

**CONTEMPORARY PRIMATE LITERATURE IN ENGLISH:  
VOICING THE UNVOICED**



By

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November 2014



*To Mané, for your constant love, trust and support.  
To my family who never gives up encouraging me.  
To my animal friends. You are the inspiration behind these words.*



*Coyote*: “There are only two kinds of people.”

*Girl*: “Humans and animals.”

*Coyote*: “No. the [*sic*] kind of people who say ‘There are two kinds of people’ and the kind of people who don’t.”

(Le Guin *Buffalo Gals* 35-6)



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are too many people I have to thank for contributing to the completion of this dissertation. Its realization has stretched for a long time and consequently many loving and caring relatives, friends, and colleagues deserve to be mentioned here.

I need to begin by thanking my husband Mané without whom this dissertation would not have been possible. His support and encouragement has shown to have no limit. He has been with me through each and every day of trying to put on paper the ideas that fuel this academic enterprise. His devoted trust in my future accomplishment has surely been fundamental in carrying me to the end.

This dissertation also proves that I have been blessed with the gift of a wonderful family. My parents have always instilled in me the perseverance needed to finish what I begin if worthy. They are my role models in life and I cannot imagine having better parents. My twin sister Pilar was key in making me believe I would be able to finish this project. She gave me the strength and confidence I needed when I thought I could not go on. I hope one day to be able to return that gesture. Amelia was also an enthusiastic listener and found everything I told her fascinating. Ángela, who always acts as a second mother to me, allowed me to spend time in her house by the sea where I found many of the words I have written. Luis and Lala always asked about my progress, certain that sooner or later I would get there. Finally, my in-laws helped in some way or another by listening to me complaining about my exhaustion and bearing with me at times of celebration like Christmas when I still needed to work. Pupe and José Carlos welcomed us to their house in Chueca and turned our Easter breaks into a pleasurable scholarly experience, as did Luis and Stéphane with their generous offering of their house in Le Marais which has become the best place to spend a summer writing.

Quique with his vast knowledge and great power of observation enlightened my research with his many comments and suggested readings.

There are many special friends who have been with me throughout the years encouraging me and seeing the end even before I could imagine it: Carolina Amador and Brian Mulcahy, Pilar Bueno, Denise Elekes, Iños, Jaime and Anne Leños, Pilar Reyes, Reikos, Yolanda Rodríguez, Esther Sánchez, Lupe Silvero and Curri, Olvido Soria, and Marta Torres. Among these dear friends Ana Recarte, who now runs the Friends of Thoreau Environmental program in Spain, deserves special mention for she was the first person who made me consider that animals would one day be granted rights. I cannot think of a better person to talk more passionately about animals than her. She opened my eyes to them.

Throughout these years some members of the English Department at the University of Extremadura have supported my work in small or big ways even though it meant seeing me even busier than I was. Thank you all! Also thanks to Maribel and Ana from the research support service at the University of Extremadura Main Library in Cáceres.

This dissertation would not have been possible were it not for the wonderful introduction to ecocriticism I received at the University of Reno, Nevada (UNR) by my host Scott Slovic. Scott and his wife Susie showed me the value of generosity and commitment to a cause. Scott also made me feel part of the L & E community at UNR by including me in every hike or discussion they organized. Our trips to Mount Rose and Mount Tallac proved to me that one can really learn by walking in good company.

Other international scholars such as Val Plumwood, Cheryll Glotfelty, Terry Gifford, and Greta Gaard have at some point or another enlightened my writing with their generous observations. I am most indebted to them all for making me feel part of

the flourishing ecocritical community. Within this group of passionate people Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, whom I lovingly refer to as the *Dream Team* of European ecocriticism, were fundamental in fueling my writing with their development of material ecocriticism: a gift to many.

A similar role has been played as well by the biennial conferences of the European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture and Environment (EASLCE). They have given me the opportunity of seeing ecocriticism grow in Europe as well as meeting colleagues with which to establish fruitful collaborations.

The image that features on the cover is in part the product of this synergy. Spanish artist Verónica Perales Blanco kindly agreed to have it included as part of my project. She explained to me that this was a preparatory drawing, almost the seed, for her collection *Grandes simios en femenino* where she captured the images of many of the female gorillas living in Spanish zoos at the moment.

I also have to say that my development into ecocriticism has been possible thanks to the University of Alcalá. Were it not for its openness to new scholarly voices I would not have discovered such groundbreaking field. The Franklin Institute was instrumental in encouraging my development as a graduate student. It was there that I began doing research thanks to one of their scholarships after having completed my MA in American Studies. I am as much a seedling of the University of Alcalá as I am of the Franklin Institute. Within the former one I have found likeminded people in the research group GIECO, the first research group on ecocriticism in Spain, to which I have belonged from its foundation. I do not know what I would have done without the incredible enthusiasm with which all its members work. They have been a most helpful and inspiring force. Their level of respect and affection for each other exceed what anyone would expect from the busy members of any academic organization.

Last but not least, I cannot forget to thank my advisor Professor Carmen Flys Junquera. She is probably one of the most strong-willed persons I have ever known. I have seen her involved in so many projects I think I would need to have several lives to do as much as she does. She is a scholar who does not forget to be curious about what is new in her field. A pioneer in ecocriticism in Spain, she has also been brave enough to accept to advise this project on animal studies. She has taught me so much in the many conferences we have attended together that I would recommend any graduate student travelling with her as part of his or her doctorate courses. Her patience with me merits a very big thank you.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to my animal friends. Some years ago we lost in a brief period of a month our Dachshund Muça and our Siamese cat Kiko. They had been raised together at home since they were puppies. I cannot help but think that they had secretly decided to leave this world together, so was their affection for each other. Later chance made us find our dog Targa whose wonderful company we still enjoy today and Tori who unfortunately suffered too soon the cruelty of humans to be a happy dog and left us too soon. A part of me is always thinking of the good times I have spent horseback riding. Now our horses Marlboro, Quevire, and Washoe live their lives away from the stress of training and competition. They have finally taught me the Zen of being animal. Contemplating them in the wild is one of my greatest joys.

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## **INTRODUCTION. SINGING THE ANIMAL. <sup>1</sup> POETIC MINDS AND PHILOSOPHICAL SOULS**

*What is meant by “reality”? It would seem to be something very erratic, very dependable—now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper in the street, now in a daffodil in the sun.... It overwhelms one walking home beneath the stars and makes the silent world more real than the world of speech—and there it is again in an omnibus in the uproar of Picadilly.... Now the writer...has the chance to live more than other people in the presence of this reality. It is [her] business to find it and disclose it and collect it and communicate it to the rest of us.*

(Woolf 113-14)

*True knowledge comes not from mere observation but from thinking and feeling. We can try to re-define our view of, and relationship with, animals. By including the emotional, the sensuous, the mystical, the intellectual, we can construct a much richer reality about animals than can be had through the merely observational and utilitarian.*

(Zammit-Lucia “Artist’s Statement” N. pag.)

It was in 1990 when American philosopher Martha Nussbaum called attention in *Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* to the need to turn literary theory to philosophy. There was “an absence, from literary theory,” according to her, “of the organizing questions of moral philosophy, and of moral philosophy’s sense of urgency about these questions” (Nussbaum *Love’s Knowledge* 170). Nussbaum expressed her disenchantment at the time with literary theorists’ lack of interest in highlighting literature’s power to show us “what possibilities (and tragic impossibilities) life offers to us, what hopes and fears for ourselves it underwrites and subverts” (*Love’s Knowledge* 171). Looking at literature as an instrument of gaining knowledge of a reality many times difficult to disentangle,<sup>2</sup> Nussbaum also proclaims its power to humanize our world. As a philosopher, she confesses her awareness of the responsibility involved in the exercise of ethical inquiry, ultimately aimed at “self-understanding and

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<sup>1</sup> I have chosen this expression to convey a sense of celebration of the animal since I am both intrigued by animals and animality. In her book *For the Love of Matter* (2003), Freya Mathews explains how in Aboriginal English one speaks of “singing up” the land so as to mean that the land can be invoked as a speaking presence (18; 158). One of my hopes with this dissertation is to transcend the idea of the animal as object to think about in order to awaken a sense of the animal as speaking subject.

<sup>2</sup> In her book *Ética y literatura* (2003), Teresa López de la Vieja refers also to the therapeutic value of literature, especially in relationship with making sense of traumatic situations such as the one she more extensively analyzes, that of the Holocaust.

communal attunement” (*Love’s Knowledge* 192). However, as a passionate reader, she cannot help but lament the silence of literary theory in debates that concern the original Socratic question “How should one live?,” even though literature offers another point of view into alternative ways of being that deeply affect our existence. Unfortunately, she goes on, “[if] these alternatives are not brought forward and described, we will go on being governed day to day by conceptions of rationality that seem impoverished next to the ones we know well and care about in novels that we love” (*Love’s Knowledge* 192).

As if Nussbaum’s words had had an effect on uncovering the necessary crossbreeding between ethical and literary theory, professor David Parker speaks in his introduction to *Renegotiating Ethics in Literature, Philosophy, and Theory* (1998) of an ethical turn in literary theory that took place during the 1990s after a period of two decades, from the 1970s to the 1980s, in which ethical criticism,<sup>3</sup> or the incorporation of an ethical component in the interpretation and evaluation of literature, was in decay (1). This does not mean that literary critics forgot about the virtues literary texts have for the exercise of ethical reflection during that time, but their analysis was not as overtly ethical as it started being in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Parker 5).<sup>4</sup> An example of such turn to openly ethical issues in literary analysis actually happened with the development of ecocriticism, the study of literature and environment, also known as environmental criticism, literary-environmental studies, literary ecology, literary environmentalism, or green cultural studies (Heise “The Hitchhiker’s Guide” 506), to which Cheryll Glotfelty’s introduction<sup>5</sup> to the seminal *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996)

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<sup>3</sup> According to Parker, the term “ethical criticism” was coined by literary critic Wayne C. Booth in reference to 1950s and 1960s criticism (5).

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps in preparation of this ethical turn, by the 1970s literary criticism started paying attention to the literary representation of race, gender and class among other social determinants. As a consequence of this interest theories such as postcolonialism or feminism evolved as part of what can be called ideological criticism.

<sup>5</sup> Cheryll Glotfelty graciously acceded to having me as translator of this introduction into Spanish for its publication as part of the book *Ecocríticas. Literatura y medio ambiente* (2010) edited by Carmen Flys Junquera, José Manuel Marrero Henríquez and Julia Barella Vigal.

attests. From the beginning of her essay she contends that the literary critic has to remain connected to the pressing issues of his or her time, and that the global environmental crisis is one to which attention needs to be paid (Glotfelty xv). In this respect and as a guide for the novice in the field, Glotfelty draws on Elaine Showalter's model of the three developmental stages of feminist criticism to provide a description of the three phases of this literary ecocritical endeavor. She depicts a first stage in which ecocriticism concentrated on the analysis of the representations of nature in literature noticing its absences and stereotypes; a second stage where a process of consciousness raising was enhanced by the recuperation of the genre of nature writing as well as the identification of environmental texts and authors; and a third phase consisting in the development of an ecocritical theory in relationship with some of the main questions raised with regard to the environment by philosophical strands such as deep ecology or ecofeminism (Glotfelty xxiv-xxv).

Interestingly, Glotfelty also hints at how the task of ecocriticism involves a combination between theory and praxis<sup>6</sup> since in order to solve environmental problems we need to "start thinking about them" (xxiv). This activism on the part of the critic would involve a change of the profession and so make the humanities connect with the pressing questions of a rapidly developing world where the ecological crisis in its multiple expressions (climate change, species extinction, ocean depletion, etc) is changing the face of the Earth and necessarily our relationship with it.

As a consequence of this turn to ethics in the humanities exemplified by ecocriticism other questions of ethical importance for human existence have been incorporated to the literary debate. An important one deals with the nature of our relationship with animals and our own animality. This involves questioning deeply

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<sup>6</sup> In an interview I conducted in 2006 with American ecocritic Scott Slovic he referred to the need for the ecocritic to remember what activism might bring him or her as part of his or her knowledge of reality. This interview was published in *Ecozon@* in 2010.

rooted characteristics of Western society such as anthropocentrism and reevaluating the pertinence of the species boundary on top of which other separations involving processes of otherization such as the man/woman or the nature/culture dualisms are built.

#### THE QUESTION OF THE ANIMAL

*The animal, what a word! The animal is a word, it is an appellation that men have instituted, a name they have given themselves the right and the authority to give to another living creature [à l'autre vivant].*  
(Derrida "The Animal" 392)

In his revision of how continental or modern European philosophy represented by Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, Giorgio Agamben, and Jacques Derrida has contributed to shedding light to the question of the animal, American philosopher Matthew Calarco characterizes this subject "as one of the central issues in contemporary critical discourse" (1). He explains that questions concerning animals in the Anglo-American philosophical tradition have traditionally been part of a branch of applied ethics known as environmental ethics,<sup>7</sup> while in Europe they have been associated with the so-called continental philosophy characterized by "its commitment to existential, ethical, and sociopolitical issues" (Calarco 1-2). Calarco explains that this interest in the animal revolves in animal studies around two main questions: one "concerns the being of animals, or 'animality,' and the other concerns the human-animal distinction" (2). Of the four components of the European strand of thought—Heidegger, Levinas, Agamben, and Derrida—Calarco highlights Derrida as the one who has made the most outstanding contribution to the philosophical debate about animals by, on the one hand, criticizing the "reductive and essentialist" way in which philosophers have traditionally dealt with animals, and on the other, denouncing the lack of concern for the suffering of

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<sup>7</sup> Some of the main figures of Anglo-American animal ethics are the American thinkers Peter Singer, Tom Regan, and Gary L. Francione whose contribution to the debate around animal welfare and animal rights will be developed later on.

nonhuman *others* shown throughout the recent history of the Western world (2-3). Such criticism on the part of Derrida maintains, as will be shown in due course, a striking resemblance with feminist environmental thinking, otherwise known as ecofeminism, the philosophical movement that inspires this dissertation.

It is widely acknowledged that Derrida's interest in animals was not clearly shown until the mid-1980s. This is also the time when Derrida takes an ethicopolitical turn in his work (Calarco 103-4). The importance he attributes to this topic in his career is evident in the following declaration included in his famous 1997 talk "The Animal Therefore I Am (More to Follow)" where he says that "...the question of the living and of the living animal... will always have been the most important and decisive question. I have addressed it a thousand times, either directly or obliquely, by means of readings of all the philosophers I have taken an interest in (...)" (Derrida 402). In his writings Derrida aims at rethinking the differences between human and nonhuman animals in a nonhierarchical and nonbinary way (Calarco 105). In order to do this he uses two main strategies. The first one consists in developing a series of "infrastructures" or quasi concepts aimed at showing that there is no clear separation between human and nonhuman animals (Calarco 106). When speaking of the idea of supplementarity in *Of Grammatology* (1967), for example, he had already tackled this human obsession with differentiating themselves from animals. This same tension between the self and the other, stated in the following quote, is also acknowledged by ecofeminist writers when they discuss the dualisms on which Western thought is built upon:

Man *calls himself* man only by drawing limits excluding his other from the play of supplementarity: the purity of nature, of animality, primitivism, childhood, madness, divinity. The approach to these limits is at once feared as a threat of death, and desired as access to a life without difference. The history of man *calling himself* man is the articulation of *all* these limits among themselves. (Derrida *Of Grammatology* 244-5; emphasis in original)

While the first of Derrida's strategies implies a questioning of anthropocentrism, the second approaches animals from an ethicopolitical perspective reflecting on the

meaning animal suffering has for humans (Calarco 106). He sees in the recognition of the *other's* suffering a point of encounter between humans and animals for it is in this instance where humans acknowledge the vulnerability that binds them to animals in the game of life:

Mortality resides there, as the most radical means of thinking the finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life, to the experience of compassion, to the possibility of sharing the possibility of this nonpower, the possibility of this impossibility, the anguish of this vulnerability and the vulnerability of this anguish. (Derrida "The Animal" 396)

Such recognition of shared finitude, as Derrida contends, divides humans between those who do not care, do not want to see or think about the suffering of animals, and those who acknowledge it and want to stop it. This gives rise to what Calarco calls the "war' over compassion toward animals" (119) which is illustrated by Derrida's following quote:

The two centuries I have been referring to somewhat approximately in order to situate the present in terms of this tradition have been those of an unequal struggle, a war being waged, the unequal forces of which could one day be reversed, between those who violate not only animal life but even and also this sentiment of compassion and, on the other hand, those who appeal to an irrefutable testimony to this pity. ("The Animal" 397)

This attempt at raising awareness about the need to respond to animal suffering is also shared by the feminist authors that will be discussed later on. Actually, post 1970s feminist thought is characterized by its stress on the need to implement an ethic of care in our relationships with all living beings.

Finally, another interesting element in Derrida's work is his critique of ways of knowing the animal in science and philosophy. He criticizes them because they tend to erase the difference of the individual animal and blur her<sup>8</sup> into the mark of the impersonal formula of the "Animal." Many of these philosophers and scientists do not allow themselves to be addressed by the animal. They build walls of data that separate

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<sup>8</sup> Throughout this dissertation I have opted for following Joan Dunayer's style guidelines when referring to nonhuman individuals. In her book *Animal Equality: Language and Liberation* (2001) she advocates a use of language that helps to counter speciesism as well as sexism. Thus, when using pronouns to refer to nonhuman individuals of unknown gender, she suggests alternating between the female and male personal pronouns (Dunayer 151).

them from the living animals they observe and study but do not fully comprehend. Outside of these constructions Derrida proposes alternative ways of knowing animals and suggests poetry as a more efficient method of thinking: “For thinking concerning the animal, if there is such a thing, derives from poetry. There you have a hypothesis: it is what philosophy has, essentially, had to deprive itself of. That is the difference between philosophical knowledge and poetic thinking” (Derrida “The Animal” 377). Derrida’s approach coincides with Nussbaum’s appreciation of the power literature has to introduce us into other modes of understanding reality. Hence, in this dissertation, I defend the potential literary imagination has for making us connect with the animal within and outside ourselves. I intend to do this analyzing four example of primate literature using the work of animal ecofeminists, those environmental feminist theorists or ecofeminists who have taken upon their shoulders an approach that develops both the theory and praxis of caring for animals.

## LITERARY IMAGINATION AND ANIMALS

In the past decade of literary animal studies the borders between literary critics and philosophers interested in the question of animals have tended to disappear. Such is the cross-pollination between these two fields that analysis of animal literature would lose part of its grip without the input of philosophical discussions on animals. Likewise, philosophy would lose a very revealing mode of understanding without its recourse to the examples literature offers of alternative ways of thinking about animals.<sup>9</sup> Calarco acknowledges this possibility of finding other ways of exploring the nature of animals and our relationships with them when he comments on the challenges of ethical theory that defend the moral consideration of animals:

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<sup>9</sup> The work of Italian environmental ethicist Serenella Iovino is an illustrative case in point. She very deftly combines the powers of the philosophical mind with that of the literary mind in order to discuss what literary texts reveal to us about our relationship with animals. A recent example of this is her article “Loving the Alien. Ecofeminism, Animals, and Anna Maria Ortese’s Poetics of Otherness” (2013).

*Contemporary Primate Literature in English: Voicing the Unvoiced*

Animals are not viewed as fundamentally alien to human language and concepts but rather as coextensive with the scientific discourses that purport to describe them. Consequently, animal ethicists rarely make recourse to poetic, literary, or artistic descriptions of animals—descriptions that might help us to see animals otherwise, which is to say, otherwise than the perspectives offered by the biological sciences, common sense, or the anthropocentric “wisdom” of the ages. (Calarco 126-27)

Thus, according to Calarco, if ethicists started to combine more creative approaches to animals, they would reach a better understanding of them. Literature may be used to this effect.

As a matter of fact, the role of the literary imagination as an instrument to reformulate our understanding of animals and how we relate to them was highlighted by Marion C. Copeland in her 2012 review of literary animal studies. Here she contends that literary animals have a real impact in our lives as is proved by “recent theories on how the human mind incorporates imaginative or virtual reality” (Copeland “Literary Animal” 93). In this respect she brings to mind the work done by Jim Blascovich and Jeremy Bailenson who in *Infinite Reality: Avatars, Eternal Life, New Worlds, and the Dawn of the Virtual Revolution* (2011) claim that the brain does not differentiate the digital image from reality: “the brain doesn’t much care if an experience is real or virtual” (3). This implies that through the representation of animals in literature, as it happens also in films and other media, there is a possibility of accessing a different understanding of them which may bring us to more compassionate attitudes emanating from the processes of identification involved in reading. That is why, according to Copeland, “literary animal studies needs to explore why it is that literature stimulates us to identify with, and care about, and want to help, characters not ourselves, not even human and how the functioning of the imagination currently figures into animal-centric literary theory and into animal studies as a whole” (“Literary Animal” 94).

As a result, as Copeland observes, different critics have come up with different versions or understandings of the different kinds of imagination that are at play in

animal literature. Nussbaum for example comes up with the term “narrative imagination” or “the ability to be an intelligent reader of [another] person’s story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have” (*Cultivating* 11). She explains that literature offers the possibility of cultivating this quality by training our sense of compassion for the *other* or what is the same, our “compassionate imagination” (*Cultivating* 93). This compassionate imagination receives the name of “sympathetic imagination” in Elizabeth Costello’s address to her audience in J. M. Coetzee’s novel *The Lives of Animals* (1999). According to her:

“[t]he heart is the seat of a faculty, *sympathy*, that allows us to share at times the being of another” (...) “There are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination” (...) “If I can think my way into the existence of a being who has never existed, then I can think my way into the existence of a bat or a chimpanzee or an oyster, any being with whom I share the substrate of life” (*The Lives* 34-5; emphasis in original).

In a similar way, inspired by Mesoamerican spirituality,<sup>10</sup> Randy Malamud elaborates his theory of “empathizing imagination” in *Poetic Animals and Animal Souls* (2003). He defends that the empathizing imagination is epitomized by art because “art has the potential to present a valuable (if not complete and flawless) account of what it is like to be a different animal from ourselves” (Malamud 7). The empathizing imagination can be said “to enhance the awareness of sentient, cognitive, ethical, and emotional *affinities between people and animals* (...)” taking us closer to what it is like being another animal (Malamud 9; emphasis in original). Seen under this light, reading becomes an almost spiritual experience, something Maryanne Wolf in *Proust and the Squid: The Story of the Reading Brain* (2007) defends when speaking of the term “passing over” as describing “the process through which reading enables us to try on, identify with, and ultimately enter for a brief time the wholly different perspective of another person’s consciousness” (7). In sum, reading complements our experience of

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<sup>10</sup> Malamud explains that Mesoamerican indigenous people believe in animal spirits who manifest in two main ways: *nagualismo* or the transformation of a person into an animal and *tonalismo* or the person’s companion animal or destiny, which everyone is believed to possess (54).

reality. It takes us where observation cannot reach, making us become the *other* who lives on the page. This is what Copeland calls “metamorphic imagination” suggesting the possibilities of transformation and empathizing embedded in all these forms of imagination presented thus far (“Literary Animal” 10). Hence, if literature can affect our imagination, turning it into a space for generating alternative visions of animals, it can be described as well as a space for liberation where the voice of the animal is heard.

#### MAKING ANIMAL VOICES HEARD

So far attention has been paid to the question of animals in modern European philosophy as well as the ways in which the literary imagination can help formulate alternative visions of the animal. In this dissertation four literary examples of animal literature, primate literature to be more precise, are analyzed through the lens of theories—animal ecofeminism mainly, but also the insight of material ecocriticism and material feminisms—that take into account animals and those terms (nature, body, matter, emotion) that are commonly identified with them. All these movements are deeply ingrained in the kind of ethical approach to issues of reality where literature can offer alternative modes of relationship with and consideration of the *other*.

My approach, borrowing feminist epistemologist Lorraine Code’s use of the term in “‘They Treated Him Well’: Fact, Fiction, and the Politics of Knowledge,” can be described as a “scavenger methodology” (218). In this it follows the eclectic theoretical orientation attributed by Peter Barry to any ecocritical endeavor (259). Thus, although I am mainly inspired by ideas emanating from feminist thought, I also use the insights arising out of the more recent material strand of ecocriticism. Such orientation is derived from two reasons. The first one responds to a willingness to offer a study able to respond to the complexities of some of the topics described in this corpus of novels. These range from captivity, ape language experiments, animal rights,

bestiality, xenotransplantation, to ecological catastrophe and the need to evolve from an anthropocentric to a biocentric heterarchical and nonbinary paradigm. The second involves my understanding of ecofeminism or environmental feminist theory as foundational for the attention to matter and materiality to which animals have traditionally been ascribed. This is significantly at the core of both material ecocriticism and material feminisms. Equally interesting is ecofeminism's advocacy of the animal which in literary studies has been shaped into ecofeminist literary criticism, a form of literary analysis that aims at finding ways in which the voice of animals can be heard. Such attempt, which implies an advocacy methodology of the kind Malamud contemplates when developing his theory of an "ecocritical aesthetic ethic" (43), leads to the formulation of literary strategies that in the words of Spanish ecocritic Carmen Flys Junquera can "dismantle the false dichotomies human/non-human and mind/matter, allowing readers to re-situate humans within the biosphere and develop a dialogical and communicative relationship with earth others that would provide an adequate ethical response to the non-human world" ("Dissolving" 21). These literary strategies are part of a program to reconfigure the kind of relationships we humans have with the more-than-human world and are described by Australian ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood as "counter-hegemonic" in the sense that "monological relationships with nature" need to be replaced "by dialogical ones that are responsive to the other on their own terms" (*Environmental* 111). This attempt involves therefore the revalorization of literature as a site of encounter with animal *others* to produce a dialogue of voices. Dialogue has to be understood here in the Bakhtinian sense as that in which "I open myself to the otherness of the person I meet" (Friedman "Martin Buber" 25). This involves an "I-Thou" relationship, that is, "a relationship that is direct, mutual, present, and open" instead of an "'I-It,'" or subject-object relation, in which one relates

to the other only indirectly and nonmutually, knowing and using the other” (Friedman “Martin Buber” 25).<sup>11</sup> This is the reason why I have decided to choose novels as the object of my exploration for, as it will be shown, they offer ample space for the kind of experimental relationships where the nature of the *other* is voiced.

## AIM AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THIS DISSERTATION

### ❖ Aim

The overarching aim of this dissertation is to prove that the literary imagination can contribute to the creation of more sustainable relationships with the nonhuman animal and the more-than-human world. As I will defend, literature enables us, among other things, to create imaginary spaces where the boundaries existing between the two poles that conform dualisms such as human/animal, man/woman, or nature/culture are erased as well as to rebalance, in nonhierarchical and nonbinary ways, the relationships between the components of these pairs. This is so because the literary imagination allows an alternative understanding of animals promoting a more empathic approach which consists in seeing the animal not as the *other* against which we measure ourselves, but as a subject worthy of recognition in her own terms that, following philosopher Karen Barad’s terminology, “intra-acts”<sup>12</sup> with us and liberates us from the constraints established by Cartesian thinking.

Although philosophically laden, this aim finds its way of realization not in philosophy but in literature. Actually, many authors working on the intersections between literature and the natural world have vindicated the role literary studies can play in finding more sustainable ways of living in this world that heads to

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<sup>11</sup> This distinction is based on Martin Buber’s work *I and Thou* (1923).

<sup>12</sup> Barad explains the term “intra-actions” as part of her elaboration of the theory of agential realism where the components of phenomena are said to be “observer” and “observed” at the same time, that is, inseparable and dependent on each other (Loc. 2421).

environmental disaster.<sup>13</sup> Hubert Zapf, for example, sustains that “imaginative literature [...] can be described in its functional profile in such a way that it *acts like an ecological principle or an ecological energy with the larger system of cultural discourses*” (55; emphasis in original).<sup>14</sup> He further explains that such function of literature implies two main achievements. On the one hand, literature, which he describes as a “*sensorium and imaginative sounding board* for hidden problems, deficits, and imbalances of the larger culture,” turns into “a form of textuality” that restores the balance to the culture-nature relationship giving voice to otherwise marginalized subjects (Zapf 56; emphasis in original). On the other, literature “becomes the site of a constant, *creative renewal* of language, perception, communication, and imagination” (Zapf 56). Such claims coincide with the tenets of ecofeminism after which this analysis has been crafted.

Ecofeminism’s project is based upon the analysis and ulterior dismantling of the systems of oppression that sustain the silencing of everything that does not conform to the standards of assumed normalcy. Hence, whatever is different from the idealized version of the self—generally a male, white, Western heterosexual and abled human being—is banned from moral consideration and, generally naturalized, hence becoming part of that nature many of us fear, as Simon C. Estok has so provocatively reflected upon when launching the term “ecophobia” into discussion (“Theorizing” 206-7). As a social and cultural movement ecofeminism has impregnated ecocriticism leading to the creation of feminist ecocriticism, a critical approach that, when applied to literary texts, enables the critic to find the voices of those for long silenced under the weight of a

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<sup>13</sup> The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), established by the United Nations in 1986, repeatedly shows in its reports that climate change, for which humans are to blame, is already having devastating consequences for life on Earth: ice caps are melting, temperatures are rising, tropical cyclone activity has increased in recent years. Hurricane Sandy or typhoon Haiyan are but recent examples of the former.

<sup>14</sup> Serenella Iovino fully endorses this claim but includes as well other artistic expressions among the forms of “cultural ecology” (“Ecocriticism” 39).

misleading hyper-rationalism.<sup>15</sup> This is so because, as Turkish ecocritic Serpil Oppermann contends, feminist ecocriticism “incorporates the material turn” in ecocritical studies (“Feminist Ecocriticism: A Posthumanist” 30). This valorization of matter underpins the aim of this dissertation and crystallizes into the formulation of a series of specific objectives that are organized around two rhetorical images, *dialogues of the mind* and *dialogues of the body*, which are conceived not as antithetical but as mutually influencing each other in their attempt at making sense of the human-animal<sup>16</sup> relationships portrayed in the works studied in the subsequent pages.

❖ Specific Objectives

The following is a list of the objectives leading to the consecution of the aim of this dissertation: proving the role played by the literary imagination in forging alternative understandings of the animal and nonhierarchical forms of relationship between the human and the nonhuman animal.

- 1) To prove that the cultural and socio-political relevancy of the question of the animal since the mid twentieth century onwards has affected the humanities crystallizing in the development of what is generally known as animal studies. Its analysis may take an activist approach and so contest the oppression of animals or else, be guided by an intellectual interest in studying the concept of animality and its cultural expression. Besides, like any other branch of environmental humanities, animal studies is characterized by its interdisciplinarity. This contributes to its currency in a world at risk where awareness about the connections among different disciplines is urgently needed if we want to find a more sustainable way of living.

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<sup>15</sup> I borrow this term from Val Plumwood’s *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (2002).

<sup>16</sup> Throughout this dissertation this expression is written as “human-animal” whenever an idea of continuity and understanding is conveyed and as “human/animal” when the contrary is expressed such as in “human/animal divide.”

