable to Bell’s work: “is it acceptable to inflict pain, or even kill animals, for the purpose of artistic expression?”<sup>343</sup> Surprisingly, a number of artists and scholars in Animal Studies avoid straightforwardly answering this question. For instance, as mentioned in the aesthetics section of this chapter, Marc Dion does not preclude animal death from artists’ “tool boxes.”<sup>344</sup> Steve Baker also avoids answering the question directly by advocating responsibility (much like Dion). He provides numerous examples (a wealth in fact, one of the strengths of all three of his major texts) of which Bell’s includes animal killing for the sake of artistic expression, yet responsibility is defined through the examples, not directly. To be fair, the central thesis of Baker’s text is to explain artists’ perspectives and processes about animals in art, rather than those of philosophers or other scholars. Yet he is also an artist who deals with animals and, more importantly, animal death (his road kill works make visible the relatively invisible). The issue of animal death—especially the use of animals in art who are killed—should have more discussion, especially in light of the convergence of aesthetics and ethics that emerge in human and nonhuman encounters. Moreover, in order to ask, as Wolfe

does, what does art add to discussions of animals. The question of animal death shouldn't be discounted.

However, animal death is just one of many issues that emerge from human and nonhuman encounters. The convergence of aesthetics and ethics helps highlight and interrogate such issues, and yet, as Levinson argues, "for the past thirty years or so in Anglo-American philosophy, aesthetics and ethics have been pursued in relative isolation...[recent attention, however,]...give[s] hope of ending this rather artificial isolation, though without necessarily forcing us to accede in Wittgenstein's gnomic dictum that "ethics and aesthetics are one."<sup>345</sup> Artistic endeavors pertaining to or employing nonhumans are no exception to the isolation of aesthetics and ethics. In fact, via humanist and/or speciesist paradigms, these endeavors engender sufficient material and semiotic concerns for "the animal" whereby the animal becomes more significant as message (usually pertaining to the human condition) rather than a material body in environments. Despite his resistance to the term ethics, Baker's concern with responsible engagement with animals does help "[end] this rather artificial isolation [between aesthetics and ethics]" in order to create a more productive approach for discussions of nonhuman animals and the relationship between humans and nonhumans.<sup>346</sup>

The confluence of materiality and semiotics in human and nonhuman experiences complicates what constitutes art because the interplay of these factors engenders a complex version of aesthetics where aesthetics is both how something is perceived and how something is presented in a place. More specifically, aesthetics remains difficult to define, especially in respect to ethics, because aesthetics includes the interplay of material and semiotic factors that are themselves not easily separated. For instance, the media used has a particular materiality and can have a particular cultural resonance. In this respect, aesthetics refers to the inter- and intra-action of these factors similar to Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome. Connections between factors like sensory systems and cultural beliefs extend in ways that make simple mimesis arguments difficult to sustain without significant anthropocentric limits on both aesthetics and

ethics. For example, scholars like Haraway have criticized the primacy of vision as an ethical consideration because the point of view not only remains anthropocentric, but also disregards other sensory abilities that serve as the primary mode of interaction for other species. Vision becomes a type of “speciesism” that Wolfe argues against.<sup>347</sup> Vision is but one node along a rhizomatic web of sensory relationships among nonhumans in shared places. To focus solely on vision becomes an aesthetic and ethical concern. For instance, in Uexküll's well known example of the Umwelt of a tick lacks vision as a marker for “being” in its world. He argues ticks rely on only three carriers of significance in order to “be” in their world: butyric acid, temperature, and hair (all found in their prey, mammals). Although Uexküll refers to ticks as Tick, the perceptual abilities of ticks do differ greatly from humans. Therefore, vision as a mode of point of view or ethical starting point remains strongly human in this sense. As an ethical mode of inquiry Deleuze & Guattari argue this example

[indicates] that the tick's three affects assume generic and specific characteristics, organs and functions, legs and snout. This is true from the standpoint of physiology, but not from the standpoint of Ethics. Quite the contrary, in Ethics the organic characteristics derive from longitude and its relations, from latitude and its degrees. We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body.<sup>348</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari's argument reveals the importance of affects, not only for bodies themselves, but between bodies and through shared environments. Understanding the confluences of these multitude of factors that constitute and are constituted by encounters remains imperative to better understand the perceived disconnect between humans and animals. Their discussion of the tick raises another significant point as well. There is a great deal of variation and misunderstanding in species. Ticks have a great deal of variation. Larisa Vredevoe of the UC Davis Department of Entomology states there are “approximately 850 species [of ticks, including] two well established families of ticks, the Ixodidae (hard ticks), and Argasidae (soft ticks).”<sup>349</sup> As Vredevoe notes, not only do the two major families differ in biology and behavior, but also both rely on more than just the three markers of significance Uexküll

notes (such as movement). Such noted differences demonstrates the importance to avoid the generalization of animals (even in species), but also the need to better understand the inter- and intra-actions between animals and their environments. Ethically, this is significant considering claims like Hiedegger's that animals are poor in the world—whereby poor rests on a humanist foundation and includes misinformation (or lack of information in the case of ticks)—or claims that purport to provide a point of view like critter cams, which reduce all the sensory experience of animals to vision for human spectators.

#### A(e)s(th)et(ics)—the Convergence of Aesthetics and Ethics in the Arts

Allison Hunter's work collected under the title "New Animals 2005-2009" addresses issues about animals, places, and human practices. Hunter's work, however, provides a strong retort to Berger's claim that animals have receded into the periphery in the arts by erasing the periphery—the surrounding environment. In her work, animals cannot recede as there is no place in which to recede. They are present and surrounded by uncertainty—colored voids that attempt to unsettle the human spectator. The starkness of the surrounding composition signals the presence of place in its absence. The animals in "New Animals" unsettle viewers because of their disassociation from places. Their presence, offset by color, highlights a fragility of species through habitat loss caused by human technological intervention (again, doubly indicated through the image and Hunter's process). The unsettling nature of her works is, in fact, the generalization of nature—the cultural belief of animals as Nature versus the "unnatural" image of animals devoid of other natures (like habitats). The animals in her work remain severed from the complex connections between animals and humans in shared places, a strong comment on the "place" of animals in human thought and material culture.



Figure 5-7 Allison Hunter “New Animals”

In one respect, Figure 5-7 works well with Berger’s and Lippit’s arguments. The image of the young animal and the soothing background with camera glare conjures the idea of innocence/childhood nostalgia (Lippit) and the awe/magic (Berger) of animals prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Yet, the absence of background also supports their more critical readings—animals have been removed (materially as well as imaginatively) from the “human” sphere. In fact, in Lippit’s case, the image above has the spectral qualities he suggests animals exhibit in contemporary representations. The sadness the image exudes relies on the juxtaposition of the warming colors, the angelic glow (light reflection), and the fragility of the animal. It could easily be the specter of the “animal” that Lippit discusses. Hunter’s image draws attention to both scholars’ theories by playing on the paradoxical relationship between matter and memory and by presenting an animal image that is both beautiful but also quite alarming—a move akin to the



uncanny. This is an animal both close in proximity and undeniably distant—a sheep without a flock, without a place to roam.

However, unlike Berger's and Lippit's rhetoric of mourning and loss, Hunter's work suggests, similar to Olly and Suzi, that animals still exist in their habitats, but might not if humans continue practices that remain detrimental animal survival. The message then is one of the present and future, unlike Berger and Lippit who primarily remain in the past—mourning the passing of "the animal." Yet, unlike Berger, rather than "the animal" receding into the periphery the animal remains present, despite the absence of place. The image reverses Berger's claim as animals have not receded from the human imagination. In fact, as the image suggests they are not only present, but troubling so. The lack of surrounding suggests the trouble of "placing" animals in current humanist paradigms, as well as the changing environments animals face. Hunter's images, therefore, call for proactive and creative solutions to issues like habitat loss, rather than the more reactive pessimism found in Berger's and Lippit's works. The convergence of ethics and aesthetics stems from the presence of the lamb in the image and the absence of place in which it resides.

The erasure of the lamb's habitat also highlights how animals help humans perceive space. That is, the animal both defines and is defined by its surroundings. As Steve Baker suggests, "the animal *articulates* the field [of color], activates it, makes it visible. The [animal] is not adrift in this space or "placed" in it by an outside hand. [...the animal] *holds and shapes the space*."<sup>350</sup> Nonhuman animals as holding and shaping space as well as making space visible undermines anthropocentric notions of space (that humans solely define—broadly conceived—spaces) by highlighting more posthumanist ones. Moreover, such an approach gives a type of agency not usually afforded to them in humanist paradigms (that of active agent in an environment) and demonstrates the types of intra/inter-actions of nonhumans and/in their environments. While Baker does not address the significance of classification of animals in relation to Hunter, his reading of animal form in relation to her work could bolster his frequent

claims on the problems with human classification systems in relationship to nonhumans.<sup>351</sup> For example, when considering her *Untitled #3* (see Figure 5-8) he notes that the lack of space means “body-shape certainly matters here, the horizontal of the deer’s spine and the near vertical of the front leg creating a smaller rectangle that echoes that of the larger field, but there’s more to it than that. The piece works between registers: figuration and abstraction.”<sup>352</sup>



Figure 5-8 Allison Hunter “Untitled No. 3” In the “New Animals” series<sup>353</sup>

The problem with classification systems is, that like the image of the deer, they too often focus only on form (species) identification makers and disregard the surrounding environment. That is, unlike Deleuze and Guattari’s wasp/orchid who define and are defined by one another, the image of the deer unsettles classifying it outside its environment. The absence of place serves to highlight these connections as the uneasiness the image engenders (the strangeness) stems from it. The framing of the image bolsters the difficulty of being between registers, between classification, as the deer is neither central in the image nor fully displayed. The a(e)s(th)et(ics) of the work signals (again via absence) that something(s) remain missing, hidden from human

understanding. The deer looks away not toward the spectator, a nod to the incompleteness of the human gaze—that looking at and back are only one means (and therefore incomplete) of inhabiting place. The lack of perceptual markers of place and of the deer (its eyes, ears, and nose are not visible) further engenders the uncertainty, the strangeness of the image. This is a “new animal” in so far as it has been completely removed from any place—looking only to the creamy void. The collision of ethics and aesthetics in her images raises the question of the lack of place and the place of animals in human thought and material practices. New, a term of some value in contemporary culture, comes under assault as new does not mean better in these images. As mentioned, in a time of increasing species extinction Hunter’s “New Animals” suggest the need to rethink the relationships between humans, nonhumans, and place.

In a brochure for the 511 Gallery in New York, Branka Arsic addresses the ethical message of Hunter’s work via the erasure of place. She states

The radical gesture of Hunter’s pictures is the way she turns the moment of “taking” a photograph into an act of freeing, since her pictures release animals from their suffering contexts. Hunter does not take photographs of the animals we see; instead, she takes an already photographed animal out of its photographed context (the circus environment, for example), and then relocates it on the surface of a non-identifiable space. It is as if the symbolic emancipation of animals here required an actual intervention upon another photograph, or as if in order to see new animals, photography itself had to change so that it no longer “takes” an image but gives it back to what is photographed. So freed animals are let be in an environment about which we cannot say much, as environment that refutes our efforts to understand it on the basis of familiar concepts.<sup>354</sup>

While erasing the backgrounds certainly places them in “an environment about which we cannot say much,” it also places animals in an environment about which they cannot “say much.”

Erasing place as liberation for animals further supports the predicament for nonhuman animals under current humanist paradigms—liberation leads to “no place.” This new space is devoid of place—of placeness—the inter/intra connections between nonhumans and their habitats. The crisis of such a move, the “unfamiliar concepts,” signals the inability for humans to rethink their relationships to nonhumans in current paradigms. As Wolfe argues in *What is Posthumanism*, the crisis animal rights paradigms currently face stems from their humanist foundations.

Hunter's images signal this crisis as well. Relocating "the animal" via technology without considering the connections between nonhuman animals and place leaves it stranded in no place—the colored frames of Hunter's works.

Lynne Hull's "Raptor Roost" installations takes up this crisis Hunter's work identifies and exemplifies the "art for animals" movement Fuller advocates (despite that it is a "habitat") as it engages animal perceptions. Her installations envision place and nonhuman perceptions in space that also align well with a(e)s(th)et(ics) of human and nonhuman animal relations in contemporary art. Hunter's work draws attention to the problem of the knotted nodes of nonhumans and place while Hull's attempts to answer the problem. While Hunter highlights the entangled material histories between humans and nonhumans via absence, Hull does so via presence—the presence of nonhuman animals in place. Hull also creates a "new place" for animals, but one much more familiar and readably accessible to human understanding. However, her work is more than mere ergonomics because it also addresses the historical relationships between humans, human practices, and raptors through material semiotic narrative(s) in shared place(s). Her work, like Olly and Suzi's also engages with animal participation between artists (both Hull and the raptors contribute to the aesthetics of the work—Hull designs the initial structure, perch, and the raptors create the nest.<sup>355</sup> By creating a potential nesting area, Hull addresses a significant material consequence for raptors stemming from human practices. Also, Hull's title "Raptor Roost" identifies the species of bird most impacted by power lines. For example, in a study published on Wildlands CPR (online)

*Katharine Hyzy argues:*

While power lines pose a number of threats to a variety of birds, the poles that support them are most likely to affect raptors and corvids. These birds are most at risk due to their relatively wide wingspans and tendency to use poles as nesting platforms and perches from which they survey for prey (Lehmann 2001). Studies have shown that golden and bald eagles suffer some of the highest mortalities; one study based on ten years of data collected from 13 western states and Canada found that out of 1,450 confirmed raptor electrocutions, 272 were golden eagles.<sup>356</sup>

Figure 5-9 illustrates how Hull recognizes the material and semiotic transformation of the landscape and the impact it has had on raptors. Her structure provides markers of significance that raptors recognize as a potential perch, as well as, adapts the look of a power pole—as a recognition that raptors now recognize the shape (vertical pole with horizontal crossbeam) as a part of their Umwelt.



Figure 5-9 Lynne Hull from “Raptor Roost” series <sup>357</sup>

The stark, yet colored vertical structure disrupts the otherwise horizontal aesthetic. Similar in shape and height to a power pole the work is a creative reinterpretation of the relationships between humans and nonhumans in shared places. The pole provides “power” but of a different kind. Rather than “fueling” the towns and cities dotted along the West, this pole powers the sustainability of raptors who through encounters with power poles has suffered greatly. Also, the work not just ergonomics or merely habitat outside the realm of art as Fuller might protest. John Fox broaches this possibility when he states “Useful to birds and animals - but why call them art? Because they are sculptures [. . .] they are all aesthetically pleasing [. . .] and they might well tickle the mind, too provoking a few thoughts about what we are doing to our environment.”<sup>358</sup> While Fox’s statement attempts to answer whether Hull’s works are art or not and makes a connection between the works and the environment, it falls short in that it remains tethered to problematic issues discussed throughout this project. For instance, the last line

could suggest humans are separate from the environment because the environment in this context becomes the vessel to hold everything nonhuman—the ubiquitous and universal Environment. Furthermore, this chasm expands as Fox indicates the works are aesthetically pleasing and thought provoking for humans—not animals. More specifically, he excludes animals from being participants in the work, or having any aesthetic recognition of the work's merits (markers of significance). His response, while a start to suggesting why the roosts are art not just habitats, remains overly humanist. Yet Hull's works highlight the a(e)s(th)et(ics) of art and animal and human relationships through the aforementioned recognition of the knotted nodes that entangle animals (humans and nonhumans) and environments. In this case, the historical, biological, material, and semiotic intersect whether through the raptors' adaptations to lines as roosts, the history of human expansion and technology in relation to material consequences for nonhumans, or the ethics of an aesthetic that attempts to appeal to both humans and nonhumans. A(e)s(th)et(ics) not only applies to the arts. Hull's work signals the practical application of a(e)s(th)et(ics) to other venues such as parks or road causeways—an extension that promotes a material posthumanist approach toward the relationships between humans and nonhumans. Examples of such potential applications, or current incarnations, will be addressed in the following chapter.

An A(e)s(th)et(ics) of inter and intra-relations in encounters or contact zones is a messy mix of converging, and at times conflicting phenomena like material and semiotic. A(e)s(th)et(ics) in relation to art about and for animals is relational. However, the relationships are not necessarily compatible, rather like contact zones or trans-corporeality the relationships between humans and nonhumans in shared places can be quite contentious and/or contagious—co-constituting one another through permeations and leakages.

## Chapter 6

### A(e)s(th)et(ics) Outside the Arts

The arts co-constitute meaning and materiality between humans and nonhumans. The film *Jaws* significantly impacted the way sharks were perceived by humans, propelling anti-shark hysteria to dire material consequences. However, *Jaws* also was influenced by actual attacks by a single (?) shark. The folding of cultural practices and presuppositions, the lack of knowledge about sharks, and the material realities of the attacks provided the foundation for the success of *Jaws*. The film is less a response to the historical events or the views of sharks post 1916, but rather a greatly fictionalized retelling in the mold of 1950s horror films with animal or insect antagonists. Ruth Ozeki's *My Year of Meats* begins with such a response. As she notes, the book started as merely a metaphor—the connection between meat and women—but as she began researching her work changed from metaphor to a material metaphor, a folding of materiality and metaphor. The dangers of D.E.S. combined with a disregard for animal or human safety directly responds to a history of cultural practices akin to Beck's boomerang effect. Unlike *Jaws*, *My Year of Meats*, explores the almost invisible risks of living in a risk society and the permeability of animal and human bodies. The works complement each other well insofar as they begin with widely divergent premises of the relationships between human and nonhuman animals: *Jaws* separates human and nonhuman along fairly rigid Cartesian boundaries. *My Year of Meats* begins with the interconnectivity of the two. Despite the differences, both works illustrate the cultural and material overlap between human and nonhuman animals. The a(e)s(th)et(ics) of this overlap becomes a mode to identify and then recast the overly simplistic portrayals or uses of nonhumans in the arts. Too often these uses reduce animals to a general idea such as monster, mindless, or passive. A(e)s(th)et(ics) attempts to undermine this by demonstrating the rich interconnectivity between active beings in shared places. Moreover, the interaction between beings includes cross species encounters, some beneficial, others extremely harmful.