- 2) To prove that the literary animal has experimented a progression in literature from symbol, and often anthropomorphized creature, to agentic subject. Examples drawn from primate literature, a genre<sup>17</sup> energized by its intrinsic paradox, that is, the difficulty of separating the human from the nonhuman primate, when analyzed in the light of female primatology and feminist epistemologies express this transition from the creature written upon to the writing creature. As will be shown, the emphasis these approaches put on relationality transform primate literature into a narrative of relationship.
- 3) To prove the role primate literature plays as a genre that since the 1980s has become an expression of the erasure of boundaries between the human and the animal favored by the development of fields such as animal ethics and cognitive ethology. Likewise, it is also an example of a more relational approach to human-animal relationships promoted by the development of feminist epistemologies of science such as the kind represented by female primatology which is characterized by paradigms of nonhierarchical, nonbinary exchanges between the human and the nonhuman.
- 4) To vindicate the contribution of ecofeminist theory to the analysis of the question of the animal in ecocritical studies. In order to do this, I first intend to call attention to the fact that the traditional woman-animal association, although contested from several strands of feminist thought, is still alive and placed at the center of many of the assumptions behind the oppression of both women and animals. Following this, an overview of the elements that, according to Greta

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<sup>17</sup> Although each of the four novels analyzed in this dissertation belongs to well-established genres ranging from the fable to the science fiction novel, I refer to primate literature as a genre of fiction based on a commonality of character and theme. In terms of their characters, in these novels one of the protagonists is a nonhuman primate. In terms of their theme, all of them develop a relationship between a human and a nonhuman primate which unfolds into a kind of epiphany for the human that changes forever his or her understanding of the nonhuman.

Gaard, most importantly affected the beginning of animal ecofeminism and of the works which still nourish this movement will be given as philosophical background of the analysis of primate literature.

- 5) To prove that the ecofeminist project in the form of feminist ecocriticism suits well both the real and the literary animal. Its enterprise of liberation involves the development of new ethical paradigms—the ethics of care, the ethics of attention—dissolves the binary systems, and believes in the power of fiction to access other natures. Through a feminist ecocritical reading of primate literature seen as a narrative of relationship, literature reveals itself as a way of knowing and taking the *other* into account. Through the written word the silent *other* is given a voice to challenge the assumptions of anthropocentrism.
- 6) To prove that animal literature is but a first step into the evolution of the humanities into a new paradigm that can be described as the posthuman humanities promoted by a movement from language to matter, from words to bodies. The posthuman humanities are a sustainable, nonanthropocentric, and ethically committed form of studying issues that affect the multiplicity of life forms on Earth.

#### STRUCTURE OF THIS DISSERTATION

This dissertation is divided in two main parts. The first one, THINKING THE ANIMAL, constitutes the background of the analysis of four examples of primate literature that is developed in the second part, HUMAN-ANIMAL DIALOGUES.

The first part is structured in five chapters. Chapter One, The Rise of the Animal, deals with the growing attention animals have received in Anglo-American culture since the 1970s. In spite of the contribution continental philosophy has had in the field of animal criticism also known as zoocriticism, it is focused, for the sake of

coherence, on the Anglo-American tradition to which the four novels under discussion belong. Consequently, this chapter aims at contextualizing the reasons behind the attention animals have received from the humanities since the 1980s as a result of the development of the modern animal rights movement first in Britain and later on in the United States. It traces the origins of Anglo-American pro-animal ethics back to Britain with the so-called Oxford Group, a group of young scholars who in the early 1970s began criticizing the exploitation of animals in Western civilization. This critique crystallized into the publication in 1975 of the book that is considered today as the bible of the animal rights movement: Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*. In contrast with Singer's pioneering book, the positions of other major animal ethicists in America, such as philosopher Tom Regan and law professor Gary L. Francione, are also considered with the aim of showing the plurality of voices that have characterized the animal debate in the last decades. This debate has also transformed activism, the legal system, and the humanities leading to the creation of the interdisciplinary field of animal studies in the 1980s.

The entrance of animals in the humanities closes Chapter One and leads to Chapter Two, *Animals in Literature*. This chapter serves a twofold purpose. It is an introduction to literary animal studies as a strand of animal studies that deals with the representation of animals in literature, as well as an overview of the latter subject. Literary animal studies can be seen as a natural derivation of ecocriticism and its interest in the environment. Postcolonial ecocritics Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin classify it as such and coin for it the term zoocriticism (*Postcolonial Ecocriticism* 18). Authors like Michael Lundblad do not necessarily connect it with a preoccupation for the environment and the lives of animals, and actually turn it into an intellectual exploration of the concept of animality ("From Animal" 497). Regarding the place of

animals in literature, this chapter finishes with a review of the development of their representation in the Anglo-American tradition from the eighteenth century onwards.

Chapter Three, *Filling the Space in Between: Primate Literature*, is dedicated to the literary and cultural representation of apes or nonhuman primates. This section serves to establish the value of nonhuman primates as a boundary species, a species where the borders between the human and the nonhuman animal are not clearly established. This leads to the realization that the species boundary is a porous space and does not respond to the Cartesian clear-cut distinction human/animal. This analysis renders nonhuman animals as an otherized category that can be easily compared with other oppressed beings such as women, people of color, gays, and disabled people.

In order to shed some light on the status of nonhuman animals as oppressed, Chapter Four, *Ecofeminism and the Animal*, revolves around the importance of ecofeminism as an instrument of reconceptualization of nonhuman *others*. It presents a combination of theory and praxis inasmuch as ecofeminism, like ecocriticism, concedes special importance to connecting the theoretical work with activism. Thus, after defining and giving an overview of ecofeminism and its different branches, it concentrates on the analysis of the woman-animal association using Carol J. Adams's theory of the animal as absent referent (*The Sexual* 51) as the method of analysis of images of animalized women in advertising and fashion. This leads to a theoretical exploration of animal ecofeminism, a form of ecofeminism that focuses on dissolving the interlocking systems of oppression that keep animals and women in the margins. Following American ecofeminist Greta Gaard's views on the subject, this section claims that animal ecofeminism needs to vindicate for itself the role it deserves within animal studies. Finally, attention is paid to the application of ecofeminist literary theory, also

defined as feminist ecocriticism by Gaard (“New Directions” 18), to the study of animal literature.

Inspired by Donna Haraway’s *Primate Visions* (1989) where she deals with science as a form of storytelling (5), Chapter Five, Feminist Ecocriticism and the Reading of Primate Literature, connects primate literature with the practice of science by women in the form of primatology. The consideration of the impact the approach of women like Jane Goodall, Diane Fossey, and Biruté Galdikas has had for the study of nonhuman primates exemplifies aspects of the sort of human-animal relationship that the novels under analysis present. These women primatologists revolutionized their field with their attention to detail, their power of observation, and their empathy for the animals they lived with. They enacted the project of a feminist epistemology where the subject-object relationship is substituted by a subject-to-subject relationship of encounter on a ground of attentive, empathic care.

Part Two, HUMAN-ANIMAL DIALOGUES, is divided in two chapters. It looks at the literary ways in which the distance between the human and the nonhuman is bridged in four novels where the relationship between human and nonhuman primates features prominently. American ecocritic Patrick D. Murphy contends that “the majority of the most daring ecological and feminist novels have been written in some other mode than realism” (*Literature* 26); that is the case with the four works analyzed in this dissertation which can be described as speculative. They are paired in two sections, Chapter Six, Dialogues of the Mind: Learning from the Animal and Chapter Seven, Dialogues of the Body: Becoming Animal, which deal with two different modes of voicing animals. The first two novels, Daniel Quinn’s *Ishmael* (1992) and Peter Goldsworthy’s *Wish* (1995), tell stories where the human protagonists learn a lesson in humanity from the animal. These narratives question anthropocentrism and human

exceptionalism, and highlight animal vulnerability. The second pair, Brenda Peterson's *Animal Heart* (2004) and Peter Dickinson's *Eva* (1988), represents a step beyond the first narratives. These novels are more experimental in nature and tackle the limits of science by looking at stories of xenotransplantation where the borders between human and nonhuman animal bodies are erased. They call attention to the need of questioning dualisms by reanimating the body as speaking matter.

This dissertation draws to a close precisely through this reanimation of matter which sets the tone for its final proposal, as explained in its conclusion, which revolves around the idea that, in order to survive, the humanities need to become posthuman in the sense of taking into consideration the more-than-human world. Such is the direction opened first by ecofeminism and its interest in the animal and the body and continued by related movements such as material feminism and material ecocriticism.

**PART ONE**

**THINKING THE ANIMAL**



## **CHAPTER ONE. THE RISE OF THE ANIMAL**

The first objective of this dissertation is to prove how the cultural and socio-political relevancy of the question of the animal since the mid twentieth century onwards has affected the humanities crystalizing in the development of what is generally known as animal studies. All the novels under analysis in this dissertation are to one extent or another influenced by the impact animal ethics and the fight for animal rights have had through the second half of the twentieth century in conforming new relationships between humans and animals. It is for this reason that in order to facilitate the understanding of the context in which all these narratives participate, in the pages that follow, first, an overview of the major theories on animal ethics and animals rights from the 1970s onwards will be given. Second, attention will be paid to two specific socio-political expressions—animal activism and animal legislation—that reveal how this renewed interest in the animal has transformed society. And third and last, an overview of animal studies, as the cradle of literary animal studies (LAS), which would be explored as separate field in a subsequent section, will be given to highlight the relevance animals and related questions have acquired in today's humanities.

Animal studies has developed in the last three decades in a myriad of different directions in the humanities and social sciences. It has followers in disciplines as diverse as psychology, history, geography, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and literary studies. Such is the wealth of approaches to the animal developed in the last years that it could be affirmed that they have been with us—literary critics, philosophers, geographers, historians, and so forth—from the beginning, although rarely did we ever acknowledge their presence.

Finding a place for animals in scholarship has been a process inspired by a shift in the way we look at them. This new vision of the animal is mainly the result of several

breakthroughs taking place from the 1970s onwards. Chief among them is the civil rights movement with its acknowledgement of a multiplicity of voices—women, blacks, Chicanos, gays—which opened a window of possibility for the inclusion of animals in this wave of recognition. Thus, in 1975, Australian philosopher Peter Singer published his book *Animal Liberation* where, in its introductory pages, the situation of oppression of animals is compared to that suffered by otherized human groups (1-9). He had already referred to the oppression of blacks, gays, and women in an article he published in 1973 in *The New York Review of Books*. Here he hints at the existence of other forms of discrimination besides those based on race or sex:

We are familiar with Black Liberation, Gay Liberation, and a variety of other movements. With Women's Liberation some thought we had come to the end of the road. Discrimination on the basis of sex, it has been said, is the last form of discrimination that is universally accepted and practiced without pretense, even in those liberal circles which have long prided themselves on their freedom from racial discrimination. But one should always be wary of talking of "the last remaining form of discrimination." (Singer "Animal Liberation" 1)

Singer had in mind a leaflet published by Richard Ryder in 1970 where discrimination on account of species,<sup>18</sup> *speciesism*, was for the first time described (Singer "Animal Liberation: A Personal View" 149).

Besides continuing to establish this comparison, in his book *Animal Liberation* Singer defended the need to give moral consideration to animals on account of their physiological similarity with humans (10-13). He argued that the sentience of nonhuman animals suffices to grant them moral status. In this sense he follows eighteenth-century philosopher and social reformer Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) who in chapter 17 of his *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789) writes about the possibility of granting moral status to animals on account not of their ability to think or to speak, but of their ability to suffer:

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<sup>18</sup> According to Ryder's entry on the term "speciesism" in the *Encyclopedia of Animal Rights and Animal Welfare*, this word was incorporated to the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1985 defined as "discrimination against or exploitation of certain animal species by human beings, based on the assumption of mankind's superiority" (Ryder "Speciesism" 527).

## Chapter One. *The Rise of the Animal*

The day has been, I grieve to say in many places it is not yet past, in which the greater part of the species, under the denomination of slaves, have been treated by the law exactly upon the same footing as, in England for example, the inferior races of animals are still. The day *may* come, when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny. The French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason why a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may come one day to be recognized, that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the *os sacrum*, are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or, perhaps, the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day, or a week, or even a month, old. But suppose the case were otherwise, what would it avail? the question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*? (Bentham 349; emphasis in original)

The capacity for suffering, shared by both human and nonhuman animals, is therefore, according to Bentham and Singer, at the center of the argument in favor of considering animals as moral subjects. Singer defends that the ethical principle on which human equality rests requires the extension of equal consideration to animals as well. This does not mean that all individuals, human or nonhuman, have the same needs. The principle of equality that Singer defends has to do with providing individuals with what they need in order to fulfill the specificities of their form of life.

As a way to strengthen this argument, in his book Singer also provides his readers with details about the conditions in which animals are kept in laboratories and farms in America.<sup>19</sup> He informs of the widespread use of animals like rats, chimpanzees, and rabbits in experiments involving an extreme degree of pain for the nonhuman animal and little real outcome for the scientist (*Animal Liberation* 73). He also tells how hens and chickens are turned into egg-producing and meat-producing machines respectively by being kept in cages where they can barely move but that result in higher benefits for the producer (*Animal Liberation* 97). His analysis leads him ultimately to advocate vegetarianism as a more compassionate diet and one that is more

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<sup>19</sup> This was not the first time that the stark realities of intensive farming were described. By 1964 British activist Ruth Harrison had already published *Animal Machines* where she exposed some of the cruelties of intensive poultry and livestock farming. Singer acknowledges his debt to Harrison in *Animal Liberation* (98; 141).

respectful with the environment, something that has been also claimed more recently by those worried about climate change.

Singer's book was with time adopted as the bible of the modern animal rights movement. It managed to raise awareness of the need to consider animals from a moral perspective and inaugurated the field of animal ethics. Thanks to this work, which has been translated into fifteen languages, the debate on the moral consideration of animals became a relevant question at a time when human relationships were being redefined. Hence a basically Anglo-American movement, which some authors qualify as "American in origin" (Recarte 159), began its worldwide expansion.

### 1.1. FROM ANIMAL LIBERATION TO ANIMAL RIGHTS AND BEYOND

The growth of the modern animal liberation movement was set in motion by a group of philosophy students at Oxford University who, due to this academic coincidence, were later known as the Oxford Group (Phelps 205). In their respective autobiographical articles published in the journal of philosophy *Between the Species*, Richard Ryder and Peter Singer coincide in saying that it all began in Oxford thanks to the confluence of a group of likeminded people who became highly aware of the need to protest against Western society's lack of concern for animals (Ryder "An Autobiography" 170; Singer "Animal Liberation: A Personal View" 149-50). The seed was planted by Richard Ryder's own activism as hunt saboteur and his coinage of the term "speciesism" in 1970 (Ryder "An Autobiography" 170). Equally important was the articulation of many important ideas in this respect by Roslind and Stanley Godlovitch, and John Harris. In 1971 they edited a collection of articles on animal ethics titled *Animals, Men and Morals: An Enquiry into the Maltreatment of Non-Humans* which, although unique in its kind, was somehow disregarded by the British public. More interest was, in fact, kindled later by Singer's abovementioned long review article on

this title published in *The New York Review of Books* in April of 1973. Such was the intrigue caused by his arguments that a leading New York publisher offered Singer to finance the writing of a book on the topics discussed in his review (Singer “Animal Liberation: A Personal View” 150). This book was supposed to provide a more systematic approach to the animal question and proved, through factual research done on factory farming and experimentation in America, what the situation was in this country. As a consequence, animal rights veered from its British conception, where two Canadians (the Godlovitches), a British born (John Harris), and an Australian (Peter Singer) acted as midwives, to its growth in the United States.

In 1975 Peter Singer published *Animal Liberation* which, according to him, “was not an immediate success” (“Animal Liberation: A Personal View” 151):

It got some good reviews, as well as some silly ones, and it sold steadily but not spectacularly. Some of the leading philosophical journals devoted special issues to the topic, which was gratifying. Nevertheless, my highest hopes—naive ones, perhaps—were not fulfilled. The book did not spark an immediate upsurge against factory farming and animal experimentation. The only prompt political effect was that Congressman Ed Koch, as he then was, referred to the book in a speech in which he proposed a National Commission of Inquiry into animal welfare matters. But his proposal lapsed, and for a few years it seemed that the only effect the book was having was to put the question of animals and ethics onto the list of topics discussed in applied ethics courses in university philosophy departments. (Singer “Animal Liberation: A Personal View” 151)

It seems therefore, as it will be later shown, that it took the committed effort of many activists in the early 1980s to really make the cause of the animals heard. Meanwhile the debate about animal ethics or the moral status of animals occupied academic debate, first in the schools of philosophy, later in the schools of law, and finally reached practically all the humanities. All these areas felt how the modern animal liberation movement was growing into the definition and defense of animal rights. This had consequences for the political and social conscience of several generations. Views emanating from animal ethics were forked in two main practical directions—Peter Singer’s welfarism and Tom Regan’s rightism—which ended up informing today’s activism, legislation, and the humanities.

Welfarism is the doctrine derived from Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1975). In his book Singer defends extending the basic principle of equality to nonhuman animals. Inspired by Jeremy Bentham's famous passage on the capacity for suffering all sentient<sup>20</sup> creatures—human and nonhuman—share, he argues that all of them deserve equal consideration. This means not that human and nonhuman animals are to have the exact same treatment but that they have to enjoy that which is in more consonance with their nature. He explains this as follows:

The extension of the basic principle of equality from one group to another does not imply that we must treat both groups in exactly the same way, or grant exactly the same rights to both groups. Whether we should do so will depend on the nature of the members of the two groups. The basic principle of equality does not require equal or identical *treatment*; it requires equal consideration. Equal consideration for different beings may lead to different treatment and different rights. (*Animal Liberation* 2; emphasis in original)

And he exemplifies it by saying that, “concern for the well-being of children growing up in America would require that we teach them to read; concern for the well-being of pigs may require no more than that we leave them with other pigs in a place where there is adequate food and room to run freely” (*Animal Liberation* 5).

This capacity for suffering and enjoyment is a prerequisite for having interests at all. Singer specifies that only those beings who have “self-awareness, the capacity to think ahead and have hopes and aspirations for the future, the capacity for meaningful relations with others and so on” can have interests (*Animal Liberation* 20). This is why when comparing the interests of an infant born with massive and irreparable brain damage with those of an adult chimpanzee, dog or pig, he is capable of arguing that their interests in a nonspeciesist society will weigh more than those of the infant. But the problem is that we tend to “make the boundary of the right to life run exactly parallel to the boundary of our own species,” the interests of the infant will always be placed first (Singer *Animal Liberation* 19). This means that the principle of the sanctity

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<sup>20</sup> Singer defines sentience as “the capacity to suffer and/or experience enjoyment” (*Animal Liberation* 8-9).

of life, which Singer renames as the principle of the “sanctity of *human* life,” only applies to the lives of humans while the rest of sentient animals are excluded (*Animal Liberation* 18; emphasis in original). Why is this so if they are also subjects with interests? Because we live in a speciesist society, Singer concludes. From a practical point of view, Singer analyzes how animals are treated in farms and in medical research and concludes that animals need to be protected against practices that involve cruelty, but he does not endorse the total suppression of animal use. This is so because as a utilitarian—Bentham was the father of utilitarianism—his aim is to produce the maximum net pleasure (Wenz 86). This means that the interests of thousands of people that need to be fed or of those who need a cure counterbalance the interests of maintaining alive thousands of chickens who hopefully will be sacrificed in a humane way. Such welfarist position, as it will be shown, is the predominant argument behind much of the legislation on farming in Europe today.

In spite of its wide impact on the moral conscience of America, Singer’s book was challenged in 1983 by philosophy professor Tom Regan in *The Case for Animal Rights*. Regan moves one step forward in the consideration of animals and argues for the recognition of their rights. Animals, he says, have inherent value which is not the sum of their pleasurable experiences as utilitarians sustain when attributing moral value to sentient beings. People as well as animals, especially higher-order mammals like nonhuman primates, elephants, and cetaceans among others, says Regan, are “subjects-of-a-life,” that is:

they have beliefs and desires; perception, memory, and a sense of the future, including their own future; an emotional life together with feelings of pleasure and pain; preference- and welfare-interests; the ability to initiate action in pursuit of their desires and goals; a psychophysical identity over time; and an individual welfare in the sense that their experiential life fares well or ill for them, logically independently of their utility for others and logically independently of their being the object of anyone’s interests. (243)

These subjects-of-a-life have an inherent value that needs to be protected through the attribution of rights, and this is applicable to both people and animals. This implies that animals, according to the rightist view, should not be killed even humanely for the interest of others because this will go against their first and foremost interest, that of remaining alive.

The truth is that these two positions, welfarism and rightism, derive from the same core idea, the need to spare animals unnecessary pain. This common interest as well as practical concerns, such as the need to make steady progress in a society not ready for the sacrifices involved in not using animals, has made both positions fuse into what Gary L. Francione calls “New Welfarism” in his book *Rain without Thunder: The Ideology of the Animal Rights Movement* (1996). Recarte considers that this is due to the fact that:

Rightists have realized that the only way of obtaining gains was [sic] to act more like welfarists, and the latter have assumed that their final goal is not only to eliminate suffering to animals but to make them subjects of rights because, in many instances, this is the only way to have effective implementation of many of the laws and regulations already enacted. (166)

In this respect Francione, the leader of the Francionites or the abolitionists, adopts a critical stand. He advocates worldwide animal liberation and veganism, and sees that many rightists who were in a position that could be described as abolitionist have softened the extent of their approach and adjusted their claims to serve the cause of animal rights as a long term goal. He defends the legal consideration of animals as persons, not property and in some cases endorses the need for violent actions as the only possible resource to defend animals.

These four approaches, welfarism or utilitarianism, rightism, the middle position known as new welfarism, as well as the more radical defended by Francione, abolitionism, constitutes the marrow upon which progress in animal legislation has been developed thus far. The most challenging aspect of these positions is the granting of

rights to animals because such a thing implies the restriction or even abolition of their use by humans. The rigidity of the species boundary stiffens even more when it comes to this and so ethicists and legislators have to find ways to make such a thing palatable. Due to this, the defense of animal rights has taken a primatocentric turn since the foundation in 1994 of the Great Ape Project (GAP), an initiative to grant three basic rights to great apes to which special attention will be paid later on. This shows human anthropocentrism and how we tend to favor those nonhuman animals that are closer species-wise to us. Nonetheless, it can definitely be considered a first step on the route towards liberation.

## 1.2. TURNING THE ATTENTION OF SOCIETY TOWARDS ANIMALS

It has already been mentioned how a revolution in the way we think about animals was set in motion in the 1970s by Singer's book *Animal Liberation*. Below two important examples of such revolution will be considered: animal activism and animal legislation. This will serve as socio-political background, together with the previous section on animal ethics, to the study of the four examples of literary fiction centered on relationships between human and nonhuman apes that are at the core of the second part of this dissertation. Likewise, it will be emphasized how animal studies and ultimately literary animal studies are rooted in the evolution of the moral consideration of animals in the Western world. This, as it will be shown, connects with the second objective of this work which is to prove that the literary animal has abandoned his role as literary symbol to adopt forms that make possible to define him as agentic subject.

### 1.2.1. Speaking for Animals: Animal Activism

Interest in animal rights has been a long-standing preoccupation of both British and American people. Prior to Singer's book a tradition of animal welfare already permeated these cultures. The first animal protection law in the Western world, known

as the “Massachusetts Body of Liberties,” was issued in 1641 in the American colony of Massachusetts (Phelps 83). However, it was thanks to the work of British thinkers and social reformers that the seed of animal protection was planted. Besides the abovementioned contribution of utilitarianism by Jeremy Bentham, English Christians such as Reverend Doctor Humphrey Primatt (1736-1779) played a fundamental role in promoting the respect of the Bible Compromise which guaranteed a “gentle usage” of the animals. Primatt, an Anglican priest, published in 1776 *The Duty of Mercy and the Sin of Cruelty to Brute Animals* and soon after, in the other side of the Atlantic, Herman Daggett (1766-1832), a Presbyterian minister, delivered in 1791 a lecture at Providence College entitled “The Rights of Animals: An Oration” (Phelps 85-87).

Little by little, in the nineteenth century, social reformers saw how the fight for slaves, women, and the poor was connected to that of animals. In fact many prominent women who in their day fought for women’s liberation like the British Frances Power Cobbe (1822-1904) and Anna Kingsford (1846-1888), as well as the American Caroline Earle White (1883-1916), were also significantly active in the cause against vivisection. The nineteenth century saw also the creation of organizations that voiced this yearning. The first of its kind was the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals created by Reverend Arthur Broome (1779-1837) and a group of social reformers in 1824. It later became to be known as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) when in 1840 was given the patronage of Queen Victoria (Phelps 101). A parallel organization was founded in America by Henry Bergh (1813-1888) in 1866 with the name of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). Also significant in this century was the anti-vivisection movement led by the Victoria Street Society initiated by Frances Power Cobbe. This organization later became the National Anti-Vivisection Society (NAVS) and Cobbe abandoned it, due to some internal

dissentions, to create in 1898 the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV). Meanwhile, in America, Caroline Earle White founded the American Anti-Vivisection Society (AAVS) in 1883.

This booming interest for the protection of animals suffered a backlash in the first half of the twentieth century as the result of the needs that arose from the two World Wars, the Great Depression, the mechanization of animal husbandry, and the increased use of animals in medical research. In sum, once more the interests of humans were placed above those of animals during the first part of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, conditions veered favorably in the direction of animals in the late 1950s in the United Kingdom with the first actions against hunting, “hunt sabotages,”<sup>21</sup> conducted by the League Against Cruel Sports. This decade is actually signaled by Norm Phelps as the beginning of the modern animal rights movement. He distinguishes the hunt sabotages as the first coordinated effort among animal activists to end a practice that had for a long time—150 years—been denounced by animal interest groups (Phelps 200).

Opposition to hunting entered the political arena in the United Kingdom after World War II through the Labour Party, and eventually crystallized on February 18, 2005, with the coming into effect of the Hunting Act which made hunting with dogs in England and Wales illegal (Phelps 202). In the United States, however, animal advocacy developed mainly through the support of grassroots organizations working along the lines of the tradition of activism began by Henry D. Thoreau with his work *Civil Disobedience* in 1849. Such tradition was also one of the inspirations behind the civil rights movement. The American public was therefore more apt than any other to see the logical connections between the subjugation of human groups—women, blacks,

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<sup>21</sup> According to Phelps, the term “sabotage” as referred to actions against hunting was first used in an article published in the London *Daily Telegraph* on August 4, 1958 (200).

Chicanos, gays—and animals. Furthermore, thanks to the endorsement by a growing number of people of the liberation of animals as the last stage in the struggle to expand the community of equals, the animal rights<sup>22</sup> movement, born in the United Kingdom and developed as an active social movement in America, turned global reaching the five continents. Hence, as a Google search done on October 3, 2013 shows, today there is a growing awareness of the need to protect the rights of animals everywhere in the world. Even in certain regions of Africa and in Asia, where the fight for human rights is still uneven, preoccupation for the welfare of animals is increasing as proved by the launching of platforms such as Animals Asia ([www.animalsasia.org](http://www.animalsasia.org)), IDA India ([www.idaindia.org](http://www.idaindia.org)), and Africa Network for Animal Welfare ([www.anaw.org](http://www.anaw.org)).<sup>23</sup> In this light, Singer's article published in 1973 can be seen, as Phelps suggests, as the tipping point of the beginning of the globalization of this new advocacy:

Singer's six-thousand-word essay was the world's introduction to the term "animal liberation" and to Singer's trademark argument, adopted from Bentham, that animals are entitled to have their interests given equal consideration with ours. It was also a sign that animal rights was about to leave Oxford to burst onto the world stage in New York, not simply as a philosophical argument, but as a full-blown social movement in the tradition of abolition, women's suffrage, the labor movement, feminism, and civil rights. (207)

It was precisely a student who attended at the time Singer's first course on animal liberation at New York University the person who became the first activist for animal rights in the modern sense of this expression (Phelps 214). His name was Henry Spira (1927-1998)<sup>24</sup> and, before becoming involved in the animal liberation movement, he had worked as a union organizer and been involved in the civil rights movement. It

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<sup>22</sup> The first person to apply the word "rights" to animals was a Christian mystic, Thomas Tryon (1634-1703). He was a self-educated shepherd and hatter, a follower of the German Protestant mystic Jacob Boehme, a vegetarian, and a pacifist (Phelps 84).

<sup>23</sup> This expansion is, however, problematic in some cases as reported by Joseph Mayton in *The Guardian* in Apr 1, 2010 and by *The Economist* in the article "A Small Voice Calling" published in Feb 28, 2008 with regard to the Middle East and to China respectively.

<sup>24</sup> In 1996 Peter Singer produced *Henry: One Man's Way* a film where he documents the efforts and philosophies of animal rights activist Henry Spira. This documentary released by Peter Singer under the Creative Commons License can be accessed in You Tube at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Kip4XVDYIE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Kip4XVDYIE).

*Chapter One. The Rise of the Animal*

was thanks to his experience in the fight for the rights of blacks in the South that he learnt some of the tactics he later put into practice in his fight to make the lives of animals in research and agriculture better. Nonetheless, his interest in the cause of animals was rather the product of serendipity, as will be explained below.

Destiny had it that in 1973 Spira came across a newspaper column where the political activist and folklorist Irwin Silber criticized Peter Singer's article in *The New York Times* (Phelps 213). Silber saw Singer's defense of animals as the cause of the wealthy middle class who, according to him, was more worried about the lives of animals than the lives of the poor. However, Spira was intrigued by Singer's argument where he connected the oppression of animals with that of otherized human groups, and decided to attend the course on animal liberation Singer was then teaching at New York University. Thanks to this experience Spira came to the conclusion that something had to be done on behalf of animals. Stimulated by what he had learned and trained, as he was, in the strategies of the civil rights and labor movement, Spira analyzed the actions of animal protection groups and thought that it was of no use to haunt people with the terrible realities faced by animals in farms, slaughterhouses, laboratories, zoos, and the likes. He thought that what was needed was to focus on small causes in order to make some measurable change in the lives of the suffering animals. Together with a few of his classmates he decided to aim first at the practice of vivisection. He learned of experiments being conducted on cats at the American Museum of Natural History where researchers had been mutilating them for almost twenty years in order to see the impact this had on their sexual behavior. Spira and his group decided to picket the American Museum of Natural History. It was July of 1976 and the protests went on for over a year. This was the first animal rights demonstration held in the United States (Phelps 215). But Spira not only organized weekly demonstrations that gained local and

national coverage, he also actively sought the support of members of Congress like Ed Koch. It was he who contacted the National Institutes of Health (NIH)—the funding agency behind the experiments—in order to require an explanation. Ultimately and after eighteenth months of protests the Museum cancelled the experiments after the NIH's refusal to continue subsidizing them. This meant the first victory of a modern animal rights campaign and the beginning of a new form of activism for animals.