However, A(e)s(th)et(ics) is not limited to the arts, but rather extends outside the humanities. In fact, much like the co-constitution of human and nonhuman the arts and culture co-constitute one another. For example, outside the Mojave National Preserve along the Southern border of California and Nevada sits what many call a modern marvel—a 2.2 billion dollar solar station, called Ivanpah (named for the valley in which it resides). The BrightSource Energy project includes a federal mandate to ensure the protection of the threatened desert tortoise.<sup>359</sup> The consideration of tortoise populations in the project parameters, while laudable, overlooked another at risk population—avian populations. The solar farm includes “three towers as tall as 40-story buildings. Nearly 350,000 mirrors, each the size of a garage door, reflect sunlight onto boilers atop the towers, creating steam that drives power generators.”<sup>360</sup> The massive installation generates up to a 1000 degrees Fahrenheit, killing many species of birds (including small and large species) passing near the structure. Environmentalists initially worried about the potential for this by citing the shimmering light of the structure as an environmental sign for water in the desert. A second facility outside Joshua Tree National Park remains on hold as biologists attempt to determine countermeasures and potentially protected species that would be at risk (including golden eagles).<sup>361</sup>

The problem with the project in under a(e)s(th)et(ics) is twofold. First, the protective orders for the tortoises and golden eagles are important, but disregard the rest of the nonhumans in the environment. More specifically, the protective order considers *only* protected species, which too often disregards the web of relations between species. For instance, protective orders for certain birds of prey required altering rules about mercury use and disposal, fishing practices, and river/waterway uses. The decline of avian species in the area could have a dramatic impact on the desert environment, including other species loss. The valuation of only endangered species signals the underlying anthropocentric ethic at hand. Unless demarcated as endangered, species interests are ancillary to human interests. Also, the ethics of protecting the tortoises and not the birds signals the fairly entrenched view of place.



The tortoise, whose native habitat is the desert, doesn't migrate like the birds. The migratory patterns of birds as inclusion in considerations of place seems lost in this project. The nomadic species are not considered inhabitants of the area—at least not for the project guidelines.

Second, even by ensuring the tortoises will be protected, the project generally ignores the aesthetics of nonhumans and nonhumans in a shared place. For instance, BrightSource Energy petitioned to alter the parameters by protecting tortoises elsewhere in the desert because the required land purchase for conserving tortoise populations around the project was not feasible. Shifting conservation focus on another population of desert tortoises disregards the potential uniqueness of species in a particular habitat. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service the Ivanpah tortoise population “may have been genetically isolated for millennia from tortoises elsewhere in the California Desert.” BrightSource Energy's proposal assumes all desert tortoises are the same (a similar problem with rigid species classifications), regardless of environmental, historical, or evolutionary factors. While less reductive than the role *Jaws* had reducing a diverse species group to one idea, small deviations in similar species signify the importance of the ethics of place for humans and nonhumans. The tortoise populations, however, were at least considered. The avian populations were generally ignored. The lack of aesthetic understanding of bird perception (drawn to shimmering light), space considerations (heat rises into migratory airspace), and human cultural preferences (the site produces a lot of light, which is an eyesore for local tribes) indicates aesthetic considerations are outweighed by the power the facility provides.

The failures of recognizing the a(e)s(th)et(ics) of the Ivanpah project for nonhumans becomes more glaring by comparing it to Montana's ambitious 56 miles of the Highway 93 wildlife crossing project, which includes “42 fish and wildlife crossing structures, 2 underpasses for live-stock and approximately 8.4 miles of fencing.”<sup>362</sup> The project was a collaboration between state agencies, biologists, and members of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribe. By studying issues such as species behavior, migratory patterns, and traffic incidents the

project created crossing structures in high accident areas that align with species sizes and behaviors. Unlike the Ivanpah project, which either reduced the unique Ivanpah Valley desert tortoises to all desert tortoises or ignored avian populations, the Highway 93 project earnestly addresses the differences between the many species in the area, noting particular types would use tunnels (as they provide a sense of security/cover) while others would use overpasses (tunnels would provide a sense of insecurity/confinement). Fencing and markers also respond to the jumping and flying abilities of certain species (high enough to stop deer from leaping, but low enough that lower flight birds can cross). Considering nonhuman species the project demonstrates the need to recognize that not only do nonhumans inhabit the same places we do, but also the relationships with them can be advantageous to both. While the primary drive behind the project was to reduce accidents so humans would not be hurt or suffer monetary consequences from repairing wrecked automobiles, the interest in the program also stems from the images the motion cameras capture. People have really enjoyed the photos of animals using the crossings, especially when some of the photos indicate adult animals are teaching their young to use the crossings.<sup>363</sup>

The ethical concerns of a(e)s(th)et(ics) remains important because without them, the type of aesthetics advocated in this project could be used in ways that are detrimental to nonhumans. For instance, understanding the perceptual markers for certain types of animals leads to better means to kill them. Hunters use calls and scents to entice animals in proximity of their guns. The aesthetics of such uses require the type of historical, material, and semiotic analysis because of the complex relationship between humans and nonhumans. The answers are not always simple. Discussions surrounding Hirst's commission of the killing of at least two tiger sharks for his controversial work mostly condemn his choices and the work itself; however, what is the difference between his work and taxidermy? The overriding response focuses on the treatment or use of animals—at the very least considering animals in the places and processes in which humans and nonhumans collide. This response leads to another question stemming

from Cary Wolfe's chapter on Temple Grandin in *What is Posthumanism*, the possibility of a posthuman ethic for killing animals. Wolfe's analysis focuses on how Grandin's autism supplies her with a different view point that, according to Grandin, allows her to envision a more humane and efficient cattle slaughtering process. The process is more humane because the cattle are subject to far less stress. Wolfe's analysis alongside Grandin's understanding of cattle behavior, addresses a posthuman aesthetics. In an era of increasing global culture, risk, and human and nonhuman encounters, an a(e)s(th)et(ics) of nonhumans, humans, and shared places will at the very least help initiate conversations about the relationships between humans and nonhumans while identifying areas where perceived boundaries are permeable or non-existent.

## References

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- <sup>1</sup> <<http://www.theginblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/10/dog3.JPG>>
- <sup>2</sup> Ruiz, Geiner Bonilla. "Perro y un polemico arte." La Prensa.com.ni. Trans. Google Translate. <<http://archivo.laprensa.com.ni/archivo/2007/octubre/05/noticias/revista/219438.shtml>>
- <sup>3</sup> There are numerous blogs, news websites, and animal welfare group websites (including The Humane Society) that have written and/or reprinted petitions, vilifying Vargas and/or advocating for stricter animal rights laws in Nicaragua. A Google search with the words "Guillermo Habacuc Vargas" demonstrates the volume of sites devoted to this topic.
- <sup>4</sup> Ironic, considering the director of the gallery also cites a lack of evidence that the dog was mistreated or died in the gallery.
- <sup>5</sup> Chambers, Rodolfo Kronfle. "Aclaracion tema "Habacuc."" SALONKRTIK.net. Trans. Google Translate. Original Publish Date. October 30, 2007.
- <sup>6</sup> Liquidising goldfish 'not a crime' BBC News. Online. May 19, 2003.
- <sup>7</sup> Both the positive and negative aspects of the work will be discussed further after the excursus.
- <sup>8</sup> Kalof, Linda and Amy Fitzgerald, Eds. *The Animals Reader: Essential Classic and Contemporary Writings*. Oxford: Berg, 2007.
- <sup>9</sup> Chris, Cynthia. *Watching Wildlife*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2006.
- <sup>10</sup> Wolfe, Cary. *What Is Posthumanism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010.
- <sup>11</sup> Liquidising goldfish 'not a crime' BBC News. Online. May 19, 2003.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Baker, Steven. *The Postmodern Animal*. London: Reaktion Books, 2000.
- <sup>14</sup> Baker, Steven. *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity, and Representation*. Chicago. U of Illinois P. 2001.
- <sup>15</sup> Datson, Lorraine and Gregg Mitman, *Thinking with Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism*. New York: Columbia UP, 2005.
- <sup>16</sup> Or considerations of ethical positions toward dogs in societies in general. That is, the exhibit could (or should) cause non-Nicaraguans to reflect on their nation's attitude towards dogs as well.
- <sup>17</sup> Rather, according to Vargas, it is the spectators who should interact, by intervening and providing the dog with sustenance—as well as outside the gallery. He contends the spectators' inaction mirrors their inaction outside the gallery where dogs similar to the one in the exhibit roam the streets.
- <sup>18</sup> The director of the gallery contests this, while Vargas remains silent. However, for both the social implications, and the art itself are more important, which follows the problematic, but often invoked, maxims "for the greater good," or "the ends justify the means." The public, lawmakers, and scholars have rejected both maxims in America in regards to animals in the media at least since the creation of "no animals were harmed in filming" disclaimer. However, both continue to resonate in areas such as consumer product and medical testing.
- <sup>19</sup> See Burt, Chris, Ingram or Mitman—film; Baker—art and culture; and Berger and Lippit—industrial and consumer culture (19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Century). All identify moments, in Western culture, where nonhuman animals are reduced to sign, whether a sign of a timeless species, a political or moral point, or a reminder of human lost innocence.
- <sup>20</sup> This argument circulates in Animal Studies. For instance, despite all the criticism surrounding Disney films (anthropocentrism, racism, sexism, etc.) most critics agree the films can have a positive influence because they can engender the political or moral importance of caring for nonhuman animals—often couched in conservation.
- <sup>21</sup> In this example, humans—especially industrial or consumer society—inflicts the purity, "virginity," of "Mother" nature. Again, this type of representation can have great rhetorical impact—like influencing viewers to support a certain cause. However, they

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- include problematic aspects, which often lead to detrimental consequences for certain groups, like the feminization of nature, or the valuation of one “nature” over another. Often these valuations are based upon cultural practices such as anthropomorphism, symbolism, racism, sexism, or religious ideology—see William Cronon “The Trouble with Wilderness” or Joy Williams “Save the Whales, Screw the Shrimp” for examples of cultural privilege of “nature,” aesthetics, and time.
- <sup>22</sup> "It's a work that leaves a social message, it definitely is conceptual art and people are still hard to digest this type of work."  
<http://www.google.com/translate?u=http://www.laprensa.com.ni/archivo/2007/octubre/05/noticias/revista/219438.shtml>.
- <sup>23</sup> In this respect animal control is not only for the safety of humans and nonhumans, but also for the aesthetic of a community. Just as vagrancy laws often are more about people not wanting to see homeless people in their neighborhoods and/or property values rather than the safety of either party.
- <sup>24</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/5338118.stm>.
- <sup>25</sup> Wolfe, Cary. *What Is Posthumanism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> Haraway, Donna. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008.
- <sup>28</sup> Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke UP, 2007. p. 132.
- <sup>29</sup> Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and The Material Self*. Bloomington: Indiana UP. 2010. p. 2.
- <sup>30</sup> Haraway, Donna. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P. 2008. p. 4.
- <sup>31</sup> Barad. p. 137.
- <sup>32</sup> Wolfe, Cary. *What Is Posthumanism?* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P. 2012. p. xv.
- <sup>33</sup> Barad. p. 32.
- <sup>34</sup> See Chapter One.
- <sup>35</sup> Haraway, Donna. *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press. 2003. p. 6.
- <sup>36</sup> See Chapter Four for an in depth analysis of sharks in contemporary culture.
- <sup>37</sup> For example, the coverage of Michael Vick's treatment of dogs generated a flurry of response from the public that was almost entirely negative, while the coverage of shark finning generates mixed responses and far less public cries for intervention or new legislation for protections.
- <sup>38</sup> Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P. 2005. p. 293.
- <sup>39</sup> Barad. p. 133.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 28.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid. p. 29.
- <sup>42</sup> Vargas, Guillermo. Source: Aloj, Giovanni. *Art & Animals*. London: I.B. Taurius. 2012. p. 127.
- <sup>43</sup> "The Refugio—Saving the lives of dogs and cats in Costa Rica." The Examiner.  
[www.examiner.com/article/the-refugio-saving-the-lives-of-dogs-and-cats-costa-rica](http://www.examiner.com/article/the-refugio-saving-the-lives-of-dogs-and-cats-costa-rica).
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>45</sup> Barad. p. 33.
- <sup>46</sup> Barad. p. 35.
- <sup>47</sup> The U.S. release, however, was 2003 (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0301727/releaseinfo>).
- <sup>48</sup> The trailer is located at: <http://www.sonyclassics.com/wingedmigration/home.html>.
- <sup>49</sup> By viewing the films as co-constitutive, or as both being products and processes of a larger project, the films inform and support one another, while highlighting more than the constructed nature of filmmaking because the processes and products raise important

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- questions pertaining to the relationships between human and nonhuman animals, perspectives, and agency.
- <sup>50</sup> See Haraway, Donna. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008; and Daston, Lorraine and Gregg Mitman. *Thinking with Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism*. New York: Columbia UP, 2005. The texts offer different perspectives on the relationships between human and nonhuman animals; however, both challenge rigid species categories that separate human and nonhuman animals by thinking with/through rather than thinking about animals. Moreover, for technology, history, and culture remain intertwined with material bodies of both human and nonhuman animals.
- <sup>51</sup> Wolfe, Carey. *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003. p. 17.
- <sup>52</sup> Barad, Karen. p. 178.
- <sup>53</sup> Daston and Mitman. p. 12.
- <sup>54</sup> The multiple meanings of focus illustrate the entangled relationships in the films more fully. More specifically, “out of focus” refers not only to that which is out of the frame of the original film (which is revealed only through the viewing of the companion film) but also to that which is literally out of focus (which is revealed only by resituating the juxtaposition of foreground/background images).
- <sup>55</sup> Burt, Jonathan. “*Whale Rider*, directed by Niki Caro and *Winged Migration*, directed by Jacques Perrin.” *Society & Animals*. 11.4, 422-23. <[www.psyeta.org/sa](http://www.psyeta.org/sa)>
- <sup>56</sup> Cronon provides examples such as nature in one’s backyard, or even “weeds” that grow in sidewalk cracks. See “The Trouble with Wilderness.”
- <sup>57</sup> Ingram, David. *Green Screen*. Exeter: U of Exeter P, 2000.
- <sup>58</sup> There are several scenes that illustrate this point such as the mechanized farming, the polluting of bodies of water, the hunting, and the trapping of birds for commercial use.
- <sup>59</sup> The aesthetics of beauty and natural are similar to the cinematic relationship between Native Americans and nature. See Ingram, Chris; and Mitman, Gregg. *Reel Nature: America’s Romance with Wildlife on Film*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999.
- <sup>60</sup> The parallelism, of course, requires an imaginative viewer that forgets he/she is not actually flying or in exotic locations.
- <sup>61</sup> Burt, Jonathan. *Animals in Film*. London: Reaktion Books, 2002. 156.
- <sup>62</sup> Baker, Steve. *Picturing the Beast*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1993. Note: Berger, Lippit, and Baker do not present the same arguments; however, all three argue that current mediums, such as film and photographs, often participate in reducing the animal to spectacle. Berger laments this trend while connecting it to the advent of industrialized society; Lippit posits that through technological representations (especially film) animals present even in their material absence, while Baker argues that although the trend continues some artists resist it by presenting a “Postmodern Animal.” See Berger, John. *About Looking*. New York: Vintage International, 1980; and Lippit, Akira Mizuta. *Electric Animal: Toward A Rhetoric of Wildlife*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P. 2000.
- <sup>63</sup> Berger argues a significant shift occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century following Descartes, whose division of the body and soul reduced nonhuman animals to machines. The 20<sup>th</sup> Century surpasses Descartes’ model through industry, technology, and exploitation.
- <sup>64</sup> Mitman. p. 17.
- <sup>65</sup> These ideas are interrelated, whereby moral reform often means protecting the idea of the wild and timeless bird or the aesthetic wonderment—which is particular, privileged landscapes and animals.
- <sup>66</sup> Optimism is not in itself a bad perspective; however, the film engenders a potentially dangerous ethic. Adults, specifically modern industrial adults, are responsible for many of the dangers birds encounter while migrating, yet only children are willing to transform

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the practices. Also, as the Blue Macaw or the Monument Valley scenes indicate the birds can adapt to such dangers. Both scenarios disregard the need for current modern industrial (or consumer) adults to change their practices and may over estimate the birds' ability to continually adapt. More specifically, the film could present a message that although human practices are harmful to nonhumans; birds have existed for tens of millions of years and will continue to exist. This message could engender a sense in viewers that their actions will not be overly detrimental to birds.

<sup>67</sup> See Burt, *Animals in Film*, Chris, *Watching Wildlife*, or Mitman, *Reel Nature*. Each offers an insightful and comprehensive view of the history of Wildlife Films. I have only listed a few examples of fairly entrenched Wildlife Film themes in *Winged Migration*; however, there are more themes that Burt, Chris, and Mitman describe in great detail.

<sup>68</sup> Barad. 89.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 89.

<sup>70</sup> Fay, Jennifer. "Seeing/Loving Animals: Andre Bazin's Posthumanism." *Journal of Visual Culture*. 7.1 (2008): 41-64. (43).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. p. 60.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. p. 60.