Spira went on and selected his next target in the cosmetics industry. In 1980 he launched a campaign against the so-called Draize eye-irritancy test but, loyal to his principle of working small towards making bigger changes, he focused on one company, Revlon. He published a full-page ad in *The New York Times* on April 15, 1980 where he asked the following question: “How many rabbits does Revlon blind for beauty’s sake?” (see Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1: How Many Rabbits Does Revlon Blind for Beauty's Sake?**

The Draize test was developed in 1944 by toxicologist John Draize as a standardized test to measure the extent of the damage that chemicals cause to the eye. It consists in rubbing or squirting the chemical tested into the eyes of immobilized rabbits. The rabbits so treated spend days or weeks in body-hugging boxes so that the scientists can observe the development of any possible injuries. Once the observation is completed the rabbits are killed.<sup>25</sup> Such kind of tests are considered very useful for the cosmetics and personal care industry because they provide an easy and cheap way of testing products that can be toxic. Phelps explains that although vivisection was scarcely used in the United States since the late nineteenth century, the Food, Drug, and Cosmetics Act (FDCA) of 1938 made it compulsory for the industry to evaluate the level of toxicity of their products in order to ensure the safety of their consumers (216-17). Such obligation led to a dramatic increase in the number of animal victims of chemical testing. Only in 1983, according to reports filed with the Department of Agriculture, the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment estimated that the overall number of animals used in research was at least 17 million to 22 million. Barnaby J. Feder made this and other estimates public in an article published by *The New York Times* in February 28, 1988. In this article Feder also revealed that rats and mice represented about two-thirds of the total while the rest included 180,000 dogs, 55,000 cats, 500,000 rabbits, a similar number of guinea pigs and 60,000 monkeys, chimpanzees and other primates.

This time Spira managed to create the largest coalition of animal rights groups ever to have joined forces. The Coalition to Stop Draize Rabbit Blinding Tests included among other organizations the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and the

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<sup>25</sup> The use of the Draize test has declined in both the United States and Europe due to its controversial nature and lack of reliability. In March 11, 2013 a full ban on animal testing for cosmetics entered into force in the European Union meaning that cosmetics tested on animals cannot be sold anymore in the member states (European Commission “Full EU Ban” n.pag.).

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). Spira asked Revlon to invest in alternatives to the Draize test but the company refused to make any changes at the beginning. Then Spira and his group used the force of the press, mass mailings, video clips, and demonstrations, managing with this to turn the public against Revlon not only in the States but also in Europe (Phelps 219). This affected the company's image and made their stock decline leading finally to a \$750,000 donation to The Rockefeller University to fund research on alternatives to animal testing for product safety. This was the first time a major corporation was investing money to reduce animal testing (Phelps 219).

However, this was also the last time animal advocacy groups worked as a coordinated force. The uneven responses by companies such as Avon or Bristol-Myers to the requirements of the animal groups led some coalition members to stiffen their positions. They decided to go on their own and ask for the eradication of the Draize test. This strategy was at odds with the previous one based on aiming at specific targets. Spira did not stop to campaign for animals, but different fronts in the animal rights movement were opened. Thus, although animal advocacy groups still shared a common cause, they did not agree on the methods chosen.

But Spira was not the only factor that contributed to the gathering momentum of the movement throughout the mid 1970s and the 1980s. Of special value were also the celebration of the first vegetarian conference organized by Alex Hershaft in 1975, the foundation of the first animal protection magazine—*The Animals' Agenda*—in 1979, the renovation of long-existing groups such as the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), and the creation of new ones like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) or Farm Animal Rights Movement (FARM). These promising efforts were topped by the organization of the so-called March on Washington in June 10, 1990,

which was enormously successful gathering a total of twenty-four thousand activists. Surprisingly, six years later a second edition of the march only congregated three thousand people (Phelps 287). What happened in the meanwhile that had so dispirited the movement?

Possibly the change of strategy referred above marked the beginning of a decline in the successful trajectory of the animal rights movement. This shift is actually seen today as the end of the golden age of animal rights, which extends from 1975 until the early 1990s (Phelps 222), and the beginning of a time of dissent that has not ended yet. Although it is easy to incur in an oversimplification when speaking about the development of any social movement, two other factors may have contributed to the disintegration of the animal rights crusade from the 1990s onwards. First of all, the radicalization of certain factions led to a fracture within the movement. The main issue at stake was whether or not the use of violence was justified in order to defend the cause of animals. The second element leading to division has revolved around the abovementioned conflict between the so-called new welfarists and the abolitionists. As it has already been explained, the new welfarists defend that in order to produce long-term results step-by-step changes need to be made. These changes can raise the sensitivity towards animals, reduce their suffering, and lead in the end to their liberation. This approach does not preclude the use of animals, but, in principle, places society into a solid progression towards the end of animal exploitation. On their part, abolitionists, led by Francione, opine that the only way to really liberate animals is to avoid their use at all costs. This involves reflecting on their legal status which should evolve from their present consideration of property to that of person.

In terms of its evolution toward violence, as a movement born out of the example of the 1960s activism for civil rights, the animal rights movement emerged as a

quintessentially pacific movement. Nonetheless, it is true that from its very beginnings in the 1970s some activists saw the use of violence as justified. There had been hunt sabotages since the late 1950s in Britain where activists often truncated the celebration of a hunt by impairing the vehicles that were going to be used or by applying scented sprays on the ground to alert the animals before the hunters arrived. The early 1970s, however, saw the beginning of an organized effort by activists to literally become animal fighters. This initiative took different forms. In its beginning it ranged from the rescue of animals kept in laboratories to the destruction of property. The first of these actions happened in the United Kingdom and were performed by the Band of Mercy created by Ronnie Lee in 1972. Through the summer of 1974 the first known liberation of imprisoned animals in the modern history of animal rights took place. Six guinea pigs were liberated from a farm in Wiltshire in south England near Salisbury (Phelps 262).

Arson or the setting fire of premises became a classic of these freedom fighters. The violence of these actions escalated and by the 1980s they even derived into physical and psychological threats aimed against the workers of animal laboratories and slaughterhouses. The Animal Liberation Front (ALF) became one of the most active and daring groups. It was founded in 1976 on the basis of Lee's the Band of Mercy. Although in its origins ALF actions were seen with a certain degree of sympathy by fellow animal sympathizers with time they were described as terrorism and seen with suspicion by other animal advocates. Laboratories and fur farms became more wary of the dangers of dealing with animals and took more precautions to defend their facilities. This derived into less transparency with regard to their activities. In the United States their lobbying also convinced legislators of the need to provide them with a set of regulations to protect them. In 1992 the Animal Enterprise Protection Act (AEPA) was

passed considering a federal offense to physically disrupt the functioning of any laboratory. In 2006 the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA) clearly associated acts against companies using animals as a terrorist action. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11 both the general public and the authorities became more sensitive to anything described under the label of terrorism. Although ALF continues to be today an active underground organization that operates in over forty countries, Phelps highlights that time has proved that ALF's violent actions have not benefited animals in the long run:

The public does not like bombings or arson. They consider them—correctly, in my opinion—reckless, dangerous, and all too likely to get out of control with deadly unforeseen consequences. Thus, as news reports of arson began to overshadow news reports of rescues, the ALF quickly lost public sympathy in America—just as it had in Britain—dragging the rest of the animal rights movement along with it. As had been the case at Hegins, the specter of violence among humans turned the spotlight of public attention away from the suffering of the animals and shone it on the actions of activists. This made the animal rights movement the issue and made it easy for the exploitation industries to label not just the ALF, but the entire animal rights movement “terrorists,” a label that to an unfortunate degree has stuck in the public mind. (269-70)

In this same vein, Singer has discouraged the use of violence in the fight for animal rights since it means the loss of the ethical base that sustains it:

It is vital that the animal liberation movement avoid the vicious spiral of violence. Animal liberation activists must set themselves irrevocably against the use of violence, even when their opponents use violence against them. It is easy to believe that because some experimenters make animals suffer, it is all right to make the experimenters suffer. This attitude is mistaken. We may be convinced that people who abuse animals are totally callous and insensitive, but we lower ourselves to their level and put ourselves in the wrong if we harm or threaten to harm that person. The entire, animal liberation movement is based on the strength of its ethical concern. It must not abandon the high moral ground. (“Animal Liberation: A Personal View” 154)

Regarding the second element of fracture, the division between new welfarists and abolitionists has served to remind activists of the ultimate goal of the movement: the suppression of all animal use and thus their liberation. Using the rhetoric of anti-slavery, Francione first argued in his book *Animals, Property, and the Law* (1995) that the enslavement and slaughter of animals depend on their legal status as property. He later revisited this argument in *Animals as Persons: Essays on the Abolition of Animal Exploitation* (2008) where he defends that animals should gain legal status as persons and that they should be granted certain rights safeguarded by law. He bases his claims

in bringing to light the fact that corporations have been legal persons since the 1890s, and that ships are also recognized as persons in maritime law. He then goes to compare the situation of animals to that of slaves in America in the eighteenth and nineteenth century:

In certain aspects the regulation of animal exploitation is similar to the regulation of human slavery in North America. Although many laws supposedly required the “humane” treatment of slaves and prohibited the infliction of “unnecessary” punishment, these laws offered almost no protection for slaves. In conflicts between slave owners and slaves, the latter almost always lost. Slave welfare laws, like animal welfare laws, generally required that slave owners merely act as rational property owners but did not recognize the inherent value of the slave. Slave owners were of course free to treat their slaves, or particular slaves, better. But as far as the law was concerned, slaves were merely economic commodities with only extrinsic or conditional value, and slave owners were essentially free to value their slaves’ interests as they chose, just as we are free to value the interests of our dogs and cats and treat them as members of our families or abandon them at a shelter or have them killed because we no longer want them. (*Animals as Persons* 9)

Today, Francione is recognized as the founder of the field known as animal law. He is a law professor at Rutgers University and the first person who defended the attribution of legal rights to animals. He was also the attorney that negotiated on behalf of animals in the Gennarelli case. This case revealed the procedures used by Dr. Thomas Gennarelli at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia to develop a scale that could objectively measure the harm inflicted by head injuries provoked by falls and car accidents among others. In his experiments he used monkeys that were attached to a machine he had developed. Their heads were strapped in order to effectively maneuver on their skulls that were struck by a sort of hammer similar to the captive-bolt pistol used in slaughterhouses. On May 28, 1984, members of the ALF broke into the laboratory and discovered sixty hours of videotape revealing the suffering of the primates and the lack of scruples of the scientists: animals were left unattended after the injury had been inflicted, some of the scientists joked about the signs of pain of the monkeys, and kept smoking while manipulating the injured skulls of their victims. The ALF sent this videotapes to PETA which produced the thirty-minute documentary

*Unnecessary Fuss*<sup>26</sup> paraphrasing Gennarelli's description of the consequences of a leak in his procedure. The release of these images produced a commotion in society. Francione negotiated with the University of Pennsylvania on behalf of the activists to obtain the release of the animals and the withdrawal of the NIH grant to Gennarelli. The activists won this battle thanks to the strength of their evidence and Francione's legal savvy. Animal law had come of age.

### 1.2.2. Beyond Cat Calls and Dog Barking: Making Animals Count within the Legal System

Animals have been the objects of legal protection in the Western world for centuries. Such consideration has emanated traditionally out of compassion for them—such in the case of anti-cruelty statutes<sup>27</sup> mentioned before—or out of an interest to protect what was considered to be someone's property. These have been the two main directions in which Western legal systems have dealt with this issue until recently. Today a third approach also seems possible thanks to studies that blur the boundaries between human and nonhuman animals. These studies show how animals communicate among themselves, have emotions, and create cultures that are transmitted for generations.<sup>28</sup> This last approach opens the door to the possibility of granting rights to animals, especially to those that are closer to humans, great apes, and those who show a

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<sup>26</sup> The documentary *Unnecessary Fuss* can be accessed at [www.peta.org/tv/videos/animal-experimentation/803731940001.aspx](http://www.peta.org/tv/videos/animal-experimentation/803731940001.aspx)

<sup>27</sup> As Recarte explains the first anti-cruelty statutes were enacted “as early as 1641 by the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in order to forbid cruelty against any brute creature kept by man” (160). These are what Phelps refers as the “Massachusetts Body of Liberties” composed by the Puritan clergyman Nathaniel Ward (83).

<sup>28</sup> Some of the most important works showing these boundary blurring capabilities are: *Animal Minds: Beyond Cognition to Consciousness* (2001) by Donald R. Griffin, *The Emotional Lives of Animals: A Leading Scientist Explores Animal Joy, Sorrow, and Empathy--and Why they Matter* (2007) by Marc Bekoff, *When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals* (2009) by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson and Susan McCarthy, *Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behavior* (2009) by Temple Grandin and Catherine Johnson, and *Elephants on the Edge: What Animals Teach Us about Humanity* (2009) by Gay A. Bradshaw.

high degree of consciousness such as elephants and cetaceans like dolphins and whales.<sup>29</sup>

These three viewpoints have been considered by the main pioneers of animal liberation abovementioned: Peter Singer, Tom Regan, and Gary L. Francione. Their contributions have led to groundbreaking changes in the legislation governing our relationship with animals, and have facilitated the recognition of legal standing for animals as well as the attribution of rights to them. Such crucial changes have also meant the creation of the field known as animal law. This field is unique in the sense that “it [analyzes] the law from the perspective of the subject of study, the animals themselves” (Senatori and Frasch 212). This involves a change of paradigm that places the animals’ interests at the center when dealing with questions that concern their use and wellbeing. It also means the possibility of attributing them legal standing which translates into their consideration as persons and the recognition of rights to at least some of them.<sup>30</sup> Ultimately, it means the crumbling of a system of oppression sustained upon the exploitation of nonhuman species.

Animal law has developed as an academic field and a new branch of law first and foremost in the United States. Hall Law School became the first law school in the country to offer an animal law course, taught by Adjunct Professor Theodore Sager Meth in 1977 (Senatori and Frasch 211). However this discipline did not reach legitimacy until it was taught at Harvard Law School in the spring of 2000 (Favre 2). Even then this course was taught by an adjunct professor, Steve M. Wise, not a tenured

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<sup>29</sup> Steven M. Wise defends this proposition in *Drawing the Line: Science and the Case for Animal Rights* (2003).

<sup>30</sup> In 2007 attorney Steven M. Wise, famous for his defense of the recognition of rights to great apes in *Rattling the Cage: Toward Legal Rights for Animals* (2001), funded the Nonhuman Rights Project “the only group,” according to its website, “fighting for actual LEGAL rights for members of species other than our own” ([www.nonhumanrightsproject.org](http://www.nonhumanrightsproject.org)).

one; but, as David S. Favre indicates, it is clear that animal law has gained momentum since that day (2, note 8).

Today, according to International Animal Law (IAL), more than one hundred law schools, including Harvard, Columbia, and New York University offer both undergraduate and graduate level courses in this field. However, there are also courses on animal law being currently taught in other parts of the world. This indicates its expansion worldwide. In Europe, for example, according to IAL, courses are offered at six different universities in the United Kingdom: John Moores University (Liverpool), Kingston University (London), Northumbria University (Newcastle), University of Aberdeen (Scotland), University of East Anglia, and University of Leeds (Leeds). There are also courses on offer at the University of Vienna in Austria and at the University of Barcelona in Spain. Here a master program in Animal Law and Society directed by Teresa Giménez-Candela has already been taught for several years.<sup>31</sup> There is also manifest interest in this discipline in other English speaking countries such as Australia (twelve universities), Canada (seven universities), and New Zealand (three universities). Finally, courses on animal law can also be found in China and Israel, although they are still an exception as happens in Austria and Spain. In conclusion, it does seem that the development of the discipline has taken hold mainly in countries under the influence of common law and where there has been a tradition in animal protection dating back in some cases several centuries ago.

Regarding its practice, animal law has gone from being a matter of national and regional legislation to becoming a global concern tackled by international organizations such as the European Union, and debated in international conferences all over the world. Nonetheless, it is unquestionable that animal law developed first as a distinctive

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<sup>31</sup> For more information on this master program go to [www.derechoanimal.info](http://www.derechoanimal.info)

branch of law in the United States. This was probably due to the grasp the animal liberation movement had in the minds of Americans since the 1970s onwards as well as the impact of the development of another American distinctive form of law, environmental law, since the 1960s (Favre 2; Senatori and Frasch 212). In the 1990s American law students, following the tradition of those who decades earlier cared for the protection of the environment and asked for courses that cater for this interest, began demanding courses on the treatment of animals by the legal system. They even promoted the creation of scholarly journals on the topic such as the *Animal Law Review* produced by students at Lewis and Clark Law School since 1994 (Favre 1), and enthusiastically organized and participated in national law moot court competitions held annually at Harvard Law School since 2003 (Favre 3; Senatori and Frasch 234). Regarding the legal profession, the first national conference held for lawyers to consider animal legal issues was organized in 1981 at Brooklyn Law School (Favre 2). A year after, the first national organization of attorneys was formed to promote both animal welfare and rights. The initial name was Attorneys for Animal Rights, but it was later changed to Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF) (Favre 2). It is true that the incorporation of animal issues at attorney meetings “often resulted in cat calls and dog barking” in the early 1990s, but by 1995 the State Bar Association accepted the application of a group of attorneys to form an Animal Law Section in Michigan (Favre 4). The numbers have steadily increased, and according to the ALDF’s website, by February of 2010 animal law was recognized by the bar on a national level with at least eighteen states creating bar sections or committees devoted to animal law (Senatori and Frasch 211). Also on a national level, the American Bar Association’s Tort Trial and Insurance Practice Section created the ABA Animal Law Committee in 2005 and more

recently listed a career as an “animal defense lawyer” as one of the top ten “hot” or “cutting edge” careers for job seekers (Senatori and Frasch 211).

In Spain, the Barcelona Bar Association created an Animal Law Committee—*Consejo de Protección y Defensa de los Animales*—in 2003. According to the *Revista de la Asociación Defensa Derechos Animal (ADDA)*, the creation of such committee was encouraged by lawyer and politician Magda Oranich Solagran. In 2009 lawyer Daniel Dorado opened in Madrid the first animal law practice ever to have been known in Spain.<sup>32</sup> Approximately a year later the *Centro Legal para la Defensa de los Animales* was inaugurated in Madrid with the aim to educate society on animal welfare and rights, and litigate on behalf of them.<sup>33</sup> On October 24 and 25, 2011 one of the Minding Animal Pre-Conferences<sup>34</sup> was held at the University of Barcelona under the title “Animals and the Law.” All this indicates that the field has at least been launched in Spain and that is progressively growing.

Lastly, abundant literature has been produced on the subject of animal law so far. This does not only include textbooks,<sup>35</sup> journals,<sup>36</sup> and collections of articles<sup>37</sup> but also abundant legislation both in Europe and overseas. Interestingly, today Europe is considered to have one of the more advanced animal welfare regulation in the world. Even Peter Singer, in an article published in *The New York Times Review of Books* in 2003 where he assesses the evolution of the animal liberation movement in the last thirty years, acknowledges how Europe has become more advanced in the protection of

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<sup>32</sup> [www.abogadodeanimales.com](http://www.abogadodeanimales.com).

<sup>33</sup> [www.leganimal.com](http://www.leganimal.com)

<sup>34</sup> Minding Animals International is an international working group on Animal Studies that was founded in 2010 by scholar and activist Rod Benison (<http://mindinganimalsinternational.wordpress.com>).

<sup>35</sup> Favre cites Sonia Waisman, Bruce Wagman, Pamala Frasch and Scott Beckstead’s *Animal Law: Cases and Materials* published in 1999 as the first textbook on animal law to be published in the States (3, note 10). In Spain Pilar de la Osa Escribano published in 2012 *El derecho del bienestar animal en Europa y Estados Unidos*.

<sup>36</sup> Favre cites *Animal Law Review* as the first law journal exclusively dedicated to animal law (1).

<sup>37</sup> Cass R. Sunstein and Martha Nussbaum offer a comprehensive overview of recent topics in animal rights in *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions* (2005).

animals than the United States (“Animal Liberation at 30” 9-11). It is indeed outstanding that in 1999 the protection of animals became, for the first time, part of the European Union Treaty when it was included as a protocol annexed to the Treaty of Amsterdam (Gavinelli and Lakestan 2). More recently, with the Treaty of Lisbon, which came into force on December 1, 2009, animal welfare has become a stand-alone article and the sentience of animals has been recognized. Thus, Title II of Article 13 of the Treaty states:

In formulating and implementing the Union's agriculture, fisheries, transport, internal market, research and technological development and space policies, the Union and the Member States shall, since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals, while respecting the legislative or administrative provisions and customs of the Member States relating in particular to religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage. (54)

The European Union (EU) has had a specific action plan on animal welfare since 2006 when the Community Action Plan for the period 2006-2010 was presented based on the consecution of the following five freedoms for farm animals: freedom from discomfort, freedom from hunger and thirst, freedom from fear and distress, freedom from pain, injury and disease, and freedom to express natural behavior. In January 19, 2012 a new four-year strategy (2012-2015) on animal welfare was announced with the aim, among other things, to secure member state compliance with its legal requirements and enhance international cooperation on animal welfare issues (European Commission “A New Animal”). In September of 2010 the European Parliament also agreed to ban the use of great apes for experimentation.<sup>38</sup> This decision is line with the different moves that have taken place worldwide towards the recognition of legal rights for great apes.

In 1997 the British government's Home Secretary banned the use of great apes as biomedical research subjects (Wise “The Evolution” 101). In 1998 there was an

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<sup>38</sup> The Spanish government issued a royal decree in February 1, 2013 that also prohibits the use of great apes in experimentation (11379).

attempt in New Zealand to gain legal rights for great apes. This led to formal Parliamentary hearings to modify New Zealand's Animal Welfare Bill No. 2 and grant three basic rights to great apes following the ideas presented in the book *The Great Ape Project: Equality beyond Humanity* (1993) edited by philosophers Paola Cavalieri and Peter Singer. In their Submission to Parliament the presenters argued that:

[b]eing fellow hominids, the great apes are more closely related to humans than to any other animals. They share many of our characteristics including some that we thought were uniquely ours, such as self-awareness, the ability to reason and the ability to imagine what others are thinking and feeling. In humans, these traits are often cited as a basis for ascribing basic legal rights. We believe that a strong case now exists for giving basic legal rights to the other members of the Hominidae family. (qtd. in Wise "The Evolution" 102)

Ultimately, the New Zealand Parliament did not grant legal rights to great apes in the Animal Welfare Act of 1999, but prohibited research, testing, and teaching involving the use of a great ape without approval of the director-general (Wise "The Evolution" 102). In 2002 there was an international move to encourage all the countries of the world, but especially the so-called range states,<sup>39</sup> to embrace an international Declaration for the Protection of Great Apes and a Convention for the Protection of Great Apes that name the great apes as "World Heritage Species" (Wise "The Evolution" 102). This category modeled upon the existing category of World Heritage Site would assure the protection of these species. It was planned as a protocol appended to the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. However, by May 2004 it was clear that there was no enthusiasm among lawyers, scientists, and representatives of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)<sup>40</sup> for negotiating a new World Heritage Species Protocol since there were already too many biodiversity-related treaties (Wold et al. 1).

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<sup>39</sup> According to *Wikipedia* a "range state" is a term used in zoogeography and conservation biology to refer to those nations which "exercise jurisdiction over any part of a range which a particular species, taxon or biotope inhabits, or crosses or overflies at any time on its normal migration route."

<sup>40</sup> UNEP and UNESCO were involved because they are the co-administrators of the Great Ape Survival Project (GRASP) and UNESCO is the Secretariat of the World Heritage Convention.

Eventually, in Spain another initiative similar to that of New Zealand was submitted in June 25, 2008 to the Spanish Parliament. The Environmental Committee of the *Cortes Generales* did approve this resolution, but nothing else was done after that in order to grant legal recognition to great apes. Curiously, a year earlier, in February 28, 2007 the Balear Parliament had adhered to the goals of the Great Ape Project.

Although it is not the object of this study to give a detailed list of the main laws affecting the integrity and wellbeing of animals, there are some online resources worth mentioning in this respect. Both the International Institute for Animal Law ([www.animallaw.com](http://www.animallaw.com)) and the International Animal Law ([www.animal-law.biz](http://www.animal-law.biz)) offer a database of American and international legislation. In the United States there are many highly informative sites associated with some universities offering courses on animal law such as the Animal Legal and Historical Center at Michigan State University ([www.animallaw.info](http://www.animallaw.info)), or the Center for Animal Law Studies at Lewis & Clark Law School ([http://law.lclark.edu/centers/animal\\_law\\_studies/](http://law.lclark.edu/centers/animal_law_studies/)). On a European level there are institutional sites that showcase the major advancement on issues concerning the wellbeing of animals such as the European Commission page on Animal Health and Welfare ([http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/index_en.htm)), the website of the Eurogroup for Animals (<http://eurogroupforanimals.org>), the European Parliament's Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals ([www.animalwelfareintergroup.eu](http://www.animalwelfareintergroup.eu)), the European Animal Welfare Platform ([www.animalwelfareplatform.eu](http://www.animalwelfareplatform.eu)), and the European Food Safety Authority ([www.efsa.europa.eu/en/topics/topic/animalwelfare.htm](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/topics/topic/animalwelfare.htm)). In Spain there is a website on animal welfare entirely funded by the EU ([www.bienestaranimal.eu/index.html](http://www.bienestaranimal.eu/index.html)) as well as the information offered on the most recent legislation by the *Ministerio de Agricultura, Alimentación y Medio Ambiente* ([www.magrama.gob.es/es/ganaderia/tema](http://www.magrama.gob.es/es/ganaderia/tema)

s). Finally, the Franklin Institute's research group Animal Welfare: AWSHEL-IAS (Science, Humanities, Ethics, and Law. Interdisciplinary Animal Studies) ([www.institutofranklin.net/en/research](http://www.institutofranklin.net/en/research)) is probably unique in its kind for it considers the interdisciplinary nature of the subject and how it intersects with the humanities, as will be explained in the following section.

### 1.3. ANIMAL STUDIES: ANIMALS ENTER THE HUMANITIES

Since the 1980s animals have also caught the attention of scholars working in the humanities. This does not mean that animals were not in the minds of academics before. However, the ethical turn motivated by Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1975), scientific discoveries blurring the distinctions between humans and animals, as well as the development of new fields derived from the civil rights movement made possible approaching the animal afresh in the humanities in the second half of the twentieth century.

The general term used to refer to this field consisting, in broad terms, in the study of the animal from the point of view of disciplines belonging to the humanities is animal studies. Aftandilian explains that this expression recalls the names of other subfields in the much larger field of cultural studies such as "American studies" or "disability studies," which can be understood as "cultural studies of America" and "cultural studies of disability" respectively. Thus animal studies can be easily understood as "cultural studies of animals" (Aftandilian xvi). However, some see this denomination as too general, ambiguous, and imprecise.<sup>41</sup> One of the leading voices in the mapping of the field, cultural anthropologist Margo DeMello, says that "animal

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<sup>41</sup> A Google search done on April 23, 2012 showed animal studies to be the denomination more widely used, but of course not all of the results obtained have to do with the study of animals in the humanities. Here are the results: animal studies 4,250,000 hits, human-animal studies 1,250,000 hits, critical animal studies 581,000 hits, anthrozoology 65,800 hits, animality studies 1,330 hits. By July 11, 2014, a similar search showed that the denomination human-animal studies had already replaced animal studies at the top of this list: human-animal studies 1,940,000 hits, animal studies 1,810,000 hits, critical animal studies 705,000, anthrozoology 79,000 hits, animality studies 5,390.

studies” actually evokes the expression used “in the natural sciences, to refer to the scientific study of, or medical use of, nonhuman animals, as in medical research” (*Animals and Society* 5). The truth is that debate on the appropriateness of the term used to name the field has been going on since its birth. This discussion has also extended to considerations about the definition of its object of study, its methodology, and whether or not active animal advocacy is required.

DeMello argues that one of the characteristics of the field is that it is not defined by any specific methodology but by its subject matter (*Animals and Society* 4). This involves not the study of the nonhuman animal per se as is the case in the life sciences, but insofar as it interacts with the human animal (DeMello *Animals and Society* 5). Animal studies, which are also known as human-animal studies or anthrozoology, is therefore the exploration of the intersections between animal lives and human societies. Such study is done from an interdisciplinary approach. This means that these relationships are analyzed from within each of the disciplines of the humanities concerned with them, but are always informed by the study of the animal as such done in the life sciences. This is what makes it so diverse, challenging and enriching.

Animal studies may also take different names depending on the importance its practitioners give to the defense of the real animal. Mainstream animal studies (MAS) is mainly represented by human-animal studies (HAS), a denomination put forward by the Animals and Society Institute (ASI), and it is not necessarily about animal advocacy although it can be concerned with it. Other branches, such as critical animal studies (CAS), imply political activism (DeMello *Animals and Society* 17). This approach is promoted by the Institute for Critical Animal Studies (ICAS) whose scholars adopt an openly belligerent stand since they consider that not doing so would be dishonest to the animals. CAS criticizes the obscure rhetoric of MAS and its conformity to the

requirements of the academic career. Hence Steve Best, one of its most vocal proponents, denounces that once animal studies “takes shape within the sterile, normalizing, hierarchical, and repressive environment of academia, animal studies, like any other knowledge or discourse, is tied to abstract, arcane, technical, and apolitical codes and discourses, and is reified as a marketable academic product and commodity as well” (9). For CAS activism is intrinsically linked to the study of animals. It takes a very critical stand against those positions which do not see the need to adopt a political stance with regard to animals. This is for example the case of what is known as animality studies, a critical approach to the issue of animality in cultural artifacts that is defined by Michael Lundblad “as a way to describe work that expresses no explicit interest in advocacy for various nonhuman animals, even though it shares an interest in how we think about “real” animals” (“From Animal” 497).<sup>42</sup>

Regarding its development, the beginning of animal studies in America in the 1980s coincided with a movement of openness in the humanities triggered by the effect the civil rights movement had on American culture. It was also a moment of erasure of disciplinary boundaries leading to increasing interdisciplinarity in the humanities (Klein 35). At the same time, scholars started paying attention to what was happening outside of the precinct of universities, thus dismantling the stereotype of the academic isolated in his ivory tower who does not want to be disturbed by the realities of life. The broadening of topics and the increasing methodological experimentation that were possible in American universities led to the publication of works where animals were at the center of the scholars’ inquiry. Tom Regan had published his response to Peter

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<sup>42</sup> In a more recent article Lundblad clarifies the concept of animality studies as “work from various disciplines that emphasizes instead the history of thinking about and representing animality in relation to what might more typically be seen as cultural studies, of the human kind. Animality studies also pays close attention to how “real” animals are constructed in various ways, and draws upon other disciplines in relation to studying and understanding biological creatures, but emphasizes the implications of how animality is constructed in relation to the situated histories of human identity categories such as race, class, gender, and sexuality” (“Humanimal” 42).