<sup>73</sup> *Winged Migration the Making of*.

<sup>74</sup> <http://rossanthony.com/W/wingmig.shtml>. The movie review site, Rotten Tomatoes calculates the average review scores. *Winged Migration* scored very favorably, while many of the reviews focused on the aesthetics of the film.

<sup>75</sup> Berger. p. 16.

<sup>76</sup> Haraway, Donna. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991. p. 190.

<sup>77</sup> See Haraway's (*Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*) and Wolfe's (*Animal Rights*) critique of vision. Both identify significant problems with visualizing practices for both humans and nonhumans. More specifically, Wolfe argues that addressing the problems of the human gaze remains especially salient for ethical approaches to nonhuman animals.

<sup>78</sup> Haraway. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. p. 192.

<sup>79</sup> Ingram. p. 34.

<sup>80</sup> Fay. p. 43.

<sup>81</sup> Barad. p. 89. Barad includes a helpful figure that illustrates the significant differences between diffraction and reflection.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. p. 89.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p. 89.

<sup>84</sup> Haraway. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. p. 190.

<sup>85</sup> See Baker. *Picturing the Beast*.

<sup>86</sup> Barad. p. 178.

<sup>87</sup> After viewing *Winged Migration the Making of* the veracity of this claim is complicated. Some of the birds were followed while others were crated and shipped from location to location.

<sup>88</sup> Barad. p. 33.

<sup>89</sup> Baker. *Picturing the Beast*. p. 218.

<sup>90</sup> See Baker *The Postmodern Animal*, where he addresses the potentiality of a postmodern animal in art. His analysis of *Shark Installation* has similar issues. Baker's analysis that the installation demonstrates a "postmodern" animal is very compelling. The relationship between the sharks, painters, and the paintings illustrates this well. For example, the fact that the shark on the cover of his text actually bites Olly and Suzi's painting thereby severing their names from the painting reinforces Baker's argument that Olly and Suzi's paintings are a direct interaction with the animal's environment, and

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are a product of the collaboration with the animals they paint. The animals participate—like *Winged Migration* they are active subjects, not passive objects. However, Olly and Suzi attract the sharks by chumming the ocean and by using blood as paint, thereby using a slurry of nonhuman animals in order to produce their signature shot, which appears on the cover of Baker's *The Postmodern Animal*. Also, their signature shot, while a demonstration of the "postmodern" animal, echoes a cultural reference that has been anything but positive for great white sharks—*Jaws*. The photograph of the shark biting a painting of a shark could incite the type of fear *Jaws* does by reinforcing notions that great white sharks are killing machines that patrol the ocean, indiscriminately devouring anything in their paths.

<sup>91</sup> Burt. *Animals in Film*. p. 15.

<sup>92</sup> Baker. *Picturing the Beast*. p. xvi.

<sup>93</sup> Barad. p. 391.

<sup>94</sup> Baker. *The Postmodern Animal*. p. 12.

<sup>95</sup> Barad. p. 89.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* p. 160.

<sup>97</sup> Anya, Rudulfo. "Devil Deer." *Literature and the Environment*. Eds. Lorraine Anderson, Scott Slovic, and John P. O'Grady. New York: Addison Wesley Longman. 1998. p. 488.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* p. 489

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* p. 490.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.* p. 490.

<sup>101</sup> Alaimo. p. 24.

<sup>102</sup> Anaya. p. 491.

<sup>103</sup> Tuana, Nancy. "Viscous Porosity: Witnessing Katrina." *Material Feminisms*. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman. Eds. Bloomington: Indiana. 2008. p. 189.

<sup>104</sup> Antonetta, Susanne. *Body Toxic*. Washington D.C.: Counterpoint. 2002. p. 17.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* p. 115.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* p. 134.

<sup>107</sup> Shukin, Nicole. *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P. 2009. p. 11.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.* p. 18.

<sup>110</sup> Ozeki, Ruth L. "A Conversation with Ruth Ozeki." *My Year of Meats*. New York: Penguin. 1998. p. 7.

<sup>111</sup> Ozeki, Ruth L. "Introduction to *My Year of Meats*." *My Year of Meats*. New York: Penguin. 1998. p. 2.

<sup>112</sup> Ozeki, Ruth L. *My Year of Meats*. New York: Penguin. 1998. p. 261.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.* p. 264.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.* p. 275.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.* "A Penguin Readers Guide to *My Year of Meats*." p. 7.

<sup>116</sup> Lampart, Nicolas. Meatscapes Series. <http://machineanimalcollages.com/>

<sup>117</sup> Thompson, Nato. "Interview with Nicolas Lampart." *Becoming Animal: Contemporary Art in the Animal Kingdom*. North Adams, MA: Mass MoCA Press. p. 80.

<sup>118</sup> See Chapter Two for more on Alaimo and risk societies.

<sup>119</sup> See Chapter Two for an analysis of "Devil Deer."

<sup>120</sup> van Wyck, Peter C. *Signs of Danger*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P. 2005. p. xvi.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* p. xvi.

<sup>122</sup> See Chapter Two for material memoirs and the convergence of matter and semiotics.



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- <sup>123</sup> Sagan, Dorion. "Introduction." *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans: With a Theory of Meaning*. By Jakob von Uexküll. Trans Joseph D. O'Neil. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P. 2010.
- <sup>124</sup> Uexküll, Jakob von. *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans: With a Theory of Meaning*. Trans Joseph D. O'Neil. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P. 2010. p. 41
- <sup>125</sup> Ibid. p. 42.
- <sup>126</sup> Ibid. p. 43.
- <sup>127</sup> See Alaimo and Tuana in Chapter Two.
- <sup>128</sup> Uexküll. p. 45.
- <sup>129</sup> Vredevoe, Larisa. "Tick Biology." UC Davis Department of Entomology and Nematology. UC California. Web.
- <sup>130</sup> Uexküll. p. 45.
- <sup>131</sup> Ibid. p. 47.
- <sup>132</sup> See Chapter Two.
- <sup>133</sup> Complexity in this respect is also a problematic term, which for scholars like Wolfe, is often deeply embedded in humanism. For example, the criteria for measuring complexity often stems from human's abilities to perceive and produce signs. While Uexküll does, at times, reinforce such beliefs through language like "lower" and "higher" forms of Umwelt he also argues that species are in tune with their Umwelt.
- <sup>134</sup> Sagan. p. 2.
- <sup>135</sup> Ibid. p. 3.
- <sup>136</sup> Zhang, Shaowu and Mandyam Srinivasan. "Exploration of Cognitive Capacity in Honeybees: Higher Functions Emerge from a Small Brain." *Complex Worlds from Simpler Nervous Systems*. Frederick R. Prete. Ed. Cambridge: MIT Press. 2004. p. 72.
- <sup>137</sup> Ibid. p. 73.
- <sup>138</sup> Ibid. p. 74.
- <sup>139</sup> Ibid. p. 72.
- <sup>140</sup> Derrida, Jaques. "And Say the Animal Responded?" *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal*. Cary Wolfe. Ed. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P. 2003. p. 122.
- <sup>141</sup> Wolfe, Cary. *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*. Chicago: U of Chicago 2003. p. 74.
- <sup>142</sup> Spivak, Gayatri. "Introduction." *Of Grammatology*. Derrida, Jacques. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976. p. xvii.
- <sup>143</sup> Ibid. p. xviii.
- <sup>144</sup> Derrida. p. 125.
- <sup>145</sup> See Chapter Two.
- <sup>146</sup> Derrida. p. 126.
- <sup>147</sup> Ibid. p. 127.
- <sup>148</sup> Harland, Duane P. and Robert R. Jackson. "Portia Perceptions: The Umwelt of an Araneophagic Jumping Spider." *Complex Worlds from Simpler Nervous Systems*. Frederick R. Prete. Ed. Cambridge: MIT Press. 2004. p. 5.
- <sup>149</sup> Ibid. p. 10.
- <sup>150</sup> Although realizing spiders have cognitive abilities might increase cultural fears of them. Also, spiders suffer from a lack of anthropocentrism in appearance and numerous stories and films that pit them as horrific monsters.
- <sup>151</sup> Porter, Kevin. *Meaning, Language, and Time*. West Lafayette: Parlor Press. 2006. p. 3.
- <sup>152</sup> Wolfe. *Animal Rites*. p. 192.
- <sup>153</sup> Porter. p. 17.
- <sup>154</sup> Ibid. p. 53.