Singer's book in 1983. Animals had been put in the spotlight and compared with groups—women and blacks—that were the object of study of new and prolific fields such as women's studies and African American studies. It was therefore only logical to expect the beginning of this new discipline. History, anthropology, literary studies, and women's studies were the first to consider the animals as a stimulating subject. Such context led to the publication in 1983 of Mary Allen's *Animals in American Literature*, a book where she explores the role played by animals as both protagonists and symbols in American literature. A series of works attending the part played by animals in the evolution of mankind were also published in the 1980s such as James A. Serpell's *In the Company of Animals: A Study of Human-Animal Relationships* (1986). Feminist scholars like Coral Lansbury studied the intersections among gender, class, and species in *The Old Brown Dog: Women, Workers, and Vivisection in Edwardian England* (1985). These intersections were later explored by Donna Haraway in *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (1989) in relation to the evolution of primatology and its connection with sexism, racism, and speciesism. It was also at the end of this decade that the institutionalization of the field started taking place leading finally to the formation of the International Society for Anthrozoology (ISAZ)<sup>43</sup> in 1991. The founders of this organization were precisely behind the publication in 1987 of the first journal in the field, *Anthrozoös*.<sup>44</sup>

The 1990s opened with the publication of *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* by Carol J. Adams, a text that set in motion a revolution in the way of understanding the ubiquitous connection between gender and species. This book was followed by Greta C. Gaard's *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (1993) and Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan's edited collection *Animals*

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<sup>43</sup> [www.isaz.net](http://www.isaz.net)

<sup>44</sup> [www.isaz.net/anthrozoos.html](http://www.isaz.net/anthrozoos.html)

*and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations* (1995). Further developments also took place with the publication of works that meant the incorporation of disciplines such as sociology and geography to the disciplines in the humanities interested in animals from this novel and interdisciplinary perspective. In 1993 Marian Louise Scholtmeijer published *Animal Victims in Modern Fiction: From Sanctity to Sacrifice* where she analyzed the victimization of animals in modern literature and suggested how in many instances the literary animal resists and finds ways of escaping human violence. In 1996 Arnold Arluke and Clinton R. Sanders published *Regarding Animals* a classic in the sociological study of the human-animal relationship. A year later Jennifer Ham and Mathew Senior considered different examples of how Western literature and philosophy have dealt with animal representations in *Animal Acts: Configuring the Human in Western History*. In 1998 Jennifer R. Wolch and Jody Emel put the question of the animal in relation to place and identity in *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics, and Identity in the Nature-Culture Borderlines*.

If the 1980s meant the beginning of the field by the more daring and the 1990s saw the steady incorporation of disciplines to the field of animal studies, the 2000s were without a doubt the decade where animal studies consolidated itself. Its institutionalization, which had begun timidly at the end of the 1990s with the creation of ISAZ, continued with the foundation in 2001 of the Center on Animal Liberation Affairs (CALA)—today known as the Institute for Critical Animal Studies (ICAS)<sup>45</sup>—by professors Anthony J. Nocella II and Steve Best. A few years later the Animals and Society Institute (ASI)<sup>46</sup> was created as a result of a merger of the Institute for Animals and Society (IAS) and the Society and Animals Forum (SAF). IAS was formerly known as Animal Rights Network (ARN) and was in charge of publishing *The Animals'*

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<sup>45</sup> [www.criticalanimalstudies.org](http://www.criticalanimalstudies.org)

<sup>46</sup> [www.animalsandsociety.org](http://www.animalsandsociety.org)

*Agenda* magazine, while SAF was originally called Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PSYETA). Psychologist Kenneth Shapiro was ASI's founder and continues being its president although cultural anthropologist Margo DeMello has been especially prolific in mapping out the field both in a practical and theoretical way as proved by books such as *Teaching the Animal. Human-Animal Studies across the Disciplines* (2010) and *Animals and Society. An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies* (2012). The 2000s were also a decade of expansion outside the frontiers of American academia. This was possible thanks to the publication of journals on animal studies, the creation of online discussion networks, and the celebration of international conferences such as the first one organized by Minding Animal International in Newcastle, Australia in 2009.

The most remarkable journals on animal studies are often associated to the creation of institutes for the study of the animal in the humanities. Besides *Anthrozoös* created in 1987 in connection with ISAZ, in 1993 the journal *Society and Animals*<sup>47</sup> started being published (Shapiro "Editor's Introduction" 333). This would eventually become the journal associated with ASI. Also worthy of note among the pioneers is the *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* (JCAS)<sup>48</sup> connected with ICAS. It was founded in 2003 by Steve Best and Anthony J. Nocella II with the name *Animal Liberation Philosophy and Policy Journal* becoming known as JCAS in 2007. Other journals born within the interest for animal studies in the humanities are *Antennae* and *Humanimalia*. The first one, *Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture*,<sup>49</sup> was founded in 2006 by Giovanni Aloï and focuses on the analysis of animals in visual culture. The second, *Humanimalia: A Journal of Human/Animal Interface Studies*<sup>50</sup> was first

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<sup>47</sup> [www.brill.com/society-animals](http://www.brill.com/society-animals)

<sup>48</sup> [www.criticalanimalstudies.org/students-for-cas/journal-for-critical-animal-studies/](http://www.criticalanimalstudies.org/students-for-cas/journal-for-critical-animal-studies/)

<sup>49</sup> [www.antennae.org.uk](http://www.antennae.org.uk)

<sup>50</sup> [www.depauw.edu/humanimalia/index.html](http://www.depauw.edu/humanimalia/index.html)

published in 2009 and encourages “the study of material animals and their discursive representations” (“The Purpose of Humanimalia”). Attention has also been paid to the animal in other academic journals not primarily focused on animal studies. The journal *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Study of Literature and Environment*, the leading publication in ecocriticism, has paid a constant attention to scholarly and creative work on animals and it is normal to find in any of its issues some articles where the nonhuman animal is present. Other journals like *Mosaic*, *PMLA: Publication of the Modern Language Association of America*, *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, and *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism* have devoted entire issues to the field.<sup>51</sup> Finally, *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, a journal published by GIECO (Spanish Research Group on Ecocriticism at the Franklin Institute, University of Alcalá) and EASLCE (European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture and Environment), has announced a future issue to be published in 2016 under the title *Pathways to an Eco-poetics of Animality*.

Thanks to the booming of information technology animal studies have bloomed also online due to the creation of discussion networks. The first one was the H-NILAS listserv<sup>52</sup> created in 1997 by the organization *Nature in Legend and Story Society*. This initiative was later followed by the Human-Animal Studies listserv<sup>53</sup> in 2003 as part of the growing of ASI, and by the H-Animal<sup>54</sup> discussion network began in 2005 and perhaps the one with the highest number of followers.

With regard to the expansion of academic debate outside the frontiers of the United States, it is important to highlight the remarkable work done in Australia by

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<sup>51</sup> The following are the references to the special issues on animal studies published by the journals abovementioned: *Mosaic* 39.4 (Dec 2006), *Mosaic* 40.1 (Mar 2007), *PMLA* 124.2 (March 2009), *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism* 12.1 (2010), and *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 27.3 (Summer 2012).

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.h-net.org/~nilas/>

<sup>53</sup> <http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/humananimalstudies/>

<sup>54</sup> [www.h-net.org/~animal/](http://www.h-net.org/~animal/)

professor Rod Bennison of the University of Newcastle, Australia. He was the organizer of the Inaugural Minding Animals Conference celebrated in Newcastle in 2009. This was the first international conference dedicated to animal studies and led to the creation in early 2010 of Minding Animals International (MAI). This is an international organization that, according to its website, aims at “[acting] as a bridge between academia and advocacy and is a network of academics, artists, activists and advocates dedicated to the study and protection of all planetary life through the advancement of Animal Studies” (“MAI Objectives and Principles”). MAI has organized already two international conferences—Newcastle 2009 and Utrecht 2012—and will celebrate a third one in India in 2015. It is remarkable how MAI has managed to stir attention in the field of animal studies by creating study circles<sup>55</sup> and pre and post conference events which consist in seminars and lectures held in various international locations where related questions are explored.<sup>56</sup> In Spain, the interest in animal studies has spread across disciplines such as philosophy, history, literary studies, and art. Philosophers such as Jesús Mosterín, Jorge Riechmann, Marta Tafalla, and Asunción Herrera have produced numerous books and articles<sup>57</sup> where they explain the bases upon which the animal movement resides. In the fields of history and literary studies, conferences such as the IX Multidisciplinary Conference “Los animales en la historia y en la cultura”

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<sup>55</sup> At present there are twenty-three study circles. Their topics are: education; marine mammals; animals and sentience; animals and children; animals and climate change; meat and animals; commercialization of animals; animals and extinction; feminism and animals; animals and queer communities; violence and animals; animals and prisoners; activism and animals; animals in art and aesthetics; animals in captivity, entertainment and sport; minding animals in science; animals, politics and the law; minding animals and philosophy; animals and religion; equine studies; animals, language, and place studies; great apes; and animals and compassionate conservation.

<sup>56</sup> Right after the Utrecht conference held in July 2012 there were five events. Three of them were celebrated in September of 2012 in Manchester (United Kingdom), Lisbon (Portugal), and Oslo (Norway) respectively. One was celebrated in Brno (Czech Republic) in the month of October of 2012. Finally, the last one was held in Vienna (Austria) in March of 2013 on the topic of animal ethics and law.

<sup>57</sup> Some of the publications worth mentioning are Jesús Mosterín’s *Los derechos de los animales* (1995), *¡Vivan los animales!* (1998), *A favor de los toros* (2010), and *El reino de los animales* (2013); Jorge Riechmann’s *Todos los animales somos hermanos. Ensayos sobre el lugar de los animales en las sociedades industrializadas* (2003); Marta Tafalla’s *Los derechos de los animales* (2004); and Asunción Herrera Guevara’s *De animales y hombres* (2007).

(Cádiz, 10-21 October 2010) and the International Conference “Four-Footed Actors: Live Animals on the Stage” (Valencia, 12-14 December 2012) attest for the growing vibrancy of animal studies among Spanish academics.<sup>58</sup> In the realm of art, artist and researcher Verónica Perales Blanco of the University of Murcia has also produced a series of articles where she combines her interest in artistic expression, ecofeminism and nonhuman primates. Two good examples of her production are the article “Arte, ecofeminismo y grandes simios / Art, Ecofeminism and Great Apes” (2010) and the exhibition catalogue “Grandes simios en femenino / Grands Singes en Féminin” (2011).

Going back to the development of animal studies, the 2010s, in general, due to the nature of some of the works published—mostly readers or introductions—can be interpreted as a time for taking stock of where animal studies are after three decades of history in the United States. It has also been accompanied by a renewed interest in the field by publishers which has led to an increased visibility of the field. In 2010 Margo DeMello, Human-Animal Studies Program Director at ASI, published *Teaching the Animal. Human-Animal Studies across the Disciplines*. This is a unique book in its kind that offers guidance on how to teach and study animal studies from a diversity of disciplines such as anthropology, cultural studies, film studies, gender studies, geography, history, literature, psychology, philosophy, religion, and sociology. It also contains a selection of syllabi, helpful resources and ideas on how to market animal studies in institutions of higher education. As it has already been mentioned, DeMello is also the author of the first introduction to the field, *Animals and Society. An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies* (2012), which is focused on the role of animals in American culture. This volume, because of its comprehensive approach, can be considered as an essential textbook in any course on animal studies. Equally interesting

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<sup>58</sup> In September of 2014 the Red Española de Filosofía also hosted a symposium organized by Marta Tafalla and Asunción Herrera on the subject of animals, aesthetics, ethics and politics.

is Paul Waldau's 2013 introductory work to the field. In *Animal Studies: An Introduction*, this professor with a long career working at the intersection of animal studies, ethics, religion, law and cultural studies<sup>59</sup> aims at giving an overview of the field by reviewing how history, culture, education, science, politics, creative arts, philosophy, law, anthropology, archaeology, and geography have dealt with animals so far. Lastly, in a more philosophical vein Kari Weil in *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?* (2012) offers a critical introduction to the field where she explains the reasons for what she calls the "animal turn" (7).

Ultimately the increased attention of publishers to the field of animal studies has crystallized into the burgeoning of book series in some major publishing houses. University of Minnesota Press has the Posthumanities series<sup>60</sup> edited by Cary Wolfe. Palgrave Macmillan has also an Animal Ethics series<sup>61</sup> edited by Andrew Linzey and Priscilla Cohn. Penn State University Press has *Animalibus: Of Animals and Cultures Series*<sup>62</sup> edited by Nigel Rothfels and Garry Marvin. Rodopi Press has the *Critical Animal Studies series*<sup>63</sup> edited by Helena Pedersen and Vasile Stanescu. Brill has the *Human-Animal Studies*<sup>64</sup> series edited by Kenneth Shapiro. Reaktion Books has been publishing for years a series of books on individual species. Also remarkable are many of the books on animal studies published by AK Press, Columbia University Press, Lantern Books, University of Chicago Press, Continuum Books, Fordham University Press, and Oxford University Press.

All these data attest for how the interest in the animal has filtered into the humanities. Animals are no longer exclusively a province of science, as James Gorman

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<sup>59</sup> For more details on the interdisciplinarity of Waldau's work see [www.paulwaldau.com](http://www.paulwaldau.com).

<sup>60</sup> [www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/series/posthumanities](http://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/series/posthumanities)

<sup>61</sup> [www.palgrave.com/philosophy/animal\\_ethics.asp](http://www.palgrave.com/philosophy/animal_ethics.asp)

<sup>62</sup> [www.psupress.org/books/series/book\\_SeriesAnimalibus.html](http://www.psupress.org/books/series/book_SeriesAnimalibus.html)

<sup>63</sup> [www.rodopi.nl/senj.asp?SerieId=CAS](http://www.rodopi.nl/senj.asp?SerieId=CAS)

<sup>64</sup> [www.brill.com/publications/human-animal-studies](http://www.brill.com/publications/human-animal-studies)

claims in an article he penned for *The New York Times* on January 2, 2012. As he metaphorically describes, “[a]nimal studies [has crossed] campus to lecture hall” (n. pag.). He justifies this expression by explaining how courses with titles such as “Human, Animals and Cyborgs” or “Animals and Women in Western Literature: Nags, Bitches and Shrews” can be found today in the curriculum of universities such as Harvard, Dartmouth or New York. This proves how animal studies has established itself as perhaps a still undefined field due to its interdisciplinarity, but one emerging with a lot of potential in many areas that were before tinted with anthropocentrism.

One of these areas is literary studies where the animal has become a legitimate object of research leading to the creation of what is generally known as Literary Animal Studies (LAS). The following section offers an overview of this field since the 1980s as well as an introduction to the development of the literary representation of animals in the Anglo-American tradition since the eighteenth century. The evolution of this type of literature serves to support the second objective of this study, that the literary animal has experimented a progression in literature from symbol, and often anthropomorphized creature, to agentic subject.



## **CHAPTER TWO. ANIMALS IN LITERATURE**

Each discipline is determined by its subject matter, and so it happens with Literary Animal Studies (LAS). LAS is the result of the intersection between animal studies and literary studies. Surely animals have traditionally occupied a prominent role in literature. In fact, it could even be argued that the text is as natural a habitat for the animal as are prairies, forests, and jungles. However, only recently has the text become a space where the animal is as valid an interlocutor as the human. This shift, known as the “animal turn” (DeKoven 367-8; Weil “A Report” 10), is part of the ripple effect derived from consideration of oppressed groups like women and peoples of color. The cultural and social changes of the late 1960s launched a disciplinary transformation that made literary studies open up to new perspectives. This meant that minority groups that had been obliterated for a long time became the focus of attention of scholars who tried to see the world through their eyes. Obviously, the most helpful way of tracing what their life experience was really like came from writers who belonged to these oppressed sectors. But what happened with the animals? They faced a paradox of great ironic proportions. They already inhabited literature in great numbers, but had no voice of their own and would never have it. They were only heard through the voices lent to them by literary authors and this involved the risk of losing veracity. However, today critics look at animal representations in literature and ask themselves questions about the role animals play in a certain narrative, or what they tell us about who we are as humans. Critics even try to see the world through the animal’s eyes.

For this reason, the aim of the following pages is, first, to give a definition of LAS and its methodology as well as the way in which different critical movements have also incorporated the animal as their object of study; second, to explain the evolution of the representation of animals in literature in English in Great Britain and North America

mainly; third, to present an overview of animal literature as well as a typology of the literary animal in this tradition. All these considerations serve to travel the distance from the *real animal* that, as explained in the first part, is the object of ethicists, activists, and lawyers to the *imagined animal*, that is the object of this dissertation in the shape of nonhuman primates.

## 2.1. LITERARY ANIMAL STUDIES (LAS)

*Animals locate a paradox of disciplinary concern, one that threatens to render literary studies irrelevant to the species discourses permeating other areas of thought and rapidly evolving through forms like genes, genomes, and proteins.*

(McHugh “Literary” 487)

Literary Animal Studies (LAS) inaugurates a form of literary analysis where animals and reflections on the kinds of relationships humans keep with them are pivotal. LAS aims at studying the animal in its multiple literary manifestations. This implies that the critic may concentrate on: 1) evaluating the extent to which the literary animal responds to the literality of the real animal or not; 2) considering the degree to which the author’s work vindicates the animal; and 3) analyzing the kind of human-animal relationships described in literary texts (Shapiro and Copeland “Toward a Critical” 345). This last approach is probably the one that can better reflect humans’ contradictory understanding of animals whom they see as both similar and different to them. Such notions of identification and difference are actually responsible for the kind of animals that can be found in literature. Moreover, as Michael Lundblad proposes, every type of literature where either sex, race or class<sup>65</sup> features as a determinant of the relationships kept among its characters can be analyzed through the lens of animality for the category *animal* is at the core of the debate on human identity (“From Animal” 498). This is actually the basis of recent works such as Anat Pick’s *Creaturely Poetics*:

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<sup>65</sup> As my analysis in this dissertation of Peter Goldsworthy’s *Wish* proves, disability can also be added to this triad.

## *Chapter Two. Animals in Literature*

*Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film* (2011), Christopher Peterson's *Bestial Traces: Race, Sexuality, Animality* (2012), and Lundblad's *The Birth of a Jungle: Animality in Progressive-Era U.S. Literature and Culture* (2013). The critic, therefore, may consider the role the animal presence or absence plays in literature to find the themes that define the human against the animal, and vice versa, as categories that need of each other and that determine our treatment of animals and other people traditionally identified as such.

As a scholarly field, the element that gives cohesion to LAS is its focus on the study of the literary representations of animals and of animality, not its methodology. The approach to this study is actually done in multifarious ways since interdisciplinarity is a key characteristic of this field. That is why, since the 1980s, it has been possible to see manifestations of different critical schools affecting the development of LAS. Some of the most relevant ones have been feminism, especially in the form of ecofeminism, postcolonialism, and posthumanism.

Feminism was the first critical movement to build an articulate discourse around the idea of how the oppression of animals is connected to that of other groups such as women, people of color, the poor, and so forth. This was first done by Carol J. Adams who in her book *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990) speaks of how live animals are “the absent referents in the concept of meat” (51), and of women as interchangeable with animals in the male discourse of consumption. Many of her ideas translated into a surge of works aimed at disentangling the woman-animal connection. This interest in the nonhuman has crystallized in what is described as the “material turn” in feminist theory (Alaimo and Hekman Loc. 180). This has meant a new appraisal of the relationship between women and nature where matter becomes an agentic force that interacts with the human and the nonhuman blurring the boundaries between the two.

Within the field of postcolonialism Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin have been without any shade of doubt the most vocal proponents of the need to pay attention to the study of the animal in order to understand the logic of otherization working at the root of the oppression that many human groups, as well as the environment, suffer. In 2001 Tiffin published an article titled “Unjust Relations: Post-Colonialism and the Species Boundary” where she speaks of the species boundary as contingent, changing according to the socio-historical context of each society (33). Tiffin, together with Bill Ashcroft and professor Huggan, also hinted, although briefly, at this issue in the 2002 edition of *The Empire Writes Back*, in a section entitled “Postcolonialism, Animals and the Environment” (213-16) where they explain how the “[i]nterrogation and exploration of the relationships between powerful human groups and what they have traditionally designated as ‘animal’ is increasingly important in post-colonial studies” (214). Later on, in an effort to show how postcolonialism is inextricably linked to issues of biocentrism, Huggan wrote “Greening Postcolonialism: Ecocritical Perspectives” (2004) where he very significantly chose to comment on two works where animals feature prominently. The first one is Barbara Gowdy’s novel *The White Bone* (1998) where the author describes life through the eyes of elephants. The second is the widely acclaimed novel by J. M. Coetzee *The Lives of Animals* (2001) where, through the voice of his alter ego Elizabeth Costello, Coetzee critically comments on human hypocrisy and ambiguity with regard to animals. Huggan’s and Tiffin’s critical production then merged in the editorial of a special issue of the journal *Interventions* entirely devoted to the topic of “Green Postcolonialism” (2007). In this piece they explain how the concepts of the human and of humanity depend on those of the animal and of animality (6). Likewise they also comment on how the conceptualization of the non-European as savage, primitive, and uncivilized derives from the connection between

anthropocentrism and Eurocentrism. But possibly their most groundbreaking work on this topic so far has been their book *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (2010). Here they distinguish the practice of literary animal studies as a sub-branch of ecocriticism concerned not exclusively “with animal *representation* but also with animal *rights*” (18; emphasis in original). They term this as zoocriticism or the literary study of the animal from a position of advocacy which contrasts with what recently has been defined as animality studies or what is the same, the study of the literary animal without any consideration for the interests of the animal in itself (Lundblad “From Animal” 497).

A third school that has paid attention to the animal in literature is posthumanism. In his book *What Is Posthumanism?* (2010) Cary Wolfe, the founding editor of the series *Posthumanities* at the University of Minnesota Press, explains that although the term “posthumanism” started being used in contemporary critical discourse in the humanities and social sciences during the mid-1990s, its roots can be traced back to at least two “genealogies” (*What Is Posthumanism?* xii). The first of these goes back to the 1960s and, as Wolfe contends, to statements such as that of Foucault in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966) where he affirms that “man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end” (qtd. in Wolfe *What Is Posthumanism?* xii). The second posthuman genealogy can be traced to the Macy conferences on cybernetics spanning from 1946 to 1953 and the invention of systems theory involving Gregory Bateson, Warren McCulloch, Norbert Wiener, and John von Neumann. According to Wolfe, these and other figures “converged on a new theoretical model for biological, mechanical, and communicational processes that removed the human and *Homo sapiens* from any particularly privileged position in

relation to matters of meaning, information, and cognition” (*What Is Posthumanism?* xiii).

Wolfe’s first use of the term, as he explains, occurred in an essay from 1995 called “In Search of Post-humanist Theory: The Second-Order Cybernetics of Maturana and Varela” (*What Is Posthumanism?* xii). Other authors started using the term later on as he also comments when speaking of how Katherine Hayles used it, although differently, in 1999 in her book *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (*What Is Posthumanism?* xiii). Meanwhile, the British branch of posthumanism was developed by Neil Badmington and Elaine Graham. Badmington edited a collection of essays under the title *Posthumanism* in 2000 which were later joined by Graham’s *Representations of the Post/Human: Monsters, Aliens, and Others in Popular Culture* (2002) and Badmington’s *Alien Chic: Posthumanism and the Other Within* (2004) (*What Is Posthumanism?* xiii). Both are indebted to Donna Haraway’s “A Cyborg Manifesto” published in her book *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991). This work has given way to “the ‘cyborg’ strand of posthumanism known as ‘transhumanism’” which deals, according to Joel Garreau, with “the enhancement of human intellectual, physical, and emotional capabilities, the elimination of disease and unnecessary suffering, and the dramatic extension of life span” (qtd. in Wolfe *What Is Posthumanism?* xiii).

In trying to pin down his own definition of posthumanism Wolfe conceptualizes “the human” as derived from the Enlightenment and thus “achieved by escaping or repressing not just its animal origins in nature, the biological, and the evolutionary, but, more generally, by transcending the bonds of materiality and embodiment altogether” (*What Is Posthumanism?* xv). Thus his posthumanism “opposes the fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy, inherited from humanism itself” (*What Is*

*Chapter Two. Animals in Literature*

*Posthumanism?* xv). Humanism is related with a negation of the body occurring as the consequence of the Enlightenment, Wolfe's posthumanism "comes both before and after humanism" (*What Is Posthumanism?* xv). Reason, that defining feature of the human, is relocated as a byproduct of the body, of matter. Hence the human is but another animal since the distinction human/animal is blurred on the basis of the corporeal, the material essence of the body, we share as animals. Posthumanism allows us to speak of the human animal and put her in relationship with the nonhuman animal because they both share a similar space of materiality. The processes taking place in our bodies inform our epistemologies, our knowledge and understanding of things, and so happens with the nonhuman animals. As Wolfe further explains, posthumanism:

enables us to describe the human and its characteristic modes of communication, interaction, meaning, social significations, affective investments with *greater* specificity once we have removed meaning from the ontological closed domain of consciousness, reason, reflection, and so on. It forces us to rethink our taken-for-granted modes of human experience, including the normal perceptual modes and affective states of *Homo sapiens* itself, by recontextualizing them in terms of the entire sensorium of other living beings and their own autopoietic ways of "bringing forth a world"—ways that are, since we ourselves are human *animals*, part of the evolutionary history and behavioral and psychological repertoire of the human itself. (*What Is Posthumanism?* xxv; emphasis in original)

Finally, Wolfe refers to animal studies as posthumanist by definition since "it fundamentally unsettles and reconfigures the question of the knowing subject and the disciplinary paradigms and procedures that take for granted its form and reproduce it" (*What Is Posthumanism?* xxix).

These three schools or critical movements—feminism, postcolonialism, and posthumanism—are ultimately aimed at deconstructing the boundaries that build Western thought as a series of binary oppositions that separate and make difficult, and even impossible, a biocentric or holistic system of relations. All of them revolve around the redefinition of an *other*—woman, colonial subject, posthuman—whose identification with the animal is found to be a practice of otherization that, once dissolved, liberates both inscribing them into a new system of references. As it will be

shown later on, such parallelisms among the three make possible their intersection. Thus, law professor Maneesha Deckha in an article published in 2012 in the journal of feminist philosophy *Hypatia* comes up with a desire to work towards what she calls “a postcolonial, posthumanist feminist theory” where the axis of race, human-animal relations (culture), and gender are taken into consideration (“Toward” 527).

## 2.2. ANIMALS IN THE LITERATURE OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN TRADITION

In the English tradition until the eighteenth century animals traditionally operated as stand-ins for humans in fables and children’s tales where they often served a didactic purpose. They also functioned as symbols of wild or tamed nature which generally run parallel to ideas of civilization. Later, thanks to the development of the culture of sensibility initiated during the Enlightenment, animals became eligible recipients of rights or, at least, of a humane treatment. Driven by such new ideas women writers mainly, who identified themselves with the fate of slaves and animals, started writing what is known today as animal autobiographies.<sup>66</sup> In such works animals narrated their own personal stories often marked by the suffering of human cruelty. The first one to be known as such was Dorothy Kilner’s *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* (1784), but Anna Sewell’s highly successful novel *Black Beauty* (1877), which became the *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* of the animal movement, is probably the best example of this genre.

Animal autobiographies initiated a kind of literature that openly questioned the harsh conditions to which animals were submitted in Victorian society. Literature became thus an instrument of animal advocacy where anthropomorphisation was defensible on the grounds of a higher moral cause. Likewise on the other side of the Atlantic, beginning in Canada although developing later in the United States, a new

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<sup>66</sup> Especially helpful on the subject of animal autobiographies is *Speaking for Animals: Animal Autobiographical Writing* edited by Margo DeMello in 2013.

form of animal story known as the realistic wild animal story arose in the late nineteenth century.

The wild animal story combined elements of nature writing and animal fiction. This meant that it mixed detached scientific descriptions of animal behavior and the author's response to its observation with elements typical of fictional animal stories like those of Rudyard Kipling in *The Jungle Books* (1894). What was new about this new form was that while in the fictional animal stories the animals were often "humans in furry or feathery clothes," in the realistic wild animal story, the animals "[lived] for their own ends," rather than for the human ends (Lutts *Wild Animal* 1). The stories in general emphasized the perspective of a wild animal. The writers of these stories—Canadian Ernest Thompson Seton (*Wild Animals I Have Known*, 1898) and Charles G. D. Roberts (*Red Fox*, 1905) as well as the Americans William J. Long (*School of the Woods*, 1902) and James Oliver Curwood (*The Grizzly King*, 1918)—were interested in describing not only the personality, the individuality, and the mentality of a specific wild animal they treated as an individual, but also his physical characteristics. They argued that their tales of animal bravery and ingenuity responded to accurate natural history. But a conflict emerged between the literality of their animal characters and their literariness. This conflict was known as the Nature Fakers controversy and had the famous American nature writer John Burroughs at its center.

In 1903 Burroughs published an essay in the *Atlantic Monthly* with the title "Real and Sham Natural History" where he called the former group of writers "sham naturalists" because he considered their stories very far from true natural history, and too prone to excessive sentimentalizing and anthropomorphizing (Lutts *Nature Fakers* 37-42).<sup>67</sup> Only Long defended himself against the attacks of the dean of American

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<sup>67</sup> In his anthology of realistic wild animal stories, *The Wild Animal Story* (1998), Lutts also highlights the role played by a series of well-known stories, especially dog stories, like John Muir's "Stickeen" (1897)

nature writing, but he could not do much when four years later president Theodore Roosevelt publicly supported Burroughs and condemned him. After this the wild animal story died out, although between the 1940s and the 1950s a transformation and rebirth of the genre occurred thanks to two women writers: Rachel Carson (*Under the Sea Wind*, 1941; *The Sea Around Us*, 1951; *The Edge of the Sea*, 1955) and Sally Carrighar (*One Day on Beetle Rock*, 1944). The biggest difference with their forerunners was that their stories were more the result of an ecological worldview rather than the humanitarian and romanticized perspectives found before (Lutts *Wild Animal* 10). Both writers tried to make their readers experience animal lives through the animals' own senses and they also tried to use language very carefully so as not to humanize their animal characters. Their representation of animals was more behavioristic since they tried not to present animals as personalities.

A decade later, Canadian writers introduced yet another innovation of the wild animal story. Fred Bodsworth (*Last of the Curlews*, 1954), Farley Mowat (*Never Cry Wolf*, 1963), William O. Pruitt, Jr. (*Animals of the North*, 1967) and Sally Carrighar (*The Twilight Seas: A Blue Whale's Journey*, 1975) took the themes of survival and victimization, typically present in their writing, and carried them to an extreme so that, in their stories, individual animals became representatives of their vanishing species. Eventually, the later part of the twentieth century, according to Lutts, has witnessed the development of a new kind of animal story (Lutts *Wild Animal* 14). In these stories humans live for the animals' end, they are heroes who fight to save the life and freedom of a wild animal, very frequently of an endangered species (Lutts *Wild Animal* 14). One of the best examples of this approach on a written form is Mowat's *A Whale for the Killing* (1972).

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as well as Jack London's *Call of the Wild* (1904) and *White Fang* (1906) which "bridged the genres of the realistic wild animal and realistic domestic animal stories" (6). London's stories were actually attacked by Burroughs as representative of a way of writing that distorted the realities of the natural world.

## *Chapter Two. Animals in Literature*

It can be argued that from the 1980s onwards, the literature of animals has experienced yet another shift. There is a flourishing genre of animal fiction, which is the object of this dissertation, aimed at making the reader aware of a continuum among species and of the need to care for nonhuman animals if humans want to survive the ecological crisis. This turn has occurred in parallel to the development of animal studies, coinciding therefore with the *zeitgeist* of the late part of the twentieth century where questions about the environment and the human/animal divide have become pressing issues of debate coming together with major questions of other dualisms, such as the ones posed by ecofeminism.

Furthermore, an interesting characteristic of animal literature is that, throughout its evolution, it has produced a series of literary animal types that can be organized so as to form a typology. Thus a classical type is that of the talking animal. This kind of animal lives mainly in fables and children's tales where the animal works as a stand-in for humans and often serves a didactic or satiric function. Then there is the kind of animal featured in the wild animal stories who coincides to a degree with the realities of her species and whose perspective is imagined by the literary author who acts as a kind of interpreter or mediator of the animal. The animal is also often described as the victim of the human and vindicated in advocacy literature of the type described above when speaking about animal autobiographies. In this kind of literature animals are often passive recipients of human compassion, too. Another case is that of the animal in some of the fiction produced from the 1980s onwards that will be analyzed in this dissertation. All the novels analyzed have at the center of the narration the story of a single animal, an individual, and the impact he or she has in the life of a human who is in one way or another changed by the intimate knowledge of the animal. These stories are told by a human or by an omniscient narrator so as to avoid the danger of

anthropomorphism; and although some elements, especially those having to do with human-animal communication, are somehow far-fetched, the animal ultimately passes as being a member of his or her species. The animal protagonists of these novels are agentic subjects. This characteristic is mainly represented by the fact that all them decide when and how to die, or else turn their death into a statement of liberation for their kind.

Finally, the truth is that the human-animal relationship is not exclusively based on the theriophilic impulse or the love of the animal. It does have its counterpart: the hate of the animal or theriophobia. Thus, although much of the literature described above shows the animal as benefic creature, laudable cause, or victim, there are also instances where the nonhuman animal is described as monstrous *other*. This contradictory vision of the animal reveals the ontological tensions between the elements of the binary pairs upon which the master mentality, typical of the Western world, is based. This mentality, which will be commented further on in this dissertation, is at the root of relations of inequality on account of categories such as sex, race, ability, and species. This is why by studying the animal, we can come to grips with the space where the difference between human and animal, man and woman, black and white, and so forth, dissolves. As will be referred in the following section, nonhuman primates, great apes to be more precise, constitute a convenient site for the exploration of these boundary crossings which are at the very basis of animal studies.

### CHAPTER THREE. FILLING THE SPACE IN BETWEEN: PRIMATE LITERATURE

*Kweli nudugu yahgu!*  
(Surely, God, these are my kin)  
(Words pronounced by Manuel—Dian Fossey’s guide—  
on encountering their first gorilla in the wild)  
(qtd. in Corbey 152)

A look at some of the main titles published in the field of LAS since the 1980s shows some of its possible approaches. Having animals at the center, these studies tend to be species, nationality, or genre specific or else they may concentrate on particular themes affecting the lives of animals such as captivity, extinction, scientific experimentation, hunting, or any other form of victimization.<sup>68</sup>

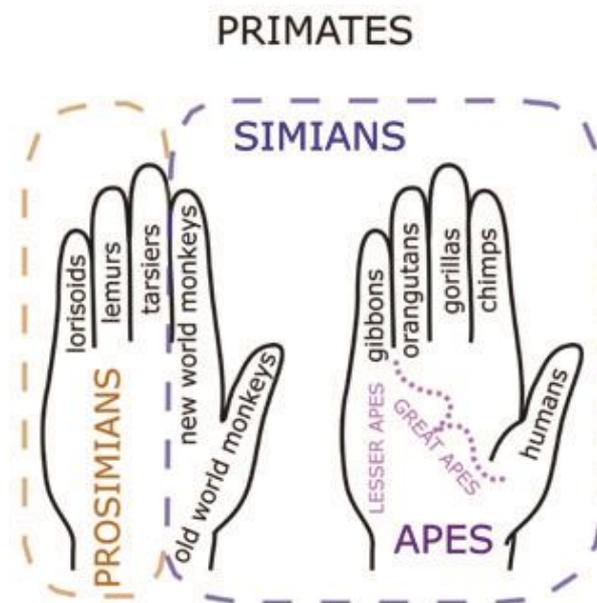
The analysis of works that is at the center of this dissertation is framed by a choice of species, genre, theme, and methodology. The corpus of works chosen consists in a total of four novels written between the late 1980s and the early 2000s. Thematically speaking they all focus on human-animal relationships, the nonhuman animal being a member of the same taxonomic family to which humans belong, that of primates and, more specifically, that of great apes. Therefore, these novels can be said to belong to the genre of primate literature, although other denominations depending on the level of scientific classification used can also be possible: from primate literature to simian or ape literature.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> To gain a deeper insight on the development of critical studies of animals in literature, a look at the bibliography compiled at the site of the Animal Studies Program at Michigan State University might be useful: [www.animalstudies.msu.edu/bibliography.php#Literature](http://www.animalstudies.msu.edu/bibliography.php#Literature). Marion W. Copeland in “Literary Animal Studies in 2012: Where We Are, Where We Are Going” (2012) as well as Margo DeMello in *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies* (2012) also offer references to some of the most remarkable LAS works of the past three decades.

<sup>69</sup> A bibliography of ape literature compiled by Marion W. Copeland can be accessed at [www2.h-net.msu.edu/~nilas/bibs/ape.html](http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~nilas/bibs/ape.html). It includes a range of primary sources from *Aesop Fables* to Alan Dean Foster’s science fiction novel *Parallelites* (1998).

From a taxonomical point of view, apes belong to the order Primate which has traditionally been divided into two different main groups, prosimians and simians. Prosimians are small primates like aye-ayes, angwantibos, galagos, lemurs and lorises. They show characteristics that are more primitive from a phylogenetic or evolutionary point of view. Simians are divided in three main groups: monkeys, lesser apes, and greater apes. Apes are distinct from other primates in that they evolved to be tailless. They are divided between lesser apes, represented by gibbons, and great apes, a group to which chimpanzees, orangutans, gorillas, bonobos,<sup>70</sup> and humans belong (see Fig. 2). Primate literature is thus referred to literature dealing with apes, but in this dissertation is more specifically referred to the relationships that are established between the human and nonhuman apes, thus the more restricted term ape literature is also appropriate.



**Fig. 2: Primate Hand Mnemonic**

<sup>70</sup> The bonobo or *Pan paniscus* is one of the two species making up the genus *Pan*, the other is the common chimpanzee or *Pan troglodytes*.

Since the similarity between apes and humans has been the source of an often conflicted relationship between the two, in the following pages attention will be paid to such topic. First, cultural representations of apes in the Western world will be contrasted with those produced in the East. This will be done in order to highlight how animals are often turned into cultural symbols upon which each civilization projects its understanding of the world. Second, an overview of how the human-ape relationship has been culturally represented both through time and in literary texts, giving way to what I call ape motifs, will be presented. Finally, and in accordance with the third objective of this dissertation, primate literature will be commented upon as a genre that since the 1980s has become an expression of the erasure of boundaries between the human and the animal. Such blurring of boundaries acquires the form of dialogues, *dialogues of the mind* and *dialogues of the body*, two metaphors around which the future analysis of literary works under the lens of ecofeminism will be organized.

Throughout these sections the eighteenth century will be signaled as the turning point when imaginary visions of apes were substituted by scientific descriptions; this, however, did not impede imaginary visions of apes being nourished by new accounts of the human-ape relationship. In line with this, in his book *The Metaphysics of Apes: Negotiating the Animal-Human Boundary* (2005) philosopher and anthropologist Raymond Corbey distinguishes three main “master narratives” affecting the relationship between human and nonhuman primates since the eighteenth century (88). The first one situates humans as a privileged category by God’s design. Such vision was typical of the eighteenth century and informed Linnaeus’ classification of species in his tenth edition of *Systema naturae* first published in 1735.<sup>71</sup> Due, among other things, to their similarities with humans, nonhuman apes were seen as closer to a primitive state of

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<sup>71</sup> In his tenth edition of *Systema naturae* (1758), Linnaeus classified humans and orangutans in the same order, *Primates*, and in the same genus, *Homo*. He based this conclusion on their anatomical similarities.

harmony with nature, the inhabitants of a prelapsarian time. The second one, which presided the entire nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century, defends the progression of humans from a state of bestiality to one of civilization and reason. This narrative describes nonhuman apes as monsters, otherized beings from which separation was necessary, and compares them with the indigenous people of colonized lands. Lastly, the third narrative explains human evolution “in terms of strictly contingent blind variation and selective retention” (Corbey 88). This means that the destiny of humans is determined by their genes.<sup>72</sup> As will be argued in the following sections, this vision ruled a great part of the twentieth century until attention was paid to the relationships between humans and nonhumans in the framework of the new primatology developed in the 1970s. This led to a return to a more eighteenth-century vision of apes which gave way in the twenty-first century to attempts at including all nonhuman primates in the community of moral beings.<sup>73</sup>

The truth is that a look at some recent literary fiction renders the nonhuman apes featuring in literary texts not as a species, but as individuals with a story worth telling. They tend to be more human than humans themselves, displaying a behavior that causes admiration. This generally makes the human characters acknowledge their own animality and pushes them to make peace with it through the example of the animal. Likewise, their stories are frequently told against a background of environmental crisis where species depletion looms over human survival on Earth. Hence, it is often the case in these stories that the survival of nonhuman apes is in the interest of humankind.

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<sup>72</sup> Richard Dawkins’s *The Selfish Gene* (1976) is a good representative of this view where genes, not the environment, determine evolution.

<sup>73</sup> See Paola Cavalieri and Peter Singer’s *The Great Ape Project: Equality beyond Humanity* (1993) on this idea that has been further expanded to encompass all living creatures by Marc Bekoff in “Deep Ethology, Animal Rights, and the Great Ape/Animal Project: Resisting Speciesism and Expanding the Community of Equals” (1998) and *The Animal Manifesto* (2010).

As will be explained later on, such dismantling of the species boundary requires the literary critic to be open to forms of analysis that question traditional dualisms such as human/animal, man/woman, culture/nature, etc. One of such forms is ecofeminist literary criticism, which in conjunction with literary animal studies informed at times by other positions such as postcolonialism, posthumanism, and new materialisms, offers an opportunity to appreciate the ways in which literature generates new possibilities of relationships, and make readers reflect on their own experiences with animality.

### 3.1. REAL APES, IMAGINARY STORIES

A history of ape representation in Western culture shows humans' troublesome relation with these animals who are extraordinarily similar to them. The fact that they are wild animals whose natural habitat is located in Africa (gorilla, chimpanzee, and bonobo) and Asia (orangutan) did not provide a first hand knowledge of them until Western nations expanded their dominions into these regions. In fact, it was not until the seventeenth century that some of the first great apes were known in Europe. As John Sorenson explains, classical and medieval societies were not familiar with these creatures and probably their reference to "apes" really meant Barbary macaques, a species common in Gibraltar and northern Africa (43). Nevertheless, this author supposes that early Greek and Roman travellers may have encountered chimpanzees and gorillas in their travels. The term "Gorillae" first appeared in a fifth-century report about West Africa by the Carthaginian Hanno the Navigator. With this term he referred to a group of "hairy savages" whom they encountered and defeated, after showing some resistance, bringing home the skinned corpses of three females (Sorenson 43).

This lack of real contact with apes was one factor that relegated them to the role of imaginary human-like beings upon which society projected its fears until eighteenth-century science started bridging the gap between apes and humans. A second element

that contributed to turning apes into hateful human *others* was their identification with images already common since antiquity such as the Wild Man and the monstrous races.<sup>74</sup> The Wild Man archetype was commonly represented as a hairy creature in the Middle Ages and led to the ideal of the Noble Savage in the eighteenth century (White 3). The monstrous races appeared described for the first time in Pliny the Elder's *Historia naturalis* where he gathers rumors about the existence of unknown creatures—cynocephali, cyclopes, blemyae, or sciopods—who are said to populate unexplored areas of the Earth.

However, not all human cultures have traditionally expressed a dislike for apes. Sorenson argues that “[r]eligion, folklore and literature of non-Western cultures depict primates in positive ways” (34). The Egyptians used to represent their god Thoth, who was associated with knowledge and equilibrium, as a baboon-headed human. In the Sanskrit epic the *Ramayana* the monkey-god Hanuman embodies strength and devotion. Some African societies like the Mpiemu in Central African Republic and the Bangando in Cameroon refrained from hunting and eating apes because they saw them as either ancestors or former allies (Sorenson 34). According to Sorenson, Asian cultures are not that rigid in their construction of the species boundaries. For them there is not a divide separating humans from animals (36). In fact, Asian societies considered apes as magical animals, linking humans and nature (Sorenson 35).

Asian literature is rich in renditions of apes under a respectful and positive light. Gibbons, for instance, are often described in Chinese literature as ethereal and aristocratic animals, having to do with the ideals of poets and philosophers.<sup>75</sup> They are admired for their gentle and spiritual nature, and often were attributed supernatural

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<sup>74</sup> A fundamental work on the history of the monstrous races is John B. Friedman's *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (2000).

<sup>75</sup> An in depth analysis of the role played by the gibbon in Chinese culture is given in Robert H. van Gulick's *The Gibbon in China: An Essay in Chinese Animal Lore* (1967).

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qualities. Sorenson cites two Chinese poets, one from the fourth-century, Yüang Sung, and another from the sixth-century, Hsiao T'ung, who are known for using one of the most famous images of Chinese poetry, that of "gibbons calling at the gorges" (38). This can be read as a manifestation of mystery since these apes were often heard but not seen (Sorenson 38). Gibbons' special connection with nature made Chinese artists condemn hunting them. They actually defended showing compassion for these animals. In eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century paintings a less laudatory image is common, that of gibbons trying to reach the moon's reflection in a pool of water. This is a cautionary representation where the gibbon stands for those who are distracted by the reflection of things instead of by their essence (Sorenson 39). Such a rendering is more in line with the didactic purpose of some Western ape representations.

In the West, where the line separating animals from humans is more clearly established, apes' similarity to humans have made them become instruments of satire and mockery as well as the expression of human fear to recognize their own animality. Corbey traces this negative vision of apes to classical times. According to him, in the Platonic dialogue *Hippias Maior*, Heraclitus declares that the most beautiful of apes is hideous in comparison to man and that the wisest of men is an ape beside God (Corbey 8). In line with this opinion the Roman poet Ennius is known for having emitted the following dictum "Simia quam similis turpissa bestia nobis" which in its English translation reads as: "How similar the monkey, this ugliest of beast, is to ourselves" (qtd. in Corbey 8). Such similarity to humans did not, however, in the least exempt apes from the sort of degradation they underwent in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance,<sup>76</sup> identified as they were in the Christian context with the "image of the devil" or *figura diaboli*. The monkey was the image associated with sinners, pagans, and heretics. It was

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<sup>76</sup> Horst W. Janson's study *Apes and Ape Lore: In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (1952) is highly recommended for a thorough analysis of ape representation in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

equally identified with the sinful Eve who was described as “cunning and sensual” (Corbey 9). Finally, by the end of the Middle Ages the simian sinner was turned into the simian fool, a construction that turned apes into an even easier instrument of sarcasm (Corbey 9).

Because of their similarity with humans, apes were identified with the uncomfortable truth of having to recognize humans’ own animality. Probably because of this, according to Corbey, the history of human-ape relationship revolves around three main master narratives aimed at either condemning apes as too low to compare them with humans or else at rehabilitating them in order to make them worthy of such comparison (88). For this reason, the new type of science practiced during the eighteenth century gave great importance to determining the differences between apes and humans. In order to do so descriptions and classifications were written. Nevertheless, the first scientific descriptions of apes were somehow misleading because often the animals analyzed were too young to show all the characteristics of a grown specimen (Corbey 42). Likewise there was certain confusion with regard to the terminology used to refer to the kinds of apes Europeans found in their voyages (Corbey 42-3).

In 1641 Nicolaes Tulp of Amsterdam described in his *Observationes medicae* what he called an orangutan following the terminology used in the seventeenth century. At that time almost every ape was known as “Orang-Outang,” a term exchangeable with the Latin *homo sylvestris* since it literally meant the same, “human from the woods” (Corbey 16). Tulp probably was not analyzing what we know today as an orangutan, but most surely a chimpanzee from Angola, the area where the Dutch traded. The term *homo sylvestris* brought to mind the myth of the Wild Man. About half a century later, in 1698, Edward Tyson dissected an orangutan in London. He referred to it also as

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Pygmie in his *Orang-Outang, sive Homo Sylvestris: or the Anatomy of a Pygmie* (1699) a term used by Pliny the Elder to refer to one of the monstrous races he mentions in his *Historia naturalis*. This tendency to recycle names used in works that belonged to the realm of the imaginary persisted until the twentieth century (Corbey 42). This happens for example in denominations such as that used for gorilla, *Troglodytes gorilla*, or for bonobo, *Pan paniscus*. In the first case, *troglodytes* or “cliff dweller” was one of the Plinian races. In the second, *Pan* refers to the Greek god Pan, the god of the wild.

Before this move toward scientific analysis there was room for a mythical understanding of apes, but once they were dissected their similarities were too many not to wonder where the boundary lay. The leap came with Linnaeus and his classification of humans and orangutans in the same order, *Primates*, and in the same genus, *Homo*. He based this conclusion on their anatomical similarities and made it public in the tenth edition of his *Systema naturae* (1758). He did not attempt with his classification to threaten the Judeo-Christian cosmivision but wanted to explain it as the result of God’s design. In this order of things humans ranked on top of every other creature because Linnaeus described them as endowed with an essence or quality missing in the rest of creation: reason. However, he found resistance from naturalists and anatomists who considered his proposition an attack against the human/animal frontier and tried to separate them again (Corbey 46). George-Louis Leclerc Buffon, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, and Petrus Camper were some of them. These authors concentrated on highlighting the differences instead of the similarities. Thus, for instance, in his essay on the “nomenclature of the apes,” which appears in volume XVI of the *Histoire naturelle* (1799), Buffon drew attention to the fact that the orangutan did not possess speech (Corbey 46). Reason was the quality that made humans different and it was expressed through language. Apes lacked the main sign of humanness. Therefore,

humans and apes could not be considered to belong to the same group of beings. However, this also meant that humans unable to speak should also be negated human status.

With time other authors in the late eighteenth century opined differently contributing, thus, to creating the conditions for the development of the theory of evolution in the following century. In France naturalists Jean-Claude Delam  therie, Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck, and Julien-Joseph Virey were known as the “transmutationists” because they defended the direct descent of humans from apes. In 1755 Rousseau had said in his Note X to his *Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’in  galit   parmi les homes* that “the so strikingly human-like Orang-Outangs reported by travellers might well not be brute animals, but human beings in their natural state, *l’homme sauvage*” (qtd. in Corbey 55). The possible humanness of the orangutan was also defended by James Burnett, alias Lord Monboddo, who compared Buffon’s claim against the humanness of orangutan on the base of his lack of speech with the attribution of humanness to Wild Peter, a wolf boy who at the age of seventy was still unable to articulate but a few words (Corbey 57). In conclusion, the second half of the eighteenth century identified apes with a more harmonious way of life in connection with the cycles of nature. Apes were the ancestors of humans. They lived in a kind of Eden and exhibited the types of virtues humans corrupted by society lacked.

But later on the nineteenth century brought along another change. This time it came in the form of the revolutionary theory devised by Charles Darwin and defended in *On the Origin of Species* (1859). Darwin argued that all species were the result of the evolution of previous organisms constantly adapting themselves to the changing environments and circumstances. In this process of adaptation only the fittest survive and pass on their characteristics to the next generation. Such theory together with the

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discovery of the first Neanderthal remains in 1829 in Belgium followed by similar discoveries in Gibraltar and Germany, in 1848 and 1856 respectively, made possible to start thinking of a common ancestor shared by humans and apes (Corbey 17). In addition, Darwin's theory offered a pretty grim account of human evolution, one where humans were the result of the struggle for survival. As a result humans could not look back at a past of peaceful bliss when their ancestors lived in harmony with creation and with each other. However, a compromise was reached between eighteenth-century ideals of the noble savage and the nineteenth-century beastly creatures that tormented humanity's pride. Humans were finally destined to rise from their state as brutes thanks to civilization. At least this was the ideology served to European society for its self-congratulation. Such formulation made also sense in the context of imperialist expansion and a capitalist society since a gradation determined by either race or class was established among humans. Civilization meant salvation from the chains of brutality. It also meant that the boundary between humans and apes became more impenetrable as a safeguard for human dignity. Raymond Corbey explains these adjustments very expressively:

The uncanny apes stood and still stand betwixt and between human and animal, being not completely the one, nor the other, and in a sense both at once. The same holds for prehistoric "apemen." Such ambiguous beings challenged the possibility of drawing a neat boundary line between "man" and "beast" as two fundamental categories of the moral order and alimentary regime. The apes' puzzling similarity to humans, their mirror qualities—which includes a whole repertoire of emotions, gestures, and other behaviours humans immediately recognize—made them a potential threat, or alternatively, a challenge, to human identity, and even, sometimes, an ideal for it. This resulted in complex reactions of humans to their closest relatives. In the case of a threat, humans often vigorously reaffirmed the ape's brutish animality and low status, thus neutralizing its disquieting familiarity and maintaining the fence between themselves and animals. (25)

In line with this solution and perhaps because of its clear allusion to apes' phylogenetic relation with humans, Carl Akeley's statue *Chrysalis* (1924), which shows a man emerging from a gorilla, caused a stir in the early twentieth century. This artwork, as *The Milwaukee Sentinel* explained on occasion of his death in 1926, was

refused a place in an exhibition of the National Academy of Design and was finally exhibited in the West Side Unitarian church (3) (see Fig. 3).



**Fig. 3: Chrysalis**



**Fig. 4: Gorilla Abducting a Woman**

Art became an expressive reflection of the troubled relationship between humans and apes. The image of apes that transcended into the twentieth century characterized apes as savage creatures. Thus, for example, in 1887 Emmanuel Frémiet's statue of a gorilla snatching an African female was displayed at the Salon de Paris stressing the classic idea of the lustful beast (see Fig. 4). The twentieth-century movie protagonist *King Kong* (1933) resonated years later with this image when the gorilla kidnaps his sweetheart Ann Darrow. But curiously, it was not until the 1960s that a return to a more eighteenth-century vision of apes took place. This shift happened thanks to the work of three female primatologists under the supervision of archaeologist Louis Leakey (Corbey 150). Famously known as Leakey's Angels,<sup>77</sup> Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, and Biruté Galdikas studied chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans respectively. They rehabilitated wild apes turning them into friends and kin. This can be seen in a *National Geographic Magazine*'s picture of Jane Goodall where she reaches out to a young chimpanzee who extends his right arm to meet her touch. Such image brings to mind Michelangelo Buonarroti's *The Creation of Adam* (1509) where God is portrayed outstretching his right arm to give life to Adam.<sup>78</sup> However, in this picture the message conveyed is slightly different. The infant chimpanzee, placed on the right, seems to be the one imparting the spark of life from his own finger which can be interpreted as stressing the fact that apes are humans' ancestors and thus our kin. Whether or not this was the intention on the part of the photographer, the impression this photography gives is that at last two separate worlds meet (see Fig. 5 and 6).

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<sup>77</sup> Biruté Galdikas refers to this group of women as Leakey's Angels in her book *Reflections of Eden* (1995) where she explains how she chose this name because she met Leaky in Los Angeles, California, and she thought this to be an interesting name to refer to her colleagues and herself (35).

<sup>78</sup> Sy Montgomery in *Walking with the Great Apes* (2009) also finds this parallelism in this *National Geographic Magazine* photograph taken by Goodall's husband, photographer Hugo van Lawick (Loc 1767). However, she does not delve further into the symbolism of this image.



**Fig. 5: My Friends the Chimpanzees of Gombe**



**Fig. 6: The Creation of Adam**

This new vision of apes as living in harmony with nature was also reflected in the title of books and articles published in the following decade (Corbey 151-52). Goodall published *In the Shadow of Man* in 1971. In 1975 Marie-Claire King and Allan C. Wilson published an article on the biochemical similarities between humans and chimpanzees with the title “Our Close Cousin the Chimpanzee.” In 1981 Francine Patterson published, in collaboration with Eugene Linden, *The Education of Koko* on her experience of teaching sign to a gorilla. In line with the titles of these books, in 1987 Shirley Strum published *Almost Human* where she tells of her experience with baboons. Some years later, in 1994, Sue Savage-Rumbaugh also published *Kanzi: The Ape at the Brink of the Human Mind*, which she co-wrote with Roger Lewin. In 1995 Birute Galdikas published *Reflections of Eden: My Years with the Orangutans of Borneo*, and two years later Roger Fouts published *Next of Kin: What Chimpanzees Have Taught Me About Who We Are*.

This shift on how primates were perceived ran also parallel to a wider change in the understanding of nonhuman animals in general. The species boundary, the line of separation between humans and animals, was seriously questioned in the twentieth century thanks to scientific developments as well as changes in the way of looking at

animals leading to moral consideration. Cognitive ethology, a field initiated by Donald Griffin and continued today by Mark Bekoff, led the march toward considering animals as endowed with cognitive capacities and not merely moved by the force of instinct. This transition was accompanied by a shift in the moral consideration of animals that fructified in campaigns of the stature of the Great Ape Project as well as Bekoff's appeal to expand the community of equals in his book *The Animal Manifesto: Six Reasons for Expanding Our Compassion Footprint* (2010)

### 3.2. LITERARY APE MOTIFS

Literature in its different expressions has served too as testimony of these changes. In the process a series of recurrent themes or ape motifs have been shaped which sometimes function on their own and sometimes are permeated by one another. The first theme can be described as "encounters with the other." Such encounters happen, for example, in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611) where Caliban, the native of the island where Prospero and Miranda have been stranded for twelve years, is described as a "monster,"<sup>79</sup> a creature of indeterminate nature difficult to define. Caliban has indeed come to epitomize the *other* as slave, noble savage, primitive man, and, tellingly, as missing link between humans and apes in the nineteenth century (Rundle 52). In the 1950s such visions of Caliban were substituted by a widely accepted postcolonial interpretation of the play where Caliban is the "cannibal," the colonized that questions and threatens the colonizer. However, since the 1990s a new turn has led Shakespeare's character to become the metaphor for the situation of liminality where great apes live in our world. To this effect Dale Peterson and Jane Goodall published *Visions of Caliban: On Chimpanzees and People* in 1993. In this book they use the metaphor of Caliban, the slave, the monster, the anthropoid beast, to tackle serious

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<sup>79</sup> According to Dale Peterson in *Visions of Caliban: On Chimpanzee and Humans*, the word "monster" applied to Caliban is repeated around forty times in the play (1-2).

issues that affect the lives of chimpanzees today: being consumed as bushmeat as well as used in sign language experiments and in the entertainment industry are just but a few of them. This identification is so apt that a few years later transpecies psychologist Gay A. Bradshaw referred to the species boundary as “Caliban’s Line” in an article published in *Psychology Today*.

A second common standard of representation of great apes takes the form of the “ape as mirror of humans,” more specifically of its flaws and absurdities as it happens in the eighteenth-century ape-land stories where authors use an ape civilization in some remote area to satirize European society. There is a hint of this satiric ape in Book IV of Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1735) where the protagonist finds two civilizations in stark contrast: the Houynhnms and the Yahoos. While the Houynhnms, in appearance similar to horses, are presented as civilized and capable of exercising virtues that distinguish them as admirable creatures, the Yahoos, who resemble apes, are described in beastly terms. Interestingly, Gulliver struggles to define himself against the humanoid brutes and in the attempt he redefines himself becoming a fool in the eyes of his neighbors. More contemporary examples are the film *Planet of the Apes* (1968) based on Pierre Boulle’s *La planète des singes* (1963) and which has generated a series of films, each adapted to its own times, which deal with the substitution of humans by nonhuman apes as the leading species on Earth.<sup>80</sup> Equally interesting is the novel *Great Apes* (1997) by Will Self where its protagonist Simon Dykes wakes up one day to a world ruled by chimpanzees.

Linked to this satirical technique where animals feature as superior morally to humans is also the ape fable where apes are characterized as having a wiser understanding of what constitutes living in a morally sane way. Such is the case of

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<sup>80</sup> The last of this series of films based on Boulle’s *La planète des singes* was released in 2014 with the title *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*.

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Franz Kafka's *A Report to an Academy* (1917) where Rotpeter or Red Peter in the English version narrates to an academy his process of transformation into a human and the fact that he can no longer reverse to his state as ape. This story serves to reflect on the human/animal boundary and has a talking ape at its center. Much in the same way Daniel Quinn uses a telepathic gorilla as teacher in his book *Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and the Spirit* (1992), a classic of environmental and ethical living, which will be analyzed later on.

A fourth trope, "the feral ape," has to do with the impact Darwin's theory of evolution had on European society in the nineteenth century.<sup>81</sup> Already in 1817 Thomas L. Peacock published *Melincourt or Sir Oran Haut-Ton*, a satire directed against Lord Monboddo's theories concerning the human status of the orangutan. This book announced the critical reception Darwin's revolutionary ideas would have later on. Precisely, in order to establish a wider separation between humans and apes, some nineteenth-century narratives tended to stress traits that defined apes as ferocious and brutish creatures. Such was the case of Edgar Allan Poe's orangutan murderer in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841). However, early twentieth-century narratives were not exempt of a certain ambiguity when it came to dealing with the human-ape boundary. In this sense Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912) can actually be read as an experiment in boundary crossing and homage to the ideals of prelapsarian life. The protagonist, Lord Greystoke, becomes an ape by adoption after the death of his parents in the jungle, and although he ends up returning to civilization, his appreciation of the purity of life amongst apes will make him opt for this kind of life in the end. The association of apes with indigenous peoples, then conceptualized as primitive, became

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<sup>81</sup> Three titles can be highlighted which deal with the impact of Darwin's theory on literature Leo J. Henkin's *Darwinism in the English Novel, 1860-1910: The Impact of Evolution on Victorian Fiction* (1963), Virginia Richter's *Literature After Darwin: Human Beasts in Western Fiction, 1859-1939* (2010) and Nicholas Saul and Simon J. James's *The Evolution of Literature: Legacies of Darwin in European Cultures* (2011).

also part of stories that portrayed maladapted working class protagonists. The American playwright Eugene O'Neill used this image of ape as primitive but noble brute in *The Hairy Ape* (1922) where the male protagonist, Yank, is a worker who finds peace in the connection he establishes with a captive gorilla he visits at the zoo after being rejected by the woman he loves. He frees the animal and commits suicide in what can be read as a play that deals with working class identification with animals. Possibly because of this association, for the 1951 film adaptation of Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Marlon Brando modeled his role as Stanley Kowalski after a gorilla (Robbins 103). The way he eats or lets his arms seem heavy, the scene where he almost roars his wife's name, all these details make the viewer think of a gorilla, a wild beast about to burst in a fit of anger.