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- <sup>155</sup> The term humanoid is more accurate than human, because the Na'vi are not humans. However, the film presents a clear parallel between them and Native Americans and identifies them anatomically closer to humans than any of the other Pandora life.
- <sup>156</sup> *Avatar* is a science fiction film that takes place in the future on an "alien" world. The film is a blend of live action and CGI. *How to Train Your Dragon* is an animated fantasy film that takes place in the past on a Viking island.
- <sup>157</sup> However, representations, omissions, and other human ideologies toward specific animals also have material consequences, which can be positive, negative, or both.
- <sup>158</sup> The act and value of anthropomorphizing animals remains a highly debatable topic in Animal Studies. Generally, scholars admonish anthropomorphic portrayals of animals; however, scholars argue for a recasting of the term to diffuse the negative associations of the term. Scholars like David Ingram note both the positive and negative aspects of the term. In *Green Screen* he presents a well balanced and thoughtful analysis of the anthropomorphizing of Flipper. He notes the increase in dolphin awareness, including the "dolphin free tuna" campaign, while also arguing that the qualities used to describe Flipper risk erasing his animal "otherness," an erasure of difference—interesting a double erasure happens as the real "actor" is a female dolphin, not a male as Flipper is called.
- <sup>159</sup> His death could be read as a logical extension, or last act, of viewers' morbid desire for animals to attack humans.
- <sup>160</sup> Chris, Cynthia. p. 105.
- <sup>161</sup> Chris. p. 105.
- <sup>162</sup> Chris. p. 106.
- <sup>163</sup> See Chapter Two.
- <sup>164</sup> Casey, Susan. *The Devil's Teeth*. p. 8.
- <sup>165</sup> <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/feb/13/local/me-benchley13>
- <sup>166</sup> <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/feb/13/local/me-benchley13>
- <sup>167</sup> <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/feb/13/local/me-benchley13>
- <sup>168</sup> Musick, John A. and Beverly McMillian. *The Shark Chronicles: A Scientist Tracks The Consummate Predator*. New York: Times Books, 2002. p. 198.
- <sup>169</sup> Crawford, Dean. *Shark*. London: Reaktion Books. 2008. p. 75.
- <sup>170</sup> Alaimo, Stacy. "Discomforting Creatures: Monstrous Natures in Recent Films." Eds. Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace. *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 2001. pgs. 279-280.
- <sup>171</sup> Alaimo discusses the missed opportunity for a positive environmental message in the cinematic version of the novel. See "Discomforting Creatures: Monstrous Nature in Recent Films."
- <sup>172</sup> Benchley, Peter. "Misunderstood Monsters." Sharkfriends.com. <http://www.sharkfriends.com/sharks/PBarticle.html>
- <sup>173</sup> Benchley, Peter. "Oceans in Peril." Ocean Planet Smithsonian. [http://seawifs.gsfc.nasa.gov/OCEAN\\_PLANET/HTML/ocean\\_planet\\_book\\_peril\\_intro.html](http://seawifs.gsfc.nasa.gov/OCEAN_PLANET/HTML/ocean_planet_book_peril_intro.html)
- <sup>174</sup> Alaimo, Stacy. "Discomforting Creatures: Monstrous Nature in Recent Films." p. 280. Alaimo provides an important critique of why horror/monster movies need more attention from Ecocriticism. As she notes, films have material consequences for nature(s). *Jaws* certainly has for most, if not all, sharks.
- <sup>175</sup> Muir, John Kenneth. *Horror Films of the 1970s*. Jefferson, NC. McFarland, 2002. p. 353.
- <sup>176</sup> An idea further bolstered by Spielberg's inclusion of a T-Rex growl as the shark sinks into the depths shrouded in a thick cloud of blood. See the Making of segment on the *Jaws* dvd.
- <sup>177</sup> Muir. p. 352.

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- <sup>178</sup> Muir. p. 353.
- <sup>179</sup> See *Close to Shore*. Capuzzo provides a detailed and engaging historical overview of the hysteria post the 1916 attacks.
- <sup>180</sup> Lev, Peter. *American Films of the 70s: Conflicting Visions*. Austin: U of Texas P. p. 47.
- <sup>181</sup> See Leopold's "Thinking Like a Mountain."
- <sup>182</sup> Ingram, p. 88.
- <sup>183</sup> See David Ingram's wonderful analysis of *Jaws* in *Green Screen*. While the overall scope of the book is environmental readings of films broadly conceived, he analyzes many animal-centric films and makes some salient arguments relevant to Animal Studies.
- <sup>184</sup> Lev, Peter. *American Films of the 70s: Conflicting Visions*. Austin: U of Texas P. p. 47.
- <sup>185</sup> *Jaws*. Universal. Dir. Steven Spielberg. 1975.
- <sup>186</sup> *Making of Steven Spielberg's Jaws*. Dir. Laurent Bouzereau. 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition. DVD. 2005.
- <sup>187</sup> Bright, Michael. *Sharks*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002. p. 5.
- <sup>188</sup> Both Goh and Hislop are interviewed in the film *Shark Water*.
- <sup>189</sup> Maniguet, Xavier. *Jaws of Death: Sharks as Predator Man as Prey*. New York: Crescent Books, 1991. p. 32.
- <sup>190</sup> <http://www.afi.com/100Years/thrills.aspx>
- <sup>191</sup> <http://www.afi.com/100Years/movies10.aspx>
- <sup>192</sup> [http://www.universalorlando.com/Theme\\_Parks/Universal\\_Studios\\_Orlando/Attractions/jaws\\_ride.aspx](http://www.universalorlando.com/Theme_Parks/Universal_Studios_Orlando/Attractions/jaws_ride.aspx)
- <sup>193</sup> Hemingway, Ernest. *The Old Man and The Sea*. New York: Scribner, 1952. p. 105.
- <sup>194</sup> The novel was published in 1973 and the film released in 1975. Jabberjaw was first aired in 1976.
- <sup>195</sup> The Animal Welfare Act was passed in 1966. It has been amended many times. The Marine Mammal Act was passed in 1972. <http://awic.nal.usda.gov/government-and-professional-resources/federal-laws/animal-welfare-act>; [http://www.dolphins.org/marineded\\_legislation.php](http://www.dolphins.org/marineded_legislation.php).
- <sup>196</sup> There is an interesting parallel here with the "coming out" of the shark named Lenny in *Shark Tale*, which will be discussed later. That is, per discussions in Critical Race theory, Gender Studies, Queer Theory, and Cultural Studies, both animated sharks could be read as subjected to a masculine, hetero-sexual normativity that still circulates in Western society. In this paradigm all "others," those who do not fit in the prescribed and enforced norm are associated with "animal" or considered "beastly."
- <sup>197</sup> [http://www.elasmo-research.org/education/white\\_shark/conservation.htm](http://www.elasmo-research.org/education/white_shark/conservation.htm)
- <sup>198</sup> <http://www.whitesharktrust.org/pages/index.html>
- <sup>199</sup> Reynolds, Emma. "Hunt for killer shark after Australian surfer is bitten in HALF by 15ft-long Great White nicknamed Brutus." DailyMail. Web. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2174265/Australia-shark-attacks--Hunt-killer-shark-surfer-bitten-HALF-24ft-long-Great-White.html>
- <sup>200</sup> The Florida Museum of Natural History records indicate 54% of all humans attacked by sharks are surfers. See <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/sharks/statistics/2003attacksummary.htm>
- <sup>201</sup> [fark.com](http://www.fark.com)
- <sup>202</sup> See Reaktion Books *Shark*. Crawford provides a comprehensive analysis of sharks in popular culture dating back as far as the Greeks.
- <sup>203</sup> There was an animated show titled *Street Sharks* prior to these films, but the characters were human/shark hybrids (*Street Sharks* following the success of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*). The focus on hybrid and monstrous creatures here would be an interesting area for study as a threshold between human and animals (like *Island of Dr. Monroe*) but is out of the scope of this chapter.