A fifth theme is that of "ape as lover." Such motif comes from different traditions. European fairy tales are one, as well as seventeenth-century travel literature. Regarding the former, in his work *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1976) Bruno Bettelheim classifies fairy tales into different cycles. One of the most prominent is that where the groom or bride is an animal. He signals the myth of "Cupid and Psyche," a story dated in the second century AD and attributed to Apuleius, as the first of this kind in the Western tradition. Although the topic of repressed sex is present in both the "animal groom" and the "animal bride" stories, Bettelheim establishes a distinction between the two. The cycles dominated by the figure of the lover as male animal characterize sex as animal-like, instinctual and repulsive. At the same time, those where the animal is female usually opt for animal forms that are delicate—the swan, the raven—against more aggressive types of animals like the bear or the pig which feature in the animal groom stories (Bettelheim Loc 5881). Some of these elements were also fused into a kind of literature that had nothing

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to do with the children's world. Seventeenth-century travel literature became a frequent site for stories that portrayed male apes kidnapping African women to satisfy their desires (Brown 236). Following Horst W. Janson, Laura Brown mentions the story told in Francesco Maria Guazzo's *Compendium Maleficarum* (1608) which Edward Tyson recounts later in *Anatomy of a Pygmy* (1699) (238-39). In this story a woman is abducted and left on a desert island where an ape, the leader of his tribe, keeps her as his wife and has two children with her. The story ends in a tragic way when, after the woman is rescued from the ape and taken away by ship, the ape throws the children and then himself into the sea.

When a female ape is the protagonist the story turns satirical. This is the case of *Gulliver's Travels* where Jonathan Swift reverses the traditional "ape-rape" story (Janson 208) to come full cycle in his satire of humans and travel books. Thus, in Book IV, a female Yahoo assaults Gulliver because she cannot repress her desire at the sight of his naked body. Equally interesting is John Collier's *His Monkey Wife or Married to a Chimpanzee* (1930) where a schoolmaster in Africa, Alfred, befriends a female chimpanzee, Emily, who by constantly listening to him talking learns to speak and also falls madly in love with him. However, he is already engaged and his return to England poses a hard dilemma because circumstances lead him to having to choose between his fiancée, Amy, or his chimpanzee companion. The novel, as David B. D. Asker explains, serves to criticize the modern woman who is not capable of loving Alfred as unconditionally as the chimpanzee does (177). In the end the chimpanzee Emily rescues her beloved from a life of hypocrisy and returns with him to Africa where they finally consummate their love.

This theme of "ape as lover" has been reworked after the 1960s into stories more in accordance with animal rights concerns and with the blurring of the human/animal

boundary. In general these new versions of the theme follow a traditional tale of the animal groom cycle, that of the Beauty and the Beast. The essence of this story, in the eighteenth-century version gathered by Madame Leprince de Beaumont, is the transformative power of love (Bettelheim Loc 6271). A series of terrible circumstances, the threat of her father's death among them, make Beauty live with Beast. This character is not given any specific description that can help identify him with any particular animal, he just has a beastly or animal-like appearance. With time and without any imposition on his part, Beauty realizes she is in love with Beast who, thanks to the force of Beauty's love, is transformed into a magnificent prince. In the modern renderings of this story where nonhuman apes play the role of Beast and humans—either male or female—that of Beauty, the animal stays the same and it is the human who experiences a moral transformation that pushes him or her to confront the taboo of interspecies sex and consummate her or his love for the ape. Such consummation is the physical expression of the blurring of the species boundary. In texts such as Peter Høeg's *The Woman and the Ape* (1996) or in Peter Goldsworthy's *Wish* (1995), which will be analyzed later on, the humans come to the realization of the ape's moral superiority while, at the same time, embrace their own animality both literally and figuratively by acknowledging the power of the *other* in their lives. Finally, these retellings of the Beauty and the Beast story fulfill also another function, that of redeeming apes from their traditional representation as lustful creatures since often it is the human the one to take the first step in the seduction process.

Another possible theme is that of “apes as a cause.” Such a theme crops up often in the film industry—*Project X* (1987), *Gorillas in the Mist* (1988), *Project Nim* (2011). In these narratives apes are portrayed as endangered species or as victims of human practices such as medical experiments or their use in entertainment—circus, zoos,

television, etc. A good example of this kind of activist fiction is Sara Gruen's novel *Ape House* (2010) inspired by the author's own experiences watching lexigram<sup>82</sup> speaking bonobos at the Great Ape Trust in Des Moines, Iowa, home of the famous Kanzi. It tells the story of scientist Isabel Duncan and the lengths she has to go to rescue the group of bonobos she used to work with from a TV channel that produces a 24-hours live show about the daily lives of the apes in a house. This novel aims at offering a balanced view of science, hence it contrasts Isabel's commitment to the bonobos, whom she considers as family, with the utilitarian attitude shown both by the TV producers and by her ex-boyfriend, also a scientist, Peter Benton.

Also in connection with the different uses to which apes are subject in today's society is a seventh theme that has been generated in recent decades due to biomedical techniques that make possible to think of using animal organs to replace those no longer functioning in humans. This theme can be referred to as the "xenotransplantation theme" and it always involves the corporeal or bodily interdependence of animal and human by means of a surgical procedure that makes possible this codependency. Such bodily connections or fusions happen in two of the novels that will be analyzed in this dissertation—*Eva* (1988) and *Animal Heart* (2004)—and although they either belong or verge on the speculative, they offer an occasion to reflect on the artificiality of the human/animal boundary given the double standard science uses when dealing with the ethical consideration of primates for research.

A last theme can be described as that of the "ecological ape." In the 1990s the risks of environmental catastrophe, especially once the perils of climate change were assessed at the 1992 Rio Conference, led to renewed interest in stories that focus on human-ape relationships. Here apes are described in a Rousseauesque style as moral

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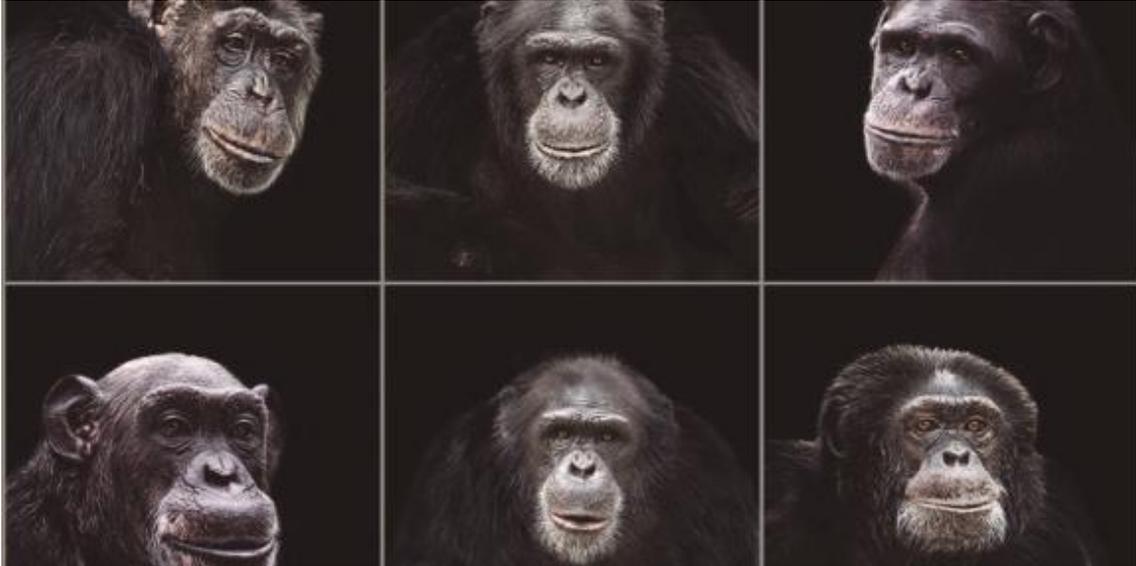
<sup>82</sup> Lexigrams are symbols corresponding to objects or ideas. They conform the artificial language known as Yerkish (Candland 333-34).

creatures who can be singled out as individuals with their own unique characteristics. Often such stories are titled after the name of the ape protagonist—*Ishmael*, *Wish*, *Eva*—but told from the point of view of the humans so as to avoid the risk of anthropocentrism. They can be described as memoirs of transformation where humans, once affected by their relationships with apes, become aware of the artificiality of the human/animal distinction. They also serve as a denunciation of human practices that are described as cruel and unfair to the animal. Besides the animal is often portrayed as a spokesperson for his kin and for planet Earth responding to the ecological anxieties of today's world. The 1990s trend has also worked its way in popular culture in the 2000s. The classic of ape literature and filmography, *Planet of the Apes*, was revisited in 2011 with the release of Rupert Wyatt's *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*, a prequel to the 1968's classic. The film was a critical and commercial success that questioned anthropocentrism and animal experimentation. It almost coincided in time with the release of Sara Gruen's novel *Ape House* (2010) that also casts a critical eye on animal research and the commercialization of apes, and the polemical documentary *Project Nim* (2011).<sup>83</sup> Finally, it is interesting to mention Disney's last nature film *Chimpanzee* (2012), an approach to ape life in the forest with a romanticized approach to the life of a young chimp, Oscar. This also shows a tendency to personalization and the individualization of the animal, a trend that is also present in the work of photographers such as Joe Zammit-Lucia who has specialized himself in the portrayal of animals as it can be seen in the following portraits of chimpanzees (see Fig. 7).<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Project Nim as well as others of its kind have also inspired literary fiction such as the recent novel by Karen J. Fowler *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* (2013) about a young woman who was raised with a chimpanzee as sister.

<sup>84</sup> A similar case to this is that of Spanish artist Verónica Perales who spent more than a year painting the female gorillas she found in different Spanish zoos. The result of this work was exhibited in El Campello (Alicante) in 2011.



**Fig. 7: Expression, Personality and Emotion**

### 3.3. PRIMATE LITERATURE AS AN EXPERIMENT IN BOUNDARY CROSSINGS

*As with every bottomless gaze, as with the eyes of the other, the gaze called animal offers to my sight the abyssal limit of the human: the inhuman or the ahuman, the ends of man, that is to say the bordercrossing from which vantage man dares to announce himself to himself, thereby calling himself by the name that he believes he gives himself.*  
(Derrida "The Animal" 381)

A recurrent issue in narratives dealing with human-ape relationships is the indeterminacy and contingency of the human/animal boundary. As explained in the previous sections, throughout history such topic has offered the opportunity of redefining the human in relationship with the animal *other*. Prior to the eighteenth century this *other* was identified with everything savage and unknown. Fantasies of tribes of savage and hairy creatures filled the imagination of those who read the chronicles of travels to faraway lands. With the rise of modern science, Europe had a glimpse of the real ape through the descriptions of Nicolaes Tulp and Edward Tyson. At the same time Linnaeus's classification of humans and orangutans in the same order, *Primates*, and in the same genus, *Homo*, situated humans and apes dangerously close to each other. The description of similarities between them was then substituted by the analysis of differences. Lack of language and reason became the signposts of the gap

between the two. A narrative where apes were increasingly described as beastly was later reinforced by Darwin's theories of evolution. Apes turned out to be identified with everything that was not civilized, European, and human. Increasingly the gap between the two was built upon the ambiguity and porosity of the thin line separating them. In the twentieth century apes became surrogates for humans in science. The discovery of a ninety eight percent genetic coincidence with chimpanzees as well as increasing data attesting for those elements that were held before as marks of separation between apes and humans—language, culture, tool making and use—led to growing attention to great apes as boundary animals.

The development of field studies of great apes in the 1960s and early 1970s gave visibility to the outstanding similarities between the culture of great apes and human culture. As will be explained later on, the work of the famous “trimates”—Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, and Biruté Galdikas—turned primatology into a female science both because of the popularity of the women working in the field, and also because of an approach which reflected typically female characteristics such as empathy and attention to detail. That is how, according to Gregg Mitman, a “public science of nature” emerged which offered an alternative to “elite professional science,” with an emphasis on “individualism, sensory bodily experience, and emotional engagement” (429).

Literary fiction in the late 1980s came to reflect this ideal of closeness with the wild animal. However, such encounters were often set, not in the wild, but in an urban setting. The wild animal is portrayed as a displaced being, taken from her habitat by force and relocated in a zoo, a circus, or a research facility for human consumption. She comes into close contact with other dislocated or displaced beings. These are humans who do not fit within the standards of normality due to self-inflicted isolation,

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disability, or illness. They, like the animals, also occupy a space of liminality and this is what makes possible their ability to enter into contact with nonhuman animals, be affected by them and report on their lives. Two kinds of dialogues are established between the human and nonhuman characters of these novels. These dialogues can be divided into dialogues of the mind and of the body. In the dialogues of the mind the human and the animal use verbal language although conveyed through telepathy and sign language to get to know and affect each other. In the dialogues of the body, human and nonhuman animals establish their relationship through bodily exchanges that take the form of xenotransplantations. These dialogues imply the crossing of the moveable frontier of the species boundary turning primate literature into an experiment in border crossing.

Primate literature is essentially a questioning of the very nature of the human. It is a challenge to radical separations between animal and human. It is a space of playfulness where categories are shuffled. The mute animal silently speaks to the human. Mind to mind conversations or signing hands conform the dialogues of the first novels. Neuron memory inhabiting the space of chimpanzee's body or a heart speaking to the soul of a man delineate the dialogues of the second group of works.

Inspired by these works and interested in the possibilities of analysis offered by ecofeminist literary criticism, I decided to use the latter to reflect on these dialogues. In her article "‘Buffalo Gals, Won't You Come Out Tonight': A Call for Boundary-Crossing in Ecofeminist Literary Criticism" Karla Armbruster considers the advantages of applying the tools of ecofeminist literary criticism to the analysis of texts. As illustrated by the following quote, she understands this critical lens in a broad and flexible way. Ecofeminism combines well with other theories and allows asking the

right questions of texts that test the frontiers of species and materiality. In Armbruster's words:

By expanding the range of theorists that they draw on, ecofeminist critics can develop interpretative and analytical tools that will allow them to go beyond simply looking for literature that emphasizes women's or other marginalized people's sense of connection with nature (connections that are inevitably opposed to dominant culture's alienation from nature). One way of doing this would be to evolve approaches that ask questions that account for the complexity that poststructuralist feminist theory has accorded to human identity and that further develop that complexity in exploring the relationship between humans and nonhuman nature. These questions might include:

- Does the text convey a sense of the human subject as socially and discursively constructed, multiply organized, and constantly shifting?
  - Does the text also account for the influence of nonhuman nature on the subject (and of the subject on nonhuman nature) without resorting to essentialism?
  - Does the text avoid reinscribing dualisms and hierarchical notions of difference?
- (105-06)

I believe that we more and more live in a space of intersections where new epistemologies are possible. In the following pages ecofeminism will be tackled as one of the first contemporary philosophical movements to connect the oppression of animals to that of other otherized beings. In this respect practical examples will be given pertaining to today's culture. Ecofeminism has developed its own specific stand on human-animal relationships, animal ecofeminism, and it has also turned into a fruitful tool of literary analysis thanks to Patrick D. Murphy and Greta Gaard's foundational work.

In 2007 primatologist Sue Savage-Rumbaugh challenged all scholarly standards by co-authoring an article with the group of bonobos with which she had been working in the Great Ape Trust, Iowa—Kanzi Wamba, Panbanisha Wamba, and Nyota Wamba. The article was published in the *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science (JAAWS)* and its purpose was to describe what apes living in the Des Moines facility considered important for their psychological and physical wellbeing in captivity (Bradshaw "An Ape" 18).<sup>85</sup> In 1989 Donna Haraway interpreted science, primatology more specifically,

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<sup>85</sup> The title of this article to which Bradshaw refers is "Welfare of Apes in Captive Environments: Comments on, and by, a Specific Group of Apes."

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as story-telling. Mixing genres she analyzed the development of this field as simian orientalism or what is the same “the construction of the self from the raw material of the other, the appropriation of nature in the production of culture, the ripening of the human from the soil of the animal, the clarity of white from the obscurity of color, the issue of man from the body of gender, the emergence of mind by the activation of body” (Haraway *Primate* 11). Both, the primatologist and the philosopher, were aiming at voicing an epistemological change and were using a rhetoric of intersection to speak of the possibilities that can be found in listening to what the *other* has to say. I find in ecofeminist literary criticism the same kind of vantage point.



## **CHAPTER FOUR. ECOFEMINISM AND THE ANIMAL**

Animal ecofeminism is the branch of ecofeminism that more directly addresses the issue of human-animal relationships. Although ecofeminism analyzes the logic of domination behind the oppression of a specific minority—women—and relates it to that of nature, its abovementioned strand—animal ecofeminism—focuses on the oppression of nonhuman animals. Ecofeminists are aware of the fact that women have traditionally been identified with nature for biological reasons. Their body has been seen as determining their role as givers, nurturers and caretakers. However, as will be explained later on, by delving into this facile association, ecofeminists have managed to uncover the maze of interconnections working at the base of the woman/nature pair. Animal ecofeminism takes such rationale further by locating the term of comparison in the also traditional association of women with nonhuman animals.

Numerous examples that will be presented later on demonstrate that the woman-animal identification is still current today. Actually, from a linguistic point of view, Joan Dunayer has called attention to the profusion of animal metaphors that refer to frequently otherized groups such as women and people of color. Among the female-specific “animal” metaphors she mentions *old crow*, *catty*, *shrew*, *dumb bunny*, *queen bee*, *sow*, and *bitch* (157-58). These expressions do not only insult women and are therefore sexist, but also degrade the nonhuman they are referred to. Likewise, with regard to peoples of color, Dunayer mentions how in seventeenth-century mainland America and in the West Indies, black slaves were often named Monkey, Ape, or Baboon (161). These metaphors conceal both contempt for women and black people as well as for the animals they are compared with. That is why it will be argued that by clarifying these identifications it is possible not only to fight current sexism and racism, but also speciesism and other forms of oppression since, as will be later explained, these

–isms are grounded on the same root of dominance and hierarchization. With this I intend to achieve the realization of the fourth objective of this study, to vindicate the sometimes neglected contribution of ecofeminist theory to the analysis of the question of the animal in ecocritical studies. Such contribution involves several things: an emphasis on the liberation of the oppressed *other*, be this human or nonhuman animal; attention to empathy, care and attentiveness as ways of forming nonhierarchical relationships; and a rediscovery of matter as well as the erasure of the boundaries separating the poles of binary constructions.

In order to do so, firstly an overview of ecofeminism will be given with the purpose of making the reader aware of the diverse strands in which this movement has developed thus far. Secondly, the focus of this dissertation will turn to the understanding of the woman-animal identification which is at the core of animal ecofeminism. This association will be illustrated through the analysis of examples taken from the world of advertising—PETA’s campaigns—and fashion—Alexander McQueen’s shows—so as to emphasize the relevance of animal ecofeminism within animal studies. That is why the third section will aim at describing the connections between these two fields.

#### 4.1. ECOFEMINISM: AN OVERVIEW

The word *ecofeminism* was coined by French author Françoise d’Eaubonne<sup>86</sup> in 1974. In very broad terms this word refers to a form of feminism that analyzes, from a gendered perspective, the connections between the oppression of women and that of the natural world. Methodologically speaking, ecofeminism can be considered the sum of an intellectual attempt to unearth the reasons behind this domination as well as a

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<sup>86</sup> Barbara T. Gates has devoted attention to the foundational writings of ecofeminism by Françoise d’Eaubonne—*Écologie féminisme: Révolution ou mutation?* (1971) and *Le Féminisme ou la mort* (1974)—in her article “A Root of Ecofeminism: *Ecoféminisme*” (1996).

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grassroots effort to stop those forms of relation where both women and nature are oppressed. As Esther Rey Torrijos reflects in her article on the origins and evolution of ecocriticism “¿Por qué ellas, por qué ahora? La mujer y el medio natural: orígenes y evolución del ecofeminismo,” ecofeminism may adopt many directions (139-40). Karen Warren, for example, describes ten different types of ecofeminism: 1) historical; 2) conceptual; 3) empirical; 4) socioeconomic; 5) linguistic; 6) symbolic and literary; 7) spiritual and religious; 8) epistemological; 9) political; and 10) ethical (*Ecofeminist* 21).

Historical ecofeminism traces back in time the origins of the domination of women and nature. In this respect, Warren highlights the works of Riane T. Eisler, Carolyn Merchant, and Val Plumwood (*Ecofeminist* 22-4). Each of them signals a different moment in the chronology of the Western world leading to the origin of the domination of women and nature. Merchant, for example, in *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1980) grounds her explanation of this turn on the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which meant a transition from an organic worldview, where nature was seen as “a nurturing mother,” to the “mechanistic world view of modern science,” where the universe was seen as a perfectly planned design (1-2). This actually meant what she refers to as “the death of nature.” Eisler, in *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future* (1988), speaks of a transition from a peaceful agrarian society ruled by an ethics of partnership—“the chalice”—to a society ruled by a more aggressive and violent type of thinking—“the blade”—brought about by the invasion of Indo-European societies by nomadic tribes from Eurasia between the sixth and the third millennia BCE (xviii). Finally, Plumwood, in “Nature, Self, and Gender” (1991) locates the origins of dualistic thinking (e.g. culture/nature, masculine/feminine, mind/body, etc) in the classical Greek philosophy of Aristotle and Plato, and the rationalist tradition from the seventeenth century onwards

(22). She also explores the logic operating behind the domination of women and nature in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993), and describes it as a master mentality conducive to a hierarchically organized “set of contrasting pairs” around which Western epistemology is founded (42-3). This preoccupation is actually the main interest of conceptual ecofeminism and will be further explored in this dissertation which deals with literary works where dualisms such as human/animal, reason/emotion, or culture/nature are challenged.

Other branches of ecofeminism such as empirical and socioeconomic ecofeminism delve into the connections between environmental destruction and the conditions in which oppressed groups such as women, children, people of color, or the poor live. In the case of the empirical approach, attention is paid to the practical relation between the lives of women and their surrounding environment. As Warren explains, abundant data demonstrate that any degradation of the natural world affects firstly and to a larger degree the lives of marginal groups (*Ecofeminist* 25). Issues of environmental justice therefore become relevant to ecofeminism, as well as criticism of the ways in which socioeconomic structures facilitate the subjugation of nature and related groups. This connection between ecofeminism as a philosophical movement and the cause of subordinate people is exemplified by authors such as Vandana Shiva whose works address issues such as sustainable agriculture, water and food distribution, biodiversity, and climate change.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, ecofeminism is also at the heart of many environmental activist groups such as the ones described by Merchant in her work *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* (1995) where she traces the history of ecofeminist activism in the United States, Sweden, and Australia. This political strand

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<sup>87</sup> In the prolific career of Vandana Shiva the following works address the questions abovementioned: *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge* (1997), *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply* (2000), *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit* (2002), and *Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in the Age of Climate Crisis* (2008).

of ecofeminism has derived also into an interest in the ways in which the oppression of women and that of animals are connected. Such interest has led to what is now called animal ecofeminism, a term coined by Greta Gaard in 2012 (“Feminist Animal Studies” 17), which will be later commented upon as one of the theoretical basis of this dissertation and a field that entails great possibilities for today’s animal studies.

Ecofeminist activism works towards a change of paradigm that is reflected in the epistemological and ethical models it proposes. From the point of view of epistemology, it challenges traditional and well-established forms of knowledge by contesting the idea that knowledge is the product of objective observation where the knower is an active participant and nonhuman nature is a passive object of knowledge. Such orientation adheres to one of the fastest-growing philosophical trends of the twenty-first century, that of new materialisms or material feminisms which vindicate matter as a site of agency. At the same time, ecofeminism aims at producing a kind of ethics that is exempt of the male bias towards strict rationality. As Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams contend in the introduction to *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics: A Reader* (2007), an ethics of care which has sympathy at its core seems to be the best model for those ecofeminists interested in the animal question (3). Equally important is the practice of attentiveness which Traci Warkentin highlights in her article “Interspecies Etiquette: An Ethics of Paying Attention to Animals” (2010). This practice, as the work of transpecies psychologist Gay A. Bradshaw shows in her article “You See Me, but Do You Hear Me? The Science and Sensibility of Trans-species Dialogue” (2010), needs to be accompanied as well by an attitude of openness to interspecies communication.

This shift in the epistemological and ethical paradigms of the West has also led to the flourishing of spiritual forms of ecofeminism such as the ones presented by Carol

J. Adams in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred* (1993). Many of them are inspired by indigenous cultural practices, although there are others that attempt to reform long-established forms of spirituality in the West like Christianity, or else are inspired by the respect to all living beings present in Eastern religions such as Jainism and Buddhism.

On a cultural level, ecofeminism also pays attention to the ways in which language reflects how human and nonhuman *others* are conceptualized. This strand of ecofeminism is described by Warren as linguistic ecofeminism (*Ecofeminist* 27-8) and investigates descriptions of women in animalistic terms, or of nature as woman. In any of these cases the terms of comparison—women, animals, and nature—are always described as victims. They are raped, mastered, conquered. This linguistic approach uncovers the denigration involved in the animalizing and naturalizing of women as well as in the feminization of animals. Language, in sum, mirrors the speciesism and the sexism that exist behind language. In a similar vein, the exploration of images of women and nonhuman nature in literature and popular culture becomes the subject matter of symbolic and literary ecofeminism. Excellent examples of this are Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (1975) and *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860* (1984), Vera Norwood's *Made from This Earth: American Women and Nature* (1993) as well as Louise H. Westling's *The Green Breast of the New World: Landscape, Gender, and American Fiction* (1996) where these authors analyze American literature and culture from a gendered and ecocritical perspective. One of the consequences derived from this approach to literary texts is the critical branch known as ecofeminist literary criticism which is defined by Gretchen T. Legler as:

a hybrid criticism, a combination of ecological or environmental criticism and feminist literary criticism [that] offers a unique combination of literary and philosophical perspectives that gives literary and cultural critics a special lens through which they can investigate the ways nature is

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represented in literature and the ways representations of nature are linked with representations of gender, race, class, and sexuality. (227)

In recent years the expression ecofeminist literary criticism has been replaced by that of feminist ecocriticism (Carr 22-3; Vakoch 1-2) or used interchangeably with it (Gaard “New Directions for Ecofeminism” 18). In general, it can be said that feminist ecocriticism has its origins in the intersection of ecocriticism with feminism of which ecofeminism is an essential part in an age of environmental degradation. Further attention will be paid to it in a future section since it is the form of ecofeminism that more directly has to do with the analysis of the literary texts this dissertation pays attention to.

On the whole, all the forms of ecofeminism mentioned so far may overlap in many ways. This is not a problem since ecofeminism uses a kind of epistemology that is not based on “positivism, oclularcentrism, and Eurocentrism” (Merchant *Earthcare* xvii), but in a framework where systems of knowledge flow, contesting and nourishing each other. This is why methodologies such as Bakhtin’s dialogics (Murphy *Literature* 12) as well as images such as quilting (Warren *Ecofeminist* 43-71) are used by ecofeminists to refer to the fluid and heterogeneous epistemological strategies used. Where they all do coincide is in their critique of the logic of domination that fuels the oppression of women, other human *others* and nature. In this sense, Plumwood claims that this logic responds to the master mentality that reigns in the Western world and assimilates women and other beings on account of their social position, race/ethnicity, age, sexuality, dis/ability, and species to nature:

The category of nature is a field of multiple exclusion and control, not only of non-humans, but of various groups of humans and aspects of human life which are cast as nature. Thus racism, colonialism and sexism have drawn their conceptual strength from casting sexual, racial and ethnic difference as closer to the animal and the body construed as a sphere of inferiority, as a lesser form of humanity lacking the full measure of rationality or culture. (*Feminism* 4)

The West, as Plumwood sees it, is ruled by forms of reason sustained upon a dualistic dynamic. Dualisms result from the process by which contrasting concepts such

as masculine and feminine gender identities “are formed by domination and subordination and constructed as oppositional and exclusive” (*Feminism* 31) or as

Plumwood further illustrates:

Dualism is a relation of separation and domination inscribed and naturalised in culture and characterized by radical exclusion, distancing and opposition between orders constructed as systematically higher and lower, as inferior and superior, as ruler and ruled, which treats the division as part of the natures of beings construed not merely as different but as belonging to radically different orders or kinds, and hence as not open to change. (*Feminism* 47-48)

Plumwood describes the series of dualisms that inform the master mentality as “a system, an interlocking structure” that can be organized into the following list of contrasting pairs:

culture/nature  
reason/nature  
male/female  
mind/body (nature)  
master/slave  
reason/matter (physicality)  
rationality/animality (nature)  
reason/emotion (nature)  
mind, spirit/nature  
freedom/necessity (nature)  
universal/particular  
human/nature (non-human)  
civilised/primitive (nature)  
production/reproduction (nature)  
public/private  
subject/object  
self/other

(*Feminism* 43)

Those terms on the left side can be read as typically attributed to men and to humans while those on the right correspond to women, nature, and the rest of otherized beings. Likewise this list is also deeply informed by the "fracture" between reason and nature. Indeed, the left or “superior” side is made of forms of reason while the right or “inferior” side is made of forms of nature. Plumwood pays special attention to the dualisms of male/female, mind/body, civilized/primitive, human/nature as the ones that express “the major forms of oppression in Western culture” leading to the naturalization of gender, class, race and nature respectively (*Feminism* 43). Plumwood also defines

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certain features that are common to these dualisms and that explain the way in which they work. The first one she mentions is backgrounding or denial. This feature results from the relationship established between the master and the slave (the *other*). The master uses the slave and by doing so it creates a series of dependencies that he denies—the *other* is made invisible (*Feminism* 43). Thinking of animals, both Paul Shepard in *The Others: How Animals Made Us Human* (1996) and Roger A. Caras in *A Perfect Harmony: The Intertwining Lives of Animals and Humans Throughout History* (1996) have dealt with the ways in which the lives of the human animal are tightly dependent on that of certain nonhuman animals, especially domestic and farm animals. However, humans live most of their lives in a state of denial of such dependencies. This easily translates into the continuing practice of abuse against animals in many human activities such as meat production and entertainment.

A second practice is that of radical exclusion or hyperseparation. This means making the *other* “inferior, part of a lower, different order of being” (*Feminism* 49). It separates the two poles in radically different spheres by denying any common trait and stressing the differences. In light of this logic which stresses stereotypes some may argue, for example, that women are not capable of logical reasoning and that they are too emotional, or that animals have no emotional life whatsoever and cannot *speak*.

As a third element Plumwood distinguishes incorporation or relational definition. This feature is based on the unequal relationship between the members of the pair. Since the *other* is defined in relationship with the master's desires, she or he is never defined in her or his true dimension (Plumwood *Feminism* 52). By this logic a woman may be defined by the roles of her husband in the same manner that certain species may be attributed specific qualities in order to satisfy certain symbolic uses. In Nazi Germany, for instance, wild predators such as wolves were held as symbols of a

nature that was considered to be “violent but orderly” (Sax 3). They represented a purity of instinct that civilization corrupted and that the Nazi regime wanted to bring back through eugenic controls.

A fourth element is that of instrumentalism or objectification. This implies that those on the lower side are considered as mere instruments at the master’s service. They do not deserve any kind of moral consideration and, of course, lack any necessity or desire. As Plumwood explains, “The dualising master self does not empathically recognise others as moral kin, and does not recognise them as a centre of desires or needs on their own account. Hence on both counts he is free to impose his own ends” (*Feminism* 53). Consequently, some may think that women’s role in life is that of supporting their husbands, fathers and brothers. In the same manner, animals are seen as mere instruments or sources in the hands of the researcher or the meat producer.

Finally, Plumwood pays attention to the phenomenon of homogenization or stereotyping. This feature implies that all the members of the lower side are homogenized, all of them presenting the same characteristics so that it is easier to instrumentalize them (Plumwood *Feminism* 54). This is a kind of “one fits all” theory where individuality is denied. Therefore all women may be described as either whores or angels, while animals may also be put into categories of extreme polarization such as bloodthirsty carnivore or cuddly pet.

The examples used so far to illustrate the features of the parallel structures described by Plumwood draw attention to the conditions of oppression of women and animals. As it has already been explained, ecofeminism studies the connections between the oppression of women and nature and, using this as a point of departure, aims at liberating other oppressed peoples by dismantling the systems of oppression that affect their lives. Since the object of this dissertation is to analyze works where nonhuman

primates feature prominently in ways that contest these systems, the section that follows illustrates how one of the strands of ecofeminism, animal ecofeminism, has turned the association of women and animals into its main preoccupation. Attention will therefore be paid to the pertinence of such theory in relationship with today's society and with the growing field of animal studies and literary analysis since, as Gaard maintains, it is time for the recognition of the contribution ecofeminism has made to the study of the animal in the humanities ("Feminist Animal Studies" 18-19; "Speaking" 524).

#### 4.2. ANIMAL ECOFEMINISM: UNDERSTANDING THE WOMAN-ANIMAL ASSOCIATION<sup>88</sup>

Animal ecofeminism is a branch of ecofeminism that explores the connections between the oppression of women and animals by relating the structures of sexism with those of speciesism. It developed as a result of Carol J. Adams's seminal work *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (1990) where she develops an idea that occurred to her in 1974 while a student at Harvard. At that time, she clearly saw there was a connection between meat eating and violence against women, and decided to write a paper on this for a course she was taking at Boston College taught by feminist philosopher Mary Daly. As she explains in an article published in the *Harvard Gazette* on occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the publication of her book, she first explored this idea in 1975 in a class paper entitled "The Oedible Complex" (Ireland par. 7). By 1990 it had grown into book form. In *The Sexual Politics of Meat* she comments on the different ways in which advertising trivializes the suffering of animals. This is done through the use of images where they are often feminized and shown in situations or attitudes that can be interpreted as

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<sup>88</sup> The following analysis was the inspiration for the article "'Savage Beauty': Representations of Women as Animals in PETA's Campaigns and Alexander McQueen's Fashion Shows" published in 2013 in the journal *Feminismo/s. Revista del Centro de Estudios sobre la Mujer de la Universidad de Alicante*.

entertaining or pleasurable for the protagonist of the picture although they mean otherwise. They are often prey animals or farm animals who are going to be turned into products for human consumption. An illustrative example of Adams's claim can be found in Schweppes's campaign *Naturellement Pulpeuse* for its soft drink Orangina where animals are often portrayed as feminized animals in provocative postures (see Fig. 8).



**Fig. 8: Naturellement Pulpeuse**

Adams's analysis in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* was later expanded in *The Pornography of Meat* (2003) based on her analysis of the images she gathered for the preparation of the slide show of the same name. In this book Adams delves further into the representation of animals and women as desirable objects of consumption. In order to support her argument, Adams used the concept of the absent referent, a term developed in structuralist and poststructuralist language theory to refer "to the real or material entity signified by the linguistic symbol, the word, which is termed the *signifier*" (Donovan "Ecofeminist" 162; emphasis in original). With this in mind,

Adams analyzes the cultural discourse of meat eating as a text in which “meat” is the signifier, and “animal” is the absent referent. The animal, as Donovan infers from her reading of Adams, “is absent from the text; its being as a thou is elided and dominated by the signifier *meat*, which deadens the animal’s aliveness, turning her or him into an it” (“Ecofeminist” 162; emphasis in original). This erasure of the subjecthood of the animal happens as well in the way in which many languages refer to animals as meat. In this respect linguist Arran Stibbe has dealt with the many ways in which animals are not only becoming extinct literally, but also, “being erased from our consciousness” by the way in which language—he specifically refers to the case of English—is used when referring to them (Loc. 86). In this sense, when dealing with how this erasure happens on a lexical level, he brings to mind Peter Singer’s reflection on the way in which language separates us from animal suffering. This, Singer explains, happens in the use of different words depending on whether we refer to living animals or to animals as meat or food.<sup>89</sup> This is so in English when the *cow* is turned into *beef*, the *pig* is turned into *pork*, or the *sheep* is referred to as *mutton* (*Animal Liberation* 95).<sup>90</sup> But animals do not necessarily need to be eaten in order to speak of them as objects of consumption. They can also be consumed as objects of entertainment in races, circuses, rodeos or fighting events. In a similar manner, women are also turned into objects of consumption in the Western world ruled as it is by the patriarchal values that sustain the master mentality described before. As it happens with the animals, women’s individuality is

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<sup>89</sup> Jonathan S. Foer also supports this vision in *Eating Animals* (2009) when he says, “Language is never fully trustworthy, but when it comes to eating animals, words are as often used to misdirect and camouflage as they are to communicate. Some words, like *veal*, help us forget what we are actually talking about” (45).

<sup>90</sup> Although it is true that, from a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, by persisting in this differentiation the real animal is blurred, there are also, as Albert C. Baugh and Thomas Cable explain, historical reasons for such a change of nomenclature when referring to the animal turned into meat. The contact between English and French after the Norman Conquest lies behind this differentiation in meaning. The French words—*beef*, *mutton*, *pork*, and *veal*—when incorporated into English were used to refer to the meat while the English—*ox*, *sheep*, *swine*, and *calf*—were associated with the living animal (Baugh and Cable 168).

also erased. Their bodies are turned into objects of consumption, a phenomenon that often involves their animalization. This process is shown in them being designated as animals, *chicks, bitches or bunnies* (Dunayer 158-59),<sup>91</sup> or represented as fragmented parts of a whole as Adams explains in the following quote:

Once the existence of meat is disconnected from the existence of an animal who was killed to become that “meat,” meat becomes unanchored by its original referent (the animal), becoming instead a free-floating image, used often to reflect women’s status as well as animals’. Animals are the absent referent in the act of meat eating; they become the absent referent in images of women butchered, fragmented, or consumable. (*Pornography* 14-5)

This animalization translates into the sexualization of images of women that depict them as subservient to men, innocent and helpless creatures, or else as ferocious women-animals waiting to be tamed or hunted.

Ecofeminism has tried to demonstrate that women and animals are interchangeable objects of oppression. Such connection is made evident in everyday cultural artifacts such as advertising and fashion shows. Actually, a look at such expressions may give an idea of the relevance of ecofeminist analysis for creating the conditions for a more egalitarian society as well as it may emphasize the currency of animal ecofeminism for today’s animal studies. In the sections that follow an extended exploration of images that reflect the woman-animal association will be given in order to vindicate the role ecofeminism plays in the understanding of animals in a posthumanist world. After that attention will be paid to Gaard’s claim that critical movements such as animal studies have forgotten to acknowledge their intellectual debt with ecofeminism. Her 2002 review of animal ecofeminism, then named vegetarian ecofeminism, will lead this dissertation into the field of ecofeminist literary criticism. As will be explained, this movement, also referred by some as feminist ecocriticism, has

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<sup>91</sup> With regard to the ways in which women are also animalized in Spanish, the following works are worthy of mention: Isabel Echevarría Isusquiza’s “Acerca del vocabulario español de la animalización humana” (2003), and Jaime Climent de Benito’s “La mujer en la literatura misógina: persona o animal” (1999).

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turned the silence of the animal into a voice that reminds humans that there are other species besides humans on planet Earth.

### 4.2.1. The Woman-Animal Association in Advertising

Numerous images from the world of advertising, animal activism campaigns, and fashion still convey the long-held association between women and animals in Western mentality. Although the purpose of this dissertation is the analysis of literary texts, reflecting on these visual artifacts through Adams's ideas may serve to better explain the critical work of ecofeminism. As will be shown, they reflect how the expression of this association in visual form can sometimes serve as an instrument of liberation while other times it fosters the oppression of one of the groups involved.

Traditionally, talk about the woman-animal association has been met by accusations of essentialism; however, the association between the two has been present in the Western world since antiquity. In Greece, for example, goddess Artemis was connected to wilderness and hunting. Homer refers to her as *Artemis Agrotera, Potnia Theron*, that is, "...forest goddess Artemis, / queen of all wild beasts..." (467). More recently, psychoanalyst Clarissa Pinkola Estés published her book *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype* (1992) in an attempt to retrieve what she calls "the wild woman," a highly capable woman inspired by an inner force coming from her natural instincts.<sup>92</sup> This idea caught in the minds of her readership and the book remained for two years in the *New York Times* selling list. As Mary Midgley explains, such identification with wild nature is rooted in the association of women with what is irrational, with materiality and the corporeal: "The fear of women is a fear of the impulses they arouse and the forces they stand for" (78). It is

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<sup>92</sup> In *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* Val Plumwood explains that although it was traditionally understood that women's identification with nature was relative to a wild, undomesticated entity, due to the influence of Victorianism, Darwinism, and recent sociobiology, men are today seen as "wild, violent, competitive and sexual" while women are regarded as "insipid, domestic, asexual and civilising" (21).

therefore unlikely for this association to disappear from contemporary cultural artifacts, but it deserves special attention since, as animal ecofeminists have shown, it has often contributed to the normalization of the oppression of both animals and women. In this respect, animal ecofeminists have analyzed the ways in which forms of aggression affecting women—battering, pornography, rape—and animals—animal abuse, animals as food and entertainment, hunting—run often parallel (see Fig. 9). In all these instances both women and animals are turned into objects of consumption. This consumption adopts different forms. In the case of animals the most obvious example is that of eating their meat. By being classified as food, animals lose their status as sentient beings and are commodified as meat. They become, according to Adams, “the absent referent in the act of meat eating” (*Sexual Politics* 14). They lose their specificity as individuals because they are transformed into objects by the literal and figurative processing of the meat industry.

WOMEN	ANIMALS
Battering	Animal abuse
Pornography	Meat industry Animals in entertainment
Rape	Hunting

**Fig. 9: Forms of Oppression**

Adams has also paid special attention to the interchangeable role of women and animals as consumable bodies in publicity, and has highlighted how, in the case of women, this objectification coincides with their portrayal as sexual objects. She points at a series of signals she describes as “cues of violability” that are generally present in such kind of

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depictions (*Pornography* 106). As a case in point she uses the analysis of a 1980s Versace advertisement where a female model is photographed showing what Adams thinks to be signs of being ready to accept the male’s sexual advances (*Pornography* 105). This “high prostitute style” consists in a series of cues that arise through appearance, gestures and ornamentation (see Fig. 10 adapted from Adams *Pornography* 106).

Carol J. Adams’s Cues of Violability	
Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small waist</li> <li>• Accentuated breast</li> <li>• Smooth legs</li> <li>• Eyelashes curl</li> </ul>
Gestures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Casting hips or pelvis rolling</li> <li>• Arching the back</li> <li>• An exposed and unstable stance that telegraphs “I cannot hold my ground”</li> <li>• Arm signals</li> <li>• Eyebrow signals</li> </ul>
Ornamentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Garter and bra—a fetish of underclothes</li> <li>• Earrings</li> <li>• Bracelets</li> <li>• Heels or painted toes</li> </ul>

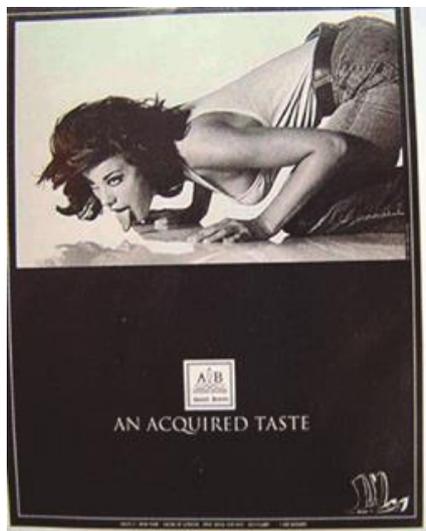
**Fig. 10: Carol J. Adams's Cues of Violability**

A look at some of the ads compiled by Scott A. Lukas in his website Gender Ads Project<sup>93</sup> demonstrates that this “prostitute style” is present by and large in publicity where women feature as main protagonists. Interestingly in some of these ads women are literally identified with animals. Such identification is conveyed in two

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<sup>93</sup> [www.genderads.com](http://www.genderads.com)

ways: either they are stand-ins for animals (see Fig. 11) or they pose with animals as if belonging to their class (see Fig. 12). Hence, for instance, in Figure 11 the model is posing on all fours and her tongue is out. She seems to be licking the floor as if she were a cat drinking milk. She shows Adams's violability signals: her buttock sticks out and her clothing shows off her breasts, plus her facial expression—tongue out—can be interpreted as lustful. In Figure 12 female subjectivity is erased from the woman who is placed as the center of a group of three—two Dalmatians and herself. She is dressed in black and white spotted clothes that match to perfection the dogs' pelt and make her undistinguishable from them. Her countenance is that of an expressionless doll—sucked in cheeks and protuberant lips—and her posture complies again with Adams's cues. Moreover, the sentence on the right hand-corner that reads "I'm the best thing since dog food" only serves to reinforce her commodification as sexualized consumable body.



**Fig. 11: An Acquired Taste**



**Fig. 12: I'm the Best Thing Since Dog Food**

These two ads are examples of how publicity can disempower women by animalizing them. This is made possible because in these two cases the animals chosen as terms of comparison belong to the category of pet. A different outcome results when

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women are compared to wild animals as in Figures 13, 14 and 15. In the Bulgari ad for its fragrance *Mon Jasmin Noir* (2011), actress Kirsten Dunst poses with a lion, a powerful wild animal, which she caresses. This ad is open to two possible interpretations regarding the woman-animal connection. The actress-lion pair can be read as one and the same, especially due to the disposition and hue of her hair which seems to be merging with the lion's fur. Nevertheless, it can also be interpreted in a more anthropocentric way as a *Beauty and the Beast* narrative where the woman with her sweet perfume seduces the wild animal who can be read as the male of the story. Either interpretation makes possible to say that in this case the woman-animal identification empowers and does not objectify women. A very similar case is that offered in the Spanish jewelry brand "Uno de 50" 2012 advertising campaign which revolves around the image of woman as or in control of a wild animal. Interestingly, in this case, the wild animals chosen for the ads—a wolf and a lynx—are both endangered species representative of Spain. Obviously, the intention behind choosing two of the endangered species of Iberian fauna is that of highlighting the exclusivity of this jewelry brand. Another important characteristic of this group of ads is that the cues of violability are not present. They are replaced by what can be called "cues of empowerment." In the three ads attention is placed on the hands that rest on the animal in a protective manner as well as in the woman's hair which blends with the animal's pelt. On top of that, emphasis is also put on the look of both the woman and the animal as if their eyes coincided in their expression of defiance and confidence. These ads belong to a different category from that of the ones previously analyzed which identify domestic animals with women, and which tend to be diminishing for both. This second category instead of objectifying women empowers them. Besides, animals are also vindicated as

powerful and worthy of respect, although not the actual ones used in the ads who are obviously animal stunts and therefore captives.



**Fig. 13: Mon Jasmin Noir**



**Fig. 14: Woman with Wolf**



**Fig. 15: Woman with Lynx**

#### 4.2.2. PETA's Campaign Ads

All the ads commented so far are aimed at marketing a product. Curiously, the largest animal rights organization in the world, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA),<sup>94</sup> uses the same techniques to sell not a product but an idea: the liberation of animals from human practices that entail their transformation in meat, fur, leather, or objects of experimentation. However, although its cause is a legitimate one and one that deserves praise, it does so often at the expense of women by victimizing

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<sup>94</sup> [www.peta.org](http://www.peta.org)

them or exposing them as consumable bodies in place of animals. Animal ecofeminists would expect otherwise from an organization that, as Maneesha Deckha recalls, prides itself to be “staffed in part by self-identified feminist women” (“Disturbing Images” 56).

As it has been explained before (see Fig. 8) there is a close correspondence between the commodification and the victimization of women and animals. PETA demonstrates it is well aware of that by often portraying women in images that conform to the codes typical of the pornography industry. Other times it reinforces the role of women as victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse. It seems that PETA’s strategy is that of “playing the game from within the system,” not that of breaking with it, as her co-founder and President Ingrid Newkirk declares in an interview for *Animal Liberation* (qtd. in Deckha “Disturbing Images” 53). However, as it will be shown, PETA also uses in its campaigns images that go more in line with the second category of the ads previously analyzed, the ads of empowerment, although this can incur as well in a certain degree of essentialism.

PETA is well-known for having some of *Playboy*’s celebrities featuring prominently in some of its campaigns. Since the 1990s this has been the case in some of the controversial ads for the “I’d Rather Go Naked than Wear Fur”<sup>95</sup> campaign where Holly Madison, Patty Davis and Joanna Kruppa among others have been shot nude to promote the end of the fur industry. This has neither been received with much satisfaction by most critical sectors of the animal liberation movement nor by ecofeminists. Gary L. Francione acknowledges this situation in *Rain without Thunder: The Ideology of the Animal Rights Movement* (1996) when he says that “...in recent years, the promotion of animal causes has increasingly relied in sexist and racist

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<sup>95</sup> [www.peta.org/mediacenter/ads/print-ads-skins.aspx](http://www.peta.org/mediacenter/ads/print-ads-skins.aspx)

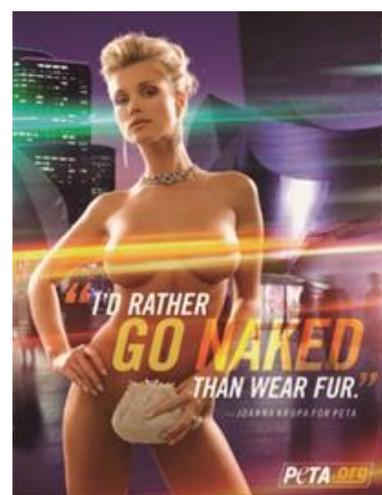
imagery” (75). This, according to him, is due to the fact that most welfarist and rightists—the two main positions in which the animal rights movement is divided—have never acknowledged the connection between social progressive movements in favor of women, people of color, and the animal liberation front. This lack of recognition, which precisely features at the core of animal ecofeminism, is what, according to him, is behind the frequent use of sexual imagery by PETA. Women are reduced to their bodies which are not simply shown naked in what at times are aesthetic snapshots of nudity (see Fig. 16), they are also featured following *Playboy’s* pornographic style and consistently showing therefore Adams’s cues of violability. In



**Fig. 16: Elisabetta Canalis / I'd Rather Go Naked Than Wear Fur**



**Fig. 17: Holly Madison / I'd Rather Go Naked Than Wear Fu**



**Fig. 18: Joanna Kruppa / I'd Rather Go Naked Than Wear Fur**

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Figures 17 and 18, for example, two *Playboy* models, Holly Madison and Joanna Kruppa, pose nude showing these cues previously discussed when speaking of the Versace's campaign: bottom sticking out, prominent breasts and a doll-like look in the face that seems to act as an invitation for the male. Other times such as in PETA's ads for the "Be Nice to Bunnies," the "Animal Testing Breaks Hearts," as well as the "I'd Rather Go Naked than Wear Fur" campaigns, women either feature dressed as *Playboy* bunnies or are accompanied by these rodents. Both types of pictures, those featuring a naked woman shot in pornographic style and those where they are associated with bunnies—innocent, defenseless creatures—, only serve to reinforce the stereotype of the woman as plaything for the man, and, thus, do not encourage equality among the sexes since they instrumentalize, objectify and background the female sex.

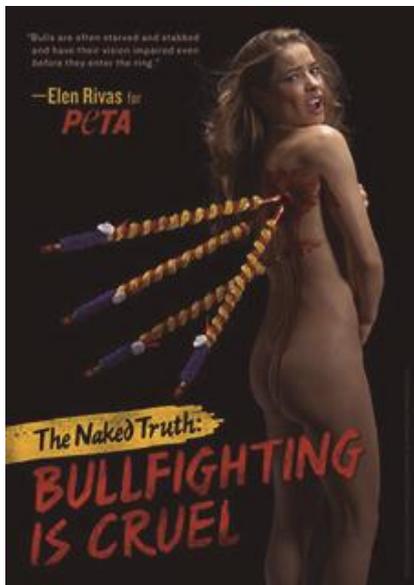
Besides this category of ads where women are sexualized, there is a second category of ads that work with the victimization of women. This second category can be organized in two groups: a) ads of assimilation where women substitute animals; and b) ads that use violence against women to sell PETA's message.

Within the first group there are ads where women, as stand-ins for animals, become the victims of practices that affect animals such as meat eating, and forms of entertainment like bullfighting or the circus that entail animal abuse and captivity. Figure 19, for example, shows an instance of what can be called the "meat cut" ads. Actress Pamela Anderson poses in a mauve bikini offering herself in a sensual pose. She is shown as literally meat, literally consumable. Remarkable is, as well, the ad (see Fig. 20) where Spanish model Elen Rivas poses as a bull that has already received the *banderillas* and whose wounds are bleeding. She is naked what renders her as consumable as the animals used for this kind of entertainment. Finally, in Figure 21, Indian actress Shilpa Shetty poses as a caged animal in PETA's "Boycott the Circus"

campaign. She is pictured wearing a figure-hugging tiger costume that portrays her as an “attractive animal” which, notwithstanding, is “beaten, lonely and abused” the way female victims of domestic violence must feel.



**Fig. 19: Pamela Anderson / All the Animals Have the Same Parts**



**Fig. 20: Elen Rivas / Bullfighting Is Cruel**



**Fig. 21: Shilpa Shetty / Beaten, Lonely and Abused**

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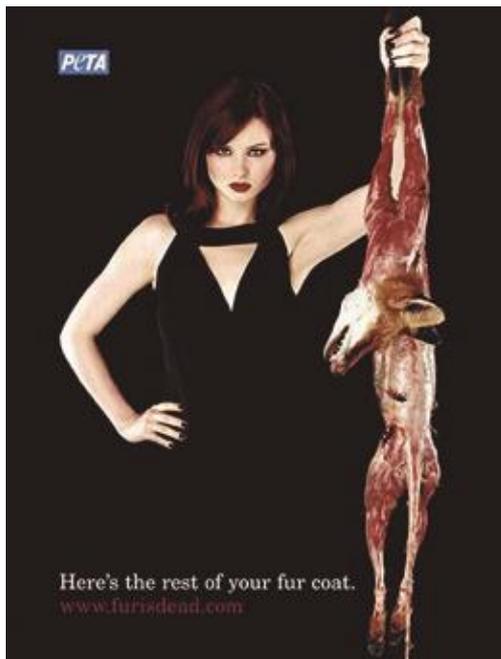
In a second group one can find those ads that play with the issue of violence against women. Some of them portray women and animals as victims connecting the suffering and degradation to which animals are submitted with that of women in rather shocking ways. In Figure 22, for example, half the body of a woman hangs from a chain between two beef carcasses against a background of plastic curtains that makes it look as if the scene was taking place at a slaughterhouse. The phrase placed at the top reads “Hooked on Meat.” The woman here is not only assimilated to meat but also shown butchered and fragmented which further objectifies her. Lastly, PETA’s last TV ad BWVAKTBOOM: "Boyfriend Went Vegan and Knocked the Bottom Out of Me" (2012) also deserves attention. In it a young woman named Jessica appears at the beginning with a pensive face and wearing a neck brace. Only after a while does the audience learn this injury is the result of having had violent sex with her boyfriend whose sexual potency has increased as a consequence of becoming vegetarian. This ad plays with the idea of domestic violence while objectifying male sexuality, and although it has a supposedly happy ending for Jessica, it unnecessarily sexualizes violence. Animals are not present but are the ultimate beneficiaries of such use of the female body as site of violence. This ad is as offensive as the 2002 PETA ad of its fur campaign



**Fig. 22: Jade McSorely / Hooked on Meat? Go Veg**

where a woman is assaulted and beaten with a baseball bat by a man who robs her fur coat.

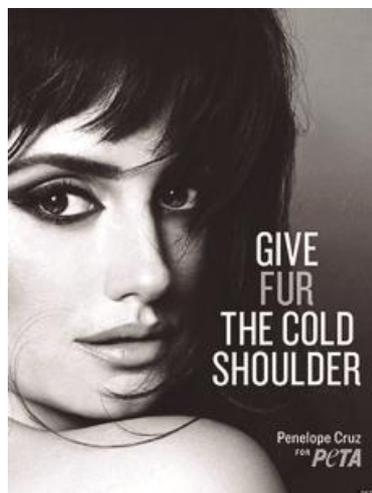
But PETA does not always victimize women. Sometimes its defense of animals also turns into images that empower them. These empowering ads are targeted at a female audience interested in the dictates of fashion and are aimed at dissuading them



**Fig. 23: Sophie Ellis-Bextor / Here's the Rest of Your Fur Coat**



**Fig. 24: Shirley Manson / Here's the Rest of Your Fur Coat**



**Fig. 25: Penelope Cruz / Give Fur the Cold Shoulder**

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from the use of fur. They generally, as in the case of the “Here’s the Rest of Your Fur Coat” campaign, feature celebrities elegantly dressed holding the skinned carcasses of animals used by the fur industry. This can be seen in Figures 23 and 24 where the elegantly groomed singer Sophie Ellis-Bextor and TV presenter Shirley Manson contrast with the crude image of the dead animals in their hands. The serious look of their faces confronts the viewer to the reality that is often hidden from the consumer—the fashion victim. In these ads, women rise as animal defenders and the fashion victim is confronted by those same women whom she admires. In line with this sort of discourse, the “Give the Fur the Cold Shoulder” features generally the naked backs of celebrities such as the Spanish actress Penelope Cruz in PETA’s most recent ad for this campaign (see Fig. 25). In Cruz’s case she looks over her bare shoulder next to the PETA slogan. This is definitely a potent lure for those interested in the fashion business since she is held as one of the most glamorous actresses in the world. As we can see PETA caters for all tastes.

The analysis of how advertising portrays the woman-animal association and of how PETA uses similar techniques to promote its cause demonstrates that such association does not always disempower women. However, there is a difference between the ads of empowerment abovementioned and those of the animal rights group. This difference lies in its end result, for while in the latter the animals are vindicated, in the former the animals involved simply respond to the stereotypes ascribed to them, but there is neither literal nor figurative liberation. The animal stunt stays equally captive, the animals they represent equally endangered. They are yet another victim of fashion.

Eduardo Robredo Zugasti has studied, from an anthropological point of view, the phenomenon of the fashion victim and, as he explains, women and animals figure prominently among the groups that suffer the consequences of the fashion industry (par.

12-5). Women are captives of following the dictates of fashion, and many animals die everyday to support yet another form of female victimization that has the body as its site of realization. Fashion is precisely also one of the sites to which Carol J. Adams refers to in her analysis of women and animals as commodified objects that are used to sell certain standards of pleasure and sexuality. This is why as a conclusion to this analysis attention will be paid to fashion as the site where discourses of victimization and objectification meet in a dynamic way with discourses of liberation. As a case in point references to British designer Alexander McQueen's runway shows will be used.

#### 4.2.3. Alexander's McQueen's Fashion Shows

Alexander McQueen (1969-2010) was one of the most prolific and intriguing designers of all times. He often used in his shows references to the woman-animal identification by turning his models literally into animals through very intricate headgear, fixing bird heads or antlers in their jackets, or using animal print fabrics. He was also known for his very provocative runway shows where he often referred openly to forms of violence against women such as witch burning, the Islamic burqa, battering, and rape. These brought him the accusation of misogyny because of what some understood as the glamorization of women's abuse.<sup>96</sup> However, little or no attention was paid to his use of animal imagery in relationship with his portrayal of women in his runway shows.<sup>97</sup> This is why, bearing in mind the previous analysis of advertising strategies and PETA's campaigns, I intend here to shed some light on McQueen's use of the woman-animal pair to further strengthen my argument that current animal studies cannot disregard animal ecofeminism because it is a critical perspective that can aptly inform an analysis on the multifacetedness of the woman-animal connection and

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<sup>96</sup> In her 1993 article on McQueen's *Taxi Driver* (fall/winter 1993-94), Marion Hume opined that "he [had] a perverse view of women" (par. 4). In 2010 Joan Smith qualified "his repeated use of images reflecting violence against women" as "shocking from a gay man" (par. 4).

<sup>97</sup> Most of McQueen's shows can be watched online at [www.alexandermcqueen.com](http://www.alexandermcqueen.com)

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contribute to their liberation. Besides, in his fashion shows McQueen develops not only a critical perspective on the world of fashion but also an environmental discourse which in his last runway show *Plato's Atlantis* (spring/summer 2010) promotes cross-speciesism or the mixing of the human with other nonhuman animals in order to survive ecological disaster. Such solution is very similar to the one offered by Peter Dickinson in the novel *Eva* which will be analyzed in a future section as an example of an ecofeminist text.

Lee Alexander McQueen was the son of a cabdriver and a genealogist living in the East End of London. From a young age he was obsessed with becoming a designer. His dream came true when he finally graduated with distinction from Saint Martin College of Art and Design. He caught the attention of British magazine editor Isabella Blow with his graduation collection presented in February 1992 “based on Jack the Ripper and Victorian prostitutes who sold their hair to be made into locks which were bought by people to give to their lovers” (Evans *Fashion at the Edge* 141). He inserted locks of his own hair in one of his jackets as if suggesting that his creations were an extension of his own body. Since then, and for a long time, the image of the battered or abused woman was a recurrent element in his collections. In March 1993 he presented a collection based on the movie *Taxi Driver* where models were wrapped in plastic film and looked battered and bruised. A little later, in October 1993, he staged *Nihilism* where models wore Edwardian jackets over tops splattered with what looked like blood or dirt. His prolific references to the victimization of women earned him, as Evans points out, the attention of *The Independent* newspaper that referred to his show as “McQueen’s Theatre of Cruelty” (qtd. in *Fashion at the Edge* 141). McQueen’s art was, indeed, often misread after this, as happened with his fifth collection *Highland Rape* (fall/winter 1995-96) which was attacked by feminists who saw in it a trivialization of

rape. His unconventional vision, which sometimes veered towards the grotesque, was aimed precisely at criticizing human flaws and paying tribute to the beauty he found in women and nature. He referred to his stage explorations as an attempt to unearth “...what goes through people’s minds, the stuff that people don’t want to admit or face up to,” and said that the shows were “about what’s buried in people’s psyches” (qtd. in Bolton 70).