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- <sup>204</sup> *Finding Nemo*. Disney. Directors Andrew Stanton and Lee Unkrich. 2003.
- <sup>205</sup> Equating eating habits with sexuality and gender roles is a fairly common argument in Gender, Feminist, Animal, and Cultural Studies. For example see Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, or Ozeki *My Year of Meats*. Television has also used food and masculinity as a marketing tool. For example, in a Hummer advertisement a man buying soy milk and vegetables looks uncomfortably (clearly a “measuring”) at the purchases of the man in line behind him (slab of meat and charcoal). He proceeds to purchase a Hummer in order to “restore his manhood.”
- <sup>206</sup> Wrenn, Eddie. “Meet Florence, the world’s first vegetarian shark who prefers celery sticks and cucumber to fish.” Mail Online. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2146340/Worlds-vegetarian-shark-shuns-meat--bemused-Sea-Life-staff-hide-fish-inside-cucumbers-protein.html>
- <sup>207</sup> <http://www.chasing-fireflies.com/great-white-shark-costume/productinfo/31383/>
- <sup>208</sup> <http://www.toysrus.com/product/index.jsp?productId=2756705>
- <sup>209</sup> Crawford, Dean. *Shark*. London: Reaktion Books, 2008. p. 132.
- <sup>210</sup> <http://www.iucnssg.org/index.php/faqreader/items/how-many-sharks-are-killed-annually-each-year>
- <sup>211</sup> Helvarg, David. “Shark is the New Dolphin.” Huffington Post. Web.
- <sup>212</sup> The order entertainment and education is important. As mentioned, animal “wildlife” films have generally eschewed education for entertainment since their outset. See Chris and Mitman. There is a larger issue here in that the argument for entertainment over education too often is posed as an either or. That is, the film can entertain, or educate. However, these terms are not mutually exclusive.
- <sup>213</sup> Casey, Susan. *The Devil’s Teeth*. p. 8.
- <sup>214</sup> Shark Week 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Collection. Discovery Channel. 2012. Blu-ray.
- <sup>215</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/13/shark-week-2012-air-jaws-apocalypse-video\\_n\\_1772142.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/13/shark-week-2012-air-jaws-apocalypse-video_n_1772142.html)
- <sup>216</sup> Palmer, Chris and Peter Kimball. “Shark Week—Education or Just Entertainment?” Huffington Post. Web.
- <sup>217</sup> For instance, Rob Stewart’s wonderful film *Sharkwater* contains interviews whereby the interviewee confirms this claim. One, an Australian, claims he is a hero for killing sharks.
- <sup>218</sup> Capuzzo, Michael. *Close to Shore: The Terrifying Shark Attacks of 1916*. New York: Broadway Books, 2001. p. 97.
- <sup>219</sup> *Ibid.* p. 154.
- <sup>220</sup> *Ibid.* p. 153.
- <sup>221</sup> *Ibid.* p. 150.
- <sup>222</sup> Crawford, Dean. His text contains an image of a shark on Greek pottery.
- <sup>223</sup> Melville, Herman. *Moby-Dick*. Hertsfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 1993. p. 244.
- <sup>224</sup> Poe, Edgar Allan. *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*. New York: Penguin Books. 1999. p. 124
- <sup>225</sup> Poe. p. 125
- <sup>226</sup> Poe. p. 125.
- <sup>227</sup> Crawford, Dean. p. 81.
- <sup>228</sup> *Ibid.* p. 92. Crawford presents many important pre 1916 images of sharks. He has many other examples that add to the argument that people were aware of shark attacks, yet devoid of the hysteria after the 1916 attacks.
- <sup>229</sup> <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/06.1234>
- <sup>230</sup> Melville, Herman. *Moby-Dick*. Hertsfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 1993. p. 252.
- <sup>231</sup> *Ibid.* p. 251.

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- <sup>232</sup> The parallel between this chapter title and Benchley's *Shark Trouble* is interesting as both titles are ambiguous yet clearly in both the sharks in trouble or being massacred.
- <sup>233</sup> Much has been written on the parallels between Ahab and Quint. The film *Shark Water* contains a segment that reminds viewers that whales were once deemed monsters of the deep that killed humans without remorse.
- <sup>234</sup> Melville, Herman. *Moby-Dick*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 1993. p. 246.
- <sup>235</sup> Ibid. p. 246.
- <sup>236</sup> Ibid. p. 246.
- <sup>237</sup> Crawford p. 73.
- <sup>238</sup> Ibid. p. 73.
- <sup>239</sup> <http://www.etsy.com/listing/104579505/the-sin-of-the-shark-a-victorian-era>
- <sup>240</sup> Melville, Herman. *Selected Tales and Poems*. Ed. Richard Chase. New York: Holt, 1950. p. 401.
- <sup>241</sup> Morgan, Jack. p. 100.
- <sup>242</sup> <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/gallery/descript/oceanicwt/oceanicwt.html>
- <sup>243</sup> <http://www.arkive.org/oceanic-whitetip-shark/carcharhinus-longimanus/#text=Biology>
- <sup>244</sup> <http://animals.howstuffworks.com/fish/pilot-fish-info.htm>; <http://www.seaworld.org/animal-info/info-books/sharks-&-rays/behavior.htm>
- <sup>245</sup> <http://animals.howstuffworks.com/fish/pilot-fish-info.htm>; <http://www.seaworld.org/animal-info/info-books/sharks-&-rays/behavior.htm>
- <sup>246</sup> Thoreau, Henry David. *Cape Cod*. New York: Penguin Books. 1987. p. 128.
- <sup>247</sup> Thoreau p. 128.
- <sup>248</sup> Hatch, Lelia. "Castles in the Sand: Thoreau on the Seashore."  
<http://thoreau.eserver.org/shore.html>
- <sup>249</sup> Hemingway, Ernest. *The Old Man and the Sea*. New York: Scribners, 1952. p. 100.
- <sup>250</sup> Ibid. pgs. 105-6.
- <sup>251</sup> Ibid. p. 106.
- <sup>252</sup> Ibid. p. 108.
- <sup>253</sup> See *Jaws the Revenge*.
- <sup>254</sup> <http://www.ollysuzi.com/trips/ocean/shark/index.php>.
- <sup>255</sup> They are, however, unsuccessful in many respects, which will be detailed further in the following sections.
- <sup>256</sup> Baker. *Postmodern Animal*. London: Reaktion Books. 2000. p. 130.
- <sup>257</sup> Broglio, Ron. *Surface Encounters*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P. 2011. p. 94.
- <sup>258</sup> Ibid. p. 94.
- <sup>259</sup> See Chapter Three.
- <sup>260</sup> See the Chapter One.
- <sup>261</sup> Per the discussions of meaning in Chapter Two, not only suggests that artists cannot control meaning because meaning is neither singular nor fixed in relation to time, but also that meaning as a product is more important than meaning as a process
- <sup>262</sup> See <http://membercentral.aaas.org/blogs/qualia/chumming-leading-more-shark-attacks>; <http://www.stopsharkcagediving.com/>; <http://www.thebombsurf.com/blog/7/339/western-australia-leads-the-way-with-banning-shark-cage-diving>
- <sup>263</sup> See meaning and consequence in Chapter Three.
- <sup>264</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hirst-Shark.jpg>.
- <sup>265</sup> Broglio. p. 16 & 17.
- <sup>266</sup> Capuzzo, Michael. *Close to Shore*. New York: Broadway Books, 2001. pgs. 90-93.
- <sup>267</sup> Ibid. p. 298.
- <sup>268</sup> This approach is noble, and theoretically and politically important. However, programs like "Shark Week" have recast behavioral and sensory approaches as a means to reinforce the post *Jaws* hysteria by frequently referring to the systems as creating the perfect

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- killer, assassin, or language associated with war while inferring that humans do not want to encounter sharks (which, while probably true, doesn't indicate sharks generally don't want to encounter humans).
- <sup>269</sup> Cole, Joanna. *Hungry, Hungry Sharks!* New York: Random House, 2009. pgs. 46-7.
- <sup>270</sup> See Chapter Two and Three.
- <sup>271</sup> See Chapter Three for meaning and a priori.
- <sup>272</sup> Baker, Steve. *The Postmodern Animal*. London: Reaktion Books, 2000. p. 44.
- <sup>273</sup> See Chapter Two.
- <sup>274</sup> Fuller, Matthew. "Art for Animals." Ed. Bernd Herzogenrath. *Deleuze/Guattari & Ecology*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2008. p. 296.
- <sup>275</sup> Ibid. p. 269.
- <sup>276</sup> See Chapter Two.
- <sup>277</sup> See Chapter Two and Three.
- <sup>278</sup> See Chapter Three.
- <sup>279</sup> Wolfe, Cary. *What Is Posthumanism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2010. p. xx.
- <sup>280</sup> Baker, Steve. *Artist/Animal*. Minneapolis. U of Minnesota P, 2012. p. 235.
- <sup>281</sup> See Chapter Two.
- <sup>282</sup> Piccinini, Patricia. "The Young Family." From Exhibition titled "We Are Family." 2002-2003. <http://www.patriciapiccinini.net/archive/>
- <sup>283</sup> Hightower, Nancy. "Patricia Piccinini's Mythic Imagination." *Weird Fiction Review*. <http://weirdfictionreview.com/2012/09/patricia-piccininis-mythic-imagination/>
- <sup>284</sup> Atwood, Margaret. *Oryx and Crake*. New York: Anchor Books, 2003. p. 23.
- <sup>285</sup> Ibid. p. 26.
- <sup>286</sup> See Chapter Two.
- <sup>287</sup> See Chapter Two.
- <sup>288</sup> Also an excellent example of Beck's boomerang effect. See Chapter Two.
- <sup>289</sup> Hightower, Nancy. "Patricia Piccinini's Mythic Imagination." *Weird Fiction Review*. <http://weirdfictionreview.com/2012/09/patricia-piccininis-mythic-imagination/>
- <sup>290</sup> See Chapter Four.
- <sup>291</sup> See Chapter Four.
- <sup>292</sup> Korsmeyer, Carolyn. Ed. *Aesthetics: The Big Questions*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. p. 9.
- <sup>293</sup> Carroll, Noël. *Philosophy of Art: A Contemporary Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1999. p. 20.
- <sup>294</sup> Plato claimed stirring up the emotions [of citizens] is socially dangerous" (19) while Aristotle argued that not only could audiences "learn from imitations" (20) but also that the "acquisition of knowledge from imitations is a major source of the pleasure that spectators derive" (20) from imitations. See Carroll pgs. 19-22.
- <sup>295</sup> See Chapter Two.
- <sup>296</sup> See Chapter Two.
- <sup>297</sup> See Chapter Three.
- <sup>298</sup> See ABC news Q & A session with Martel. <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Books/story?id=124838&page=1#.UaKX5dicvXQ>
- <sup>299</sup> See Chris in Chapter Four.
- <sup>300</sup> Turner, Allan. "Lack of Fireflies in Houston Bugs Flashing Beetles' Fans." *Houston Chronicle*. June 26, 2011.
- <sup>301</sup> Hunter, Allison. From the artist's website. <http://www.allisonhunter.com/art/>
- <sup>302</sup> Mortimer, Roz. "How It All Started." *The Flayed Horse*. January 22, 2001. Web.
- <sup>303</sup> See the Chapter One.
- <sup>304</sup> Fuller, Matthew. "Art for Animals." *Deleuze/Guattari & Ecology*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.2009. pgs 266-7.
- <sup>305</sup> Ibid. 267.