Such a combination led him often to use highly provocative images through which he managed often to dismantle standards of beauty. By doing so and in contrast with some of the images previously commented upon, McQueen managed to evolve towards a criticism of the instrumentalization of women and the desacralization of nature by technological development. He did this by calling attention to the bodies of women as sites of abuse where animals are reflected upon as in a canvas where the two, women and animals, are interchangeable. In this sense, Adams’s explanation of the animal as the absent referent in images of violence against women turns out to be especially interesting since in McQueen’s shows the animal is always present, although often blended in the body of the women thanks to McQueen’s vision. In this regard, in his runway installations the connection between women and animals can be seen as working in three phases. His first phase, which spans from his graduation collection titled *Jack the Ripper Stalks His Victims* (1992) to his very polemic *Highland Rape* (fall/winter 1995-96), featured images of battered women. In a second phase, which expanded from his *Dante* collection (fall/winter 1996-97) to *The Girl Who Lived in a Tree* (fall/winter 2008-09), women started being represented as human-animal and human-plant hybrids thanks to the use of elaborate headgear. In his third phase, which began with *Natural Dis-tinction Un-natural Selection* (spring/summer 2009) and ended with *Plato’s Atlantis* (spring/summer 2010), this animalization or hybridization of

women turned into a wakeup call to raise awareness of environmental problems such as biodiversity reduction and climate change.

It is widely recognized that McQueen's work was inspired by a multiplicity of historical, artistic, and scientific references as well as by the most pressing events of his time. In this sense, fashion historian Caroline Evans acknowledges in his work the influences of "the work of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century anatomists, in particular that of Andreas Vesalius; the photography of Joel-Peter Witkin from the 1980s and 90s; and the films of Pasolini, Kubric, Buñuel and Hitchcock" (*Fashion at the Edge* 141). Furthermore, in the catalogue to the exhibition *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty* (2011) Andrew Bolton, curator at The Costume Institute at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, relates McQueen's creative impulse to a profound engagement with Romanticism. He analyzes his work through the concept of the Sublime<sup>98</sup> which he interprets as the engine leading McQueen to go beyond the limits imposed on fashion at his time. Bolton also mentions the importance McQueen conferred to his runway shows which he conceived almost as installations of a performance artist:

Through his runway presentations, McQueen validated powerful emotions as compelling sources of aesthetic experience. In equating emotion with aesthetics, he advanced a tradition that emerged in the last decades of the eighteenth century through the Romantic movement. Romanticism associated unfettered emotionalism with the appreciation of beauty. It placed particular emphasis on awe and wonder, fear and terror, emotions closely aligned with the concept of the Sublime. As an experience, the Sublime was both destabilizing and transformative, involving instances that exceeded our capacities for self-control and rational comprehension. These moments of mute encounter describe the experience of McQueen's runway presentations. Over and over again, his shows took his audience to the limits of reason, eliciting an uneasy pleasure that merged wonder and terror, incredulity and revulsion. For

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<sup>98</sup> Bolton seems to be using here the concept of the sublime as proposed by Edmund Burke in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). Burke juxtaposes the sublime and the beautiful, making the sublime a superior experience. While the two produce awe, it is the sublime the one that entails a feeling of horror and such extremity of emotion is more enduring than the mere observation of beauty. However, when put in relationship with the experience of nature, as Patrick D. Murphy explains in "An Ecological Feminist Revisioning of the Masculinist Sublime" (2012), it often derives into feelings of superiority and triumph over it as exemplified by the experiences described in Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Mont Blanc" (79). That is probably why Murphy proposes a reworking of this term under the light of feminist and ecofeminist theory which, if applied to McQueen's works, may derive into interesting conclusions since he aimed, within the limits of his medium, to offer an alternative vision of women, nature, and animals.

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McQueen, the Sublime was the strongest of passions, as it contained the potential for exaltation and transcendence beyond the quotidian. (12)

Certainly McQueen found in the runway show the best medium to express the peculiarity of his concept of fashion as an art committed to exposing, amongst other things, the cruelty of the world. He turned fashion into a revolutionary statement every time one of his collections was premiered. As he once said: “I’m making points about my time, about the times we live in. My work is a social document about the world today” (qtd. in Bolton 12). He was not interested in being politically correct in his shows since he thought the only way in which fashion could turn into an instrument to raise social awareness of the inequalities of the world was by not being so. Perhaps due to this, in *La Poupee* (spring/summer 1997) he dared to show model Debra Shaw chained to a metal frame that restricted her movements on stage and suggested the slavery of black people (see Fig. 26). Equally provocative was how he integrated the Paralympic athlete Aimee Mullins with the rest of the models in his *No 13* (spring/summer 1999) show where she wore intricately carved wooden legs in an image that turned the world around (see Fig. 27). He, in sum, was aware of difference and wanted to show people how “[b]eauty can come from the strangest of places...” (qtd. in Bolton 196 ).



**Fig. 26: Debra Shaw / La Poupee**



**Fig. 27: Aimee Mullins / No 13**

Going back to the woman-animal association, this can be found in the first phase of McQueen's runway shows in his development of what Evans calls "an aesthetic of cruelty" (*Fashion: Alexander McQueen* par. 5). Such an aesthetic is sustained by his portrayal of women as victims of abuse in his first three collections: *Jack the Ripper Stalks His Victims* (1992), *Taxi Driver* (March 1993), and *Nihilism* (October 1993). In the fourth one, *The Birds* (spring/summer 1995), he started using one of his fundamental themes, that of birds.<sup>99</sup> This show revolved around the idea of roadkill. The models wore tire marks on their clothes to make them look as if they had been driven over. The runway was turned into a road and the printed tire marks were combined with frequent references to birds, animals that fascinated McQueen as much as women. As early as 1995 McQueen was already making a connection between the suffering of animals and that of women. He had already depicted women as victims in his previous shows but in *The Birds* he, for the first time, situated women as substitutes for animal victims. From the beginning of his career he was also displaying in his shows another one of his obsessions, death, which he often portrayed as the result of human cruelty. He continued developing this theme, which resonated with romantic and gothic influences, in his next collection which he presented under the very provocative title *Highland Rape* (fall/winter 1995-96). This show stirred a lot of attention and brought him the accusation of misogyny due to the use of the word rape and the imagery of brutalized women stumbling on stage. However, as Evans contends, his collection was misread as literally dealing with the abuse of women although, as he declared, what he was doing was to play tribute to his Scottish background and provocatively denounce

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<sup>99</sup> McQueen was extremely fond of birds. From a young age he had been a member of the Young Ornithologists Club of Great Britain. He also confessed his fascination for birds in the program notes of his spring/summer collection of 2009 *Natural Dis-tinction Un-natural Selection*. This fascination is attested by his own words: "Birds in flight fascinate me. I admire eagles and falcons. I'm inspired by a feather but also its color, its graphics, its weightlessness and its engineering. It's so elaborate. In fact I try and transpose the beauty of a bird to women" (qtd. in Bolton 172).

“England’s rape of Scotland” as a “genocide” (*Fashion: Alexander McQueen* par. 7). This was done precisely at a time when media coverage of the conflicts in Bosnia and Rwanda were vivid images of violence in the eyes of Western viewers. Furthermore, as Evans proves, it also seems that the accusations of misogyny against McQueen were misplaced due to his own personal experience with domestic violence and his own understanding of women. One of McQueen’s sisters had been the victim of domestic violence (*Evans Fashion: Alexander McQueen* par. 15) and this made him aware of the suffering involved in this sort of situation: “I’ve seen a woman get nearly beaten to death by her husband. I know what misogyny is ... I want people to be afraid of the women I dress” (McQueen qtd. in *Evans Fashion: Alexander McQueen* par. 16). He, therefore, wanted to create a woman “who looks so fabulous you wouldn’t dare lay a hand on her” (McQueen qtd. in *Evans Fashion: Alexander McQueen* par. 15). His ideal woman was a strong one and this ambition led him to find his inspiration in iconic women such as Joan of Arc or Marie Antoinette as his collection *Joan* (fall/winter 1998-99) and *Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious* (fall/winter 2002-3) prove. Perhaps because of this desire to portray a powerful and charismatic woman and also to counteract the accusations mentioned above, he left behind references to the abuse of women in a second phase which began with his collection *Dante* (fall/winter 1996-97).

In *Dante*, as Evans explains, McQueen created an image of a feral woman, in line with the nineteenth-century *femme fatale* and the wild woman archetype, by making one of his models wear a headpiece of stag’s horn which conferred an unearthly and defiant beauty on her (see Fig. 28) (*Fashion: Alexander McQueen* par. 15). This image of a human-animal hybrid was a trademark of McQueen’s throughout this second phase. It spoke of his concept of women as powerful and not necessarily fixed in the role of victims. His work therefore evolved from a narrative where female domination was

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predominant to one where the tables were turned repositioning the victim in the place of the aggressor (Evans *Fashion: Alexander McQueen* par. 19). In this sense, it is especially significant that McQueen uses the animalization of women to convey their force and that, contrary to the images of empowerment studied when analyzing advertising strategies, his choice does not necessarily fall on predator wild animals but on prey animals such as some bird species, deer, and gazelles. In other collections he also identifies women with animals that have often been the object of collectors: birds, butterflies, and mollusks. This choice makes sense in a man who loved art collecting, birds, and swimming. He identified the ultimate target of his art, women, with some of his other passions and paid homage to them by conferring strength and character on them.

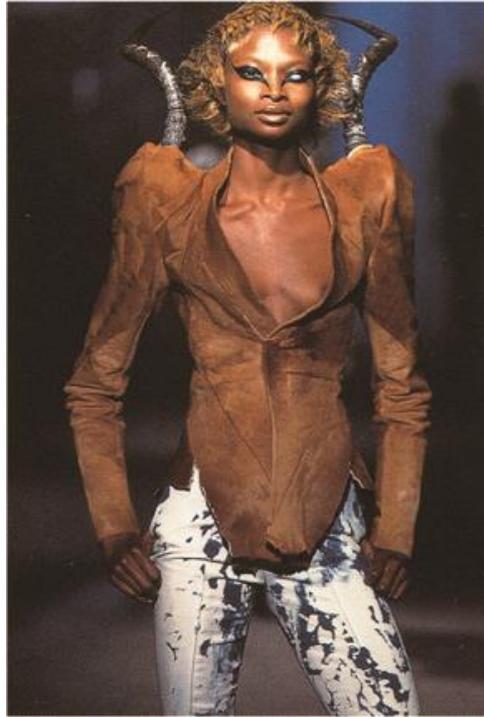


**Fig. 28: Dante / Headpiece**

Perhaps one of the most meaningful examples of this second phase is constituted by his *It's a Jungle Out There* collection (fall/winter 1997-98) based on the theme of the Thompson's gazelle and its vulnerability to predators. In the show the models' makeup

and hairstyle as well as their clothes, made of animal skins, transformed them into the animal preys they represented. According to McQueen:

The whole show feeling, was about the Thompson's gazelle. It's a poor little critter – the markings are lovely. It's got these dark eyes, the white and black with the tan markings on the side, the horns – but it is the food chain of Africa. As soon as it's born it's dead, I mean you're lucky if it lasts a few months, and that's how I see human life, in the same way. You know, we can all be discarded quite easily ... you're there, you're gone, it's a jungle out there! (qtd. in Bolton 159)



**Fig. 29: It's a Jungle Out There / Jacket**

In Evans's words, through the image of this defenseless animal, McQueen was dealing with "the idea of animal instincts in the natural world as metaphor for the dog-eats-dog nature of the urban jungle," but the poses of defiance adopted by the models on the runway spoke otherwise, not of acceptance of fate but of rebellion (*Fashion: Alexander McQueen* par. 20). In this sense, McQueen's central piece, a jacket with pointed shoulders from which a pair of twisting gazelle horns stood up worn by a black model wearing metallic contact lenses, which made her look otherworldly, reinforces once again his talent at subverting conventional expectations (see Fig. 29). Moreover, his exploration of the prey/predator topic acquired a substantial importance later on in

his third phase where he portrays humans as dangerous creatures, not only for each other, but also for the planet.

The oneiric undertones of his transitional collection *The Girl Who Lived in a Tree* (fall/winter 2008-09), inspired by an elm under whose shade McQueen liked to rest in his country house near Fairlight Cove in East Sussex, gave way to a new period where McQueen turned his criticism towards concern for the environment and criticism of the fashion industry. The first of these interests can be found in his collections *Natural Dis-tinction Un-natural Selection* (spring/summer 2009) and *Plato's Atlantis* (spring/summer 2010), while the second is the subject matter of *The Horn of Plenty* (fall/winter 2009-10). Curiously, in all of them the animalization of women is present, although the importance given to the elaborate headpieces of the second phase is substituted by full body animal costumes like the swan-like (see Fig. 30) and the crow-like garments (see Fig. 31). Both costumes are part of his collection *The Horn of Plenty* presented as a satire of the fashion industry. Models appear transformed into walking objects on stage due to their Philip Treacy<sup>100</sup> hats which this time reproduce items which range from umbrellas and lamps to paint rollers. When they appear as animals their attire does not leave any room for doubt. They are the prisoners of an industry that, taken to the extreme, becomes a grotesque pantomime which incarcerates women with its impossible codes of beauty. Perhaps, in order to symbolize that, McQueen makes one of the models wear a birdcage as a hat, so as to represent women as captives of a materialist industry (see Fig. 32).

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<sup>100</sup> Philip Treacy is one of London's most famous milliners and collaborated with McQueen from his *Dante* collection onwards.



**Fig. 30: The Horn of Plenty / Swan Costume**



**Fig. 31: The Horn of Plenty / Crow Costume**



**Fig. 32: The Horn of Plenty / Birdcage Hat**

This mockery of fashion is combined around the same phase with a growing interest in the environment. In the spring/summer collection of 2009 titled *Natural Dis-tinction Un-natural Selection* McQueen reflected upon Darwin's theory of evolution producing a collection that was interpreted as "a commentary on humankind's lack of consideration for the environment" (qtd. in Bolton 25). McQueen was siding with the nonhuman and turning the runway into an ecological statement. Perhaps because of this, for the first time he left aside the importance he always gave to tailoring and texture to allow engineered prints derived from the natural world to take over. Models are turned into living organisms easily recognizable as insects, while an assortment of stuffed wild animals lined on the runway face the human audience as if questioning them about the state to which humans have led the planet whose giant image presides the scene (see Fig. 33).



**Fig. 33: *Natural Dis-tinction Un-natural Selection***

Such a discourse on the environment was further developed in his spring/summer collection of 2010, *Plato's Atlantis*, his last one produced while he was alive. Here McQueen envisioned a future Earth where the planet, once the ice caps have melted, is transformed into an island, a new Atlantis, where humans need to become hybrids in order to survive in closer contact with the place where they come from, the ocean.<sup>101</sup> At the beginning of the show model Rachel Zimmermann is shown lying naked on the sand experimenting what it seems to be a kind of mutation into a reptile or amphibian (see Fig. 34). Once the show begins, the runway is filled with models that look almost like aliens from a science fiction film (see Fig. 35). McQueen was engaging with the preoccupation with global warming and constructing a solution built on cross-specieziation. He defined it as “Darwin’s theory of evolution in reverse” (qtd. in Bolton 25). He was foreseeing a time where in order to survive humans would need to mix with

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<sup>101</sup> The image of the ocean as the site of an alternative civilization has been analyzed by Irene Sanz Alonso in her doctoral dissertation “Redefining Humanity in Science Fiction: The Alien from an Ecofeminist Perspective.” Here she comments Joan Slonczewski’s ecofeminist novel *A Door Into Ocean* (1986) where the action takes place in Shora, a moon covered by water, where all its inhabitants are female.

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other species. There they would become a new species through hybridization, developing the characteristics of amphibious animals. As in Peter Dickinson's *Eva*, the image of the island,<sup>102</sup> this time a new Atlantis, becomes the site for the creation of a new civilization that will give hope to humanity. The solution to the survival of human life on Earth comes through becoming animal, an amphibian or a reptile, an animal adapted to the changes provoked by the human.



**Fig. 34: Plato's Atlantis / Runway Photo**

McQueen began his career looking at the past, but at this time he was looking at the future. He turned his last show into a reflection of humankind's need to reinvent itself and respond to the environmental crisis that McQueen had already commented upon in the spring/summer collection of 2009.

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<sup>102</sup> The island as site of alternative civilizations is a ubiquitous literary image. It features for instance in Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627) as well as in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726).



**Fig. 35: Plato's Atlantis / Hairdo and Make-Up (Detail)**

The analysis of these examples, from advertising to McQueen, gives sufficient proof of the ubiquitousness of the woman-animal association as well as of the complications involved in its understanding. There are many difficulties enmeshed in working with a pair long misrepresented by a culture ruled by a master mentality. Often, as in the case of advertising, both women and animals are objectified in images that render them as disposable and fixed into stereotypes of hypersexuality, ferocity, or domesticity that, although empowering to a certain extent, may also strengthen some misconceptions. Curiously, even when in the hands of groups such as PETA, that should be aware of the inequities faced by the oppressed, the woman-animal association becomes more often than not an instrument of subjugation instead of liberation. More perplexing is the use of this association by McQueen who, although a confessed animal lover and champion of women, did use animal skins and fur in some of his collections. However, it is certain that he evolved from a denunciation of the shared oppression of women and animals to a new world inhabited by empowered female human-animal

hybrids. It is this late turn towards a cross-species representation of the pairing, where borders are erased between the two that confers his work a higher sense of the possibilities involved in a reinvention of this association. Such a reinvention is needed as part of the ecofeminist enterprise to “bridge gaps between reason/emotion, human/animal, man/woman, and self/other” (Gruen and Weil 479).

Finally, the currency of this pairing supports my initial argument about the need for today’s booming field of animal studies to pay attention to what animal ecofeminists have said thus far. In a fast changing world where theories get dated before growing into a mature construction, recycling the past may be a constructive way of advancing towards interdisciplinary collaborations which can provide the insight needed to explore issues that still intrigue us. This is exemplified by the contentious relationship between animal ecofeminism and animal studies which has the study of human-animal relationships at its center.

In the following section an update of Gaard’s detailed 2002 review on animal ecofeminism, then known as vegetarian ecofeminism, will be given in order to show the state of the art of this field. After this, in depth attention will be paid to the conflict between animal ecofeminism and animal studies to conclude that there is more in common between the two than has been traditionally recognized. This will bring us to the question of how animal ecofeminism may inform the analysis of literary texts by bringing together its theoretical insights, its commitment to the real animal, and the usefulness of its methodology.

#### 4.3. PAST AND PRESENT: ANIMAL ECOFEMINISM REVISITED

It has already been mentioned how ecofeminism and more specifically animal ecofeminism serve to create an awareness about the situation of oppression of women and animals. Nevertheless, as Greta Gaard explains, there is a lack of acknowledgement

on the part of animal studies of the role ecofeminism has played in framing a big part of the discussion that is taking place about the animal today (“Feminist Animal Studies” 18-19; “Speaking” 524). Since there is such an intellectual debt, in order to vindicate the role animal ecofeminism has had in the development of animal studies, in the section that follows attention will be given to the elements that, according to Gaard, most importantly affected the beginning of animal ecofeminism<sup>103</sup> and how an important wealth of works produced by ecofeminists still nourish this movement. Many of them will actually inform the analysis of texts presented in this dissertation.

As her articles demonstrate, since 2003 Gaard has been by far one of the most vocal authors in tracing the roots and describing the significance of the woman and animal connection in the formation of animal ecofeminism. Although it is true that Carol J. Adams was the first one to analyze this connection in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990), Gaard was fundamental in the inauguration of the field in 1993 with the publication of her *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*. Here the woman-animal connection was for the first time articulated as part of the ecofeminist movement which, as Gaard explains, has had a “contentious relationship with the idea of animal liberation” from its beginning (“Vegetarian” 117). Gaard also mentions that prior to her book only two anthologies had touched in a marginal manner the role played by animals in ecofeminist theory (“Vegetarian” 118). These were Léonie Caldecott and Stephanie Leland’s *Reclaim the Earth: Women Speak Out for Life on Earth* (1983) and Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein’s *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism* (1990). Today animals are already recognized as a suitable academic topic in the humanities as is shown by many of the conferences, associations, journals,

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<sup>103</sup> As Greta Gaard explained to me via electronic mail (4 Dec 2012), her choice of the term “animal ecofeminism” over “vegetarian ecofeminism,” which she had used in her review essay on this matter published in 2002, is derived from the fact that, after a decade of “animal studies,” “it seems clearer to use the term “animal ecofeminism” referencing the thirty-year history of ecofeminists examining the sex/gender/species/race/class connections.”

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graduate programs and books mentioned in review works by Kenneth Shapiro and Marion W. Copeland, Margo DeMello, and Kathleen Gerbasi. However, as Gaard repeatedly mentions, when it comes to connecting women and animals, scholars working in critical animal studies prefer to be cautious, and avoid using labels such as ecofeminism due to the peril of being accused of essentialism. Actually, partly as a consequence of this need to claim the role both feminism and ecofeminism have played as theoretical foundation of animal studies, a special issue of the journal of feminist philosophy *Hypatia* under the title of *Animal Others* was published in the summer of 2012.

From a theoretical point of view, ecofeminism explores the oppression of women and connects it to that of nature; thus, it would have been only logical to expect that it would have also dealt with the oppression of animals from its beginning, but this was not the case. So, although since its beginnings in the late 1970s, ecofeminism had analyzed the workings of other systems of oppression outside of the sphere of sexism and naturism—racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, and disability—, it took until 1990 to include speciesism. Nonetheless, the question of the animal remained an uncomfortable one due to the risk of essentialism and animalization of the objects of oppression. This was so much so that some ecofeminists even rejected having to include this issue in their explorations. But, as Gaard explains, when no one cared about the animal in academia, at least a few ecofeminists dared to bring up the nonhuman as subject of exploration, meeting with the rejection of their colleagues who discouraged the lack of seriousness of such endeavor (“Speaking” 522). However, today, thanks to the development of animal studies under the protective umbrella of continental philosophy, animal studies has acquired the mark of respect required by academia to consider it as a proper field of enquiry. Nevertheless, some attention needs to be given

to the reasons why very few animal critics acknowledge the enormous contribution of the work done by ecofeminists in the deconstruction of dualisms such as human/animal.<sup>104</sup> This is especially significant because today's consumerist society offers examples, as has been shown, that indicate that such contrasting pairs are still alive, and that, when it comes to the woman-animal association, they impregnate both linguistic expressions as well as advertising and the visual arts.

In order to understand why animal ecofeminism is still current, it is helpful to take a look at Gaard's explanation of its conceptual basis and look at other works that inform animal ecofeminism today. To begin with, it is interesting to evince how the same forces that motivated the appearance of animal ecofeminism are still at play making this philosophical movement alive. These forces are, according to Gaard, the experience of sympathy for nonhuman animals, the development of animal liberation theories, the countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as feminism ("Vegetarian 118").

The importance of sympathy and compassion is present in much of what has been written on the human-animal relationship in the last decade. Sympathy is at the root of a paradigm shift that has led to new and groundbreaking ways of looking at the animal from an ethical, philosophical, scientific, and literary point of view. Marc Bekoff has been probably one of the most daring examples of a scientist withdrawing from the hyperactivity of mainstream forms of Western science and arguing for a compassionate science, what he calls "deep science" ("Redecorating" 635). He, for instance, in *The Animal Manifesto* (2010), inspired by the rhetoric of the fight against climate change, proposes taking stock of our level of compassion towards nonhuman animals in order to become aware of the ways in which we can expand our "compassion

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<sup>104</sup> In this respect Val Plumwood's dismantling of the master mentality in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993) deserves special attention.

footprint” (3). Interestingly, he does not mention any of his predecessors in this attempt at creating a compassionate science, such as nineteenth-century women physicians like Elizabeth Blackwell and Arabella Kingsford; neither does he consider the impact the feminist care tradition has had in developing a more compassionate approach to animals in science. This precisely is one of the issues that Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams explore in their book *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics: A Reader* (2007) with articles such as Deborah Slicer’s “Your Daughter or Your Dog? A Feminist Assessment of the Animal Research Issue” about compassion and animal experimentation. However, as was mentioned in a previous section, other authors with an interest in feminist studies have not omitted such a contribution when speaking of new epistemological ways of approaching animals. Traci Warkentin, for example, in “Interspecies Etiquette: An Ethics of Paying Attention to Animals” (2010) calls attention to the importance of compassion and relationship in the ecofeminist approach proposed by Donovan as well as feminism in general (104-05). On a more practical level, Gay A. Bradshaw, a practitioner of trans-species psychology, a field she developed as a result of her discovery of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in elephants, promotes in “You See Me, but Do You Hear Me?” fusing sensibility and science for the enhancement of trans-species dialogue (409-10). In the humanities, Marion W. Copeland, who set herself to the task of reviewing the latest developments in animal literary studies in “Literary Animal Studies in 2012: Where We Are, Where We Are Going,” draws attention to the crucial role of the imagination for knowing animals and suggests that sympathy is the engine behind the literary imagination of those writing animal stories or analyzing them (97).

Regarding animal liberation theories, the debate between welfarists and rightists initiated by Peter Singer’s *Animal Liberation* (1975) and Tom Regan’s *The Case for*

*Animal Rights* (1983) is still alive. However, it can be said that besides the development of the so-called new welfarism previously commented upon, in 1993 a point of convergence was reached between the two with the foundation of the Great Ape Project (GAP), an initiative aimed at obtaining the recognition of three basic rights for great apes: the right to life, protection of individual liberty, and prohibition of torture. This was thoroughly illustrated with the publication of the book *The Great Ape Project: Equality Beyond Humanity* (1993) edited by Paola Cavalieri and Peter Singer in which thirty-four authors coming from very different fields supported this initiative. Ecofeminists have argued against the GAP considering it a reformulation of an ethical pyramid where only humans' closest animal relatives are granted rights.<sup>105</sup> It is seen, therefore, as too human as well as too intellectualized because of its appreciation of those characteristics that situate animals close to humans.<sup>106</sup> Animal ecofeminists offer more imaginative and comprehensive solutions. Kelly Oliver, for instance, thinks that the rights discourse is limited when applied to animals. She believes that instead of focusing so much on Bentham's question "Can they suffer?" which guides Singer's and Regan's theories of rights, more attention should be given to our capacity to respond to the suffering of the *other* (Oliver 222). In her response to Peter Singer's and Paula Casal's presentation of GAP in Spain,<sup>107</sup> another ecofeminist, Alicia H. Puleo, proposes

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<sup>105</sup> In the introduction to *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics*, Donovan and Adams give five reasons why ecofeminists argue against the ethics of rights that is behind the GAP: 1) Its rationalist framework implies that animals in order to be considered as persons with rights have to be compared with humans. This turns humans into the deceptive measure of all living creatures; 2) Its emphasis on the similarities between human and nonhuman animals makes difficult to see animals in their own terms; 3) Its disregard for the network of interdependencies in which both humans and nonhuman animals live eliminates the need to care of those most in need of support; 4) Its devaluation of emotions means that feelings are not taken into account for making an ethical decision with regard to animals; 5) An ethics of rights favors "rules that are universalizable or judgments that are quantifiable" instead of an emotional response (6). Ecofeminists prefer to adopt a contextual approach that takes into account the individual and his situation (5-6).

<sup>106</sup> A more thorough account of the debate between feminist animal ethics and mainstream animal ethics will be given in the following section.

<sup>107</sup> The GAP was presented in Spain by philosophers Peter Singer and Paula Casal in a special issue of the journal *Laguna* in 2000. Today there is even an official website in Spanish that proves the commitment of the scientific community to this project in Spain <[www.proyectogransimio.org](http://www.proyectogransimio.org)>.

an intermediate position between an ethics of rights and an ethics of care as the best way to find a respectful way of dealing with the *other* (356).

Regarding social awareness, the countercultural movement of the 1960s and 1970s still resonates today in causes raised as a consequence of the risks posed by climate change and overpopulation. Scientists have demonstrated the connection between diet and global warming. Anthony J. McMichael et al. have shown that a fifth of total greenhouse-gas emissions is produced by agricultural activity, especially livestock production (1253). Taking into account the complex relations between energy, food, and health they propose reducing meat production and consumption as one of the measures that could contribute to a more sustainable world. These and other scientific considerations have been taken into account by the United Nations which recently published, as one of its top climate change publications, the *Integrated Assessment of Black Carbon and Tropospheric Ozone* which points out the need to efficiently manage livestock manure, one of the main sources of CH<sub>4</sub> emissions. As a consequence some argue in favor of more sustainable agricultural practices<sup>108</sup>—like letting cows graze on pasture instead of feeding them maize—that will improve the life of cattle. Another initiative is shifting to a low meat diet and, if possible, to vegetarianism or veganism (McKibben n.pag.). In this sense, it is meaningful to find that Francis Moore Lappé's *Diet for Small Planet* (1971), once considered the vegetarian bible for countercultural activists (Gaard "Vegetarian" 124), has been followed by a sequel written by Lappé's daughter. In *Diet for a Hot Planet: The Climate Crisis at the End of Your Fork and What You Can Do about It* (2010) Anna Lappé exposes the environmental risks involved in current food production and proposes a "climate friendly diet." This coincides with the defense of a vegetarian diet by animal ecofeminists, although it is

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<sup>108</sup> For more information on this kind of initiatives see <http://smallplanet.org/>

true that the reason for change is not so much the eradication of the suffering of animals as the mitigation of a problem caused by an anthropocentric world system.

Finally, as a last factor, Gaard acknowledges the long history of women's activism on behalf of animals and the impact it has had on the development of animal ecofeminism ("Vegetarian" 125). Josephine Donovan paid attention to such tradition in her article "Animal Rights and Feminist Theory" (1990) and some years later Linda Hogan, Deena Metzger and Brenda Peterson compiled a collection of literary texts that reflected the special relationship between women and animals in *Intimate Nature: The Bond Between Women and Animals* (1998). This became the first literary anthology to consider animal literature written by women, and it showcased how the literary imagination of women has always been potently inspired by animals. More recently books such as *Sister Species: Women, Species and Social Justice* (2011) by Lisa A. Kemmerer and *Women and the Animal Rights Movement* (2011) by Emily Gaarder have served to demonstrate