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- <sup>306</sup> <http://webecoist.momtastic.com/2010/06/08/housing-on-the-wing-10-bitingly-bizarre-bat-houses/>
- <sup>307</sup> Fuller p. 267.
- <sup>308</sup> <http://batmanagement.com/Batcentral/batboxes/whyfail.html>
- <sup>309</sup> Cembalest, Robin. "Birds Do It, Bees Do It: Taking Animals' Art Skills Seriously."  
<http://www.artnews.com/2013/03/28/animals-making-art/>
- <sup>310</sup> <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Publications/Zoogoer/2012/4/CreatureCreations.cfm>
- <sup>311</sup> Fuller. p. 269.
- <sup>312</sup> Ibid. p. 269.
- <sup>313</sup> See Chapter Two.
- <sup>314</sup> Fuller p. 269.
- <sup>315</sup> Carroll. p. 256.
- <sup>316</sup> Ibid. p. 258.
- <sup>317</sup> <http://emptyeasel.com/2009/01/29/the-vegans-list-of-art-supplies-art-products-free-of-animal-ingredients/>
- <sup>318</sup> Carroll argues that art works that require interpretation via cultural knowledge require little or no aesthetic understanding of art. That is, cultural interpretations can be independent of form—cultural studies, rather than formalism.
- <sup>319</sup> Carroll. p. 158.
- <sup>320</sup> Ibid. p. 156.
- <sup>321</sup> Ibid. p. 156.
- <sup>322</sup> Dewey. p. 13.
- <sup>323</sup> Ibid. p. 13.
- <sup>324</sup> From Steiner Birding: "They are equipped with full-color vision and with eyes specially adapted to permit rapid adjustment of focus while moving at speed, and from four to eight times the resolving power of the human eye. Hovering may be compared to looking into a field from a car moving at twenty miles an hour or from one which comes to a standstill every few yards. It would be possible for a human being to see an individual rabbit or large game bird at a range of 600-700-yards; a bird of prey, with about four times the resolving power of the human eye, should therefore be able to see it at a range of nearly two miles." [http://www.steiner-birding.com/birdtalk/observations/peregrine\\_falcon.html](http://www.steiner-birding.com/birdtalk/observations/peregrine_falcon.html)
- <sup>325</sup> Levinson, Jerrold. *Aesthetics and Ethics: Essays at the Intersection*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1998. p. xvi.
- <sup>326</sup> Ibid. p. xv.
- <sup>327</sup> Ibid. p. 9.
- <sup>328</sup> Buell, Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism*. Malden, MA: Blackwell. 2005. p. 145.
- <sup>329</sup> Buell. He defines space as "a real form in the abstract, whether literal territory of metaphorical, carrying the implication of locational specificity of some sort without any particular affect. But space is not value-neutral. Spatial practices—cartography, territorial definition, and land apportionment, for instance—inevitably express the values and agendas of those in charge of them" p. 147.
- <sup>330</sup> Carroll p. 166.
- <sup>331</sup> Ibid. p. 200.
- <sup>332</sup> Ibid. p. 199.
- <sup>333</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Trans. C.K. Ogden. London: Routledge. 2001.
- <sup>334</sup> Stegel, Katherine. "Ethics as Style: Wittgenstein's Aesthetic Ethics and Ethical Aesthetics." *Poetics Today*. 25.4. (2004): pgs. 611-12.
- <sup>335</sup> See Chapter Two.

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- <sup>336</sup> Baker, Steve. *Artist|Animal*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2013. p. 65.
- <sup>337</sup> Ibid. p. 65.
- <sup>338</sup> See Baker, *Artist|Animal* p. 143 for his account of Dion's "Manifesto." His primary argument focuses on semantics—notes versus standards or responsibility for what is done, not what must be done—and the playfulness of the "proclamations."
- <sup>339</sup> <http://becoming-animal-becoming-human.animal-studies.org/html/bell.html><http://becoming-animal-becoming-human.animal-studies.org/html/bell.html>
- <sup>340</sup> See Hirst in Chapter Four.
- <sup>341</sup> <http://becoming-animal-becoming-human.animal-studies.org/html/bell.html><http://becoming-animal-becoming-human.animal-studies.org/html/bell.html>
- <sup>342</sup> Baker, Steve. *Artist|Animal*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2013. p. 138.
- <sup>343</sup> Aloï, Giovanni. *Art & Animals*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2012. p. 113.
- <sup>344</sup> Read Giovanni Aloï's interview of Dion in *Artist & Animal*.
- <sup>345</sup> Levinson, Jerrold. *Aesthetics and Ethics: Essays at the Intersection*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1998. p. 1.
- <sup>346</sup> Ibid. p. 1.
- <sup>347</sup> Even when the "vision" is more than human (like telephoto lenses or microscopes) "human vision" plays a significant role in framing images, or choosing images to display. While such technologies like "critter cams" allow a perspective shift, the shift is still one of vision that resonates with human vision. For instance, a critter cam that presented images from a fly's multi-lens perspective or from infra vision, would better afford animal "point of view." Of course, this perspective would ignore the other sensory factors (like smell for a dog), but at least would recognize that even vision is markedly different.
- <sup>348</sup> Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2005. p. 257.
- <sup>349</sup> Vredevoe, Larisa. Background Information on the Biology of Ticks
- <sup>350</sup> Baker, Steve. *Artist|Animal*. Minneapolis. U of Minnesota P. 2013. p. 212.
- <sup>351</sup> He does address the inadequacy of classification systems (via artists like Dion) in many of his works, just not in relation to Hunter.
- <sup>352</sup> Baker, Steve. *Artist|Animal*. Minneapolis. U of Minnesota P. 2013. p. 213.
- <sup>353</sup> Hunter, Allison. *Untitled #3*. From "New Animals" series. [http://www.allisonhunter.com/art/Animals/LR\\_05\\_08\\_photos/05\\_09/content/fawn\\_lg\\_large.html](http://www.allisonhunter.com/art/Animals/LR_05_08_photos/05_09/content/fawn_lg_large.html)
- <sup>354</sup> Arsic, Branka. "Regarding New Animals: Photographs of Allison Hunter." From Allison Hunter's Website. [http://www.allisonhunter.com/art/arsic\\_essay.html](http://www.allisonhunter.com/art/arsic_essay.html)
- <sup>355</sup> See Chapter Four.
- <sup>356</sup> Hyzy, Katharine. The Price of Power: Understanding the Effects of Power Lines on Birds. Wildlands CPR. <http://www.wildlandscpr.org/road-reporter/price-power-understanding-effects-power-lines-birds>
- <sup>357</sup> <http://www.greenmuseum.org/c/aen/Bios/hull2.php>
- <sup>358</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>359</sup> Clarke, Chris. "BrightSource Seeks Changes in Ivanpah Tortoise Plan." Kcet.org.
- <sup>360</sup> Sweet, Cassandra. "The \$2.2 Billion Bird-Scorching Solar Project." The Wall Street Journal. Online. Feb. 12 2014.
- <sup>361</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>362</sup> Eidt, Jack. "Wildlife Crossings: Animals Survive with Bridges and Tunnels." Wilderutopia.com.
- <sup>363</sup> Devlin, Vince. "Cameras show wildlife use Highway 93 North overpass and tunnels." *Missoulian*. October 3 2010. Web.



### Biographical Information

Matthew Lerberg completed his M.A. in English and a TESL Certificate at Northern Arizona University. His areas of interest include Environmental Humanities, American Literature, Rhetoric, Animal Studies, and Film Studies. His primary concern is the intersection of materiality and semiotics pertaining to the relationships between humans and nonhumans. His article, "Animals, Actors, and Agency: Navigating *Winged Migration*," appeared in *ASLE Green Letters*. His second article, "Transforming the Big Bad Wolf," will appear in *Werewolves, Wolves, and The Gothic* from the University of Wales Press series of Gothic Literary Studies. He enjoys outdoor activities, including rock climbing, cycling, running, and hiking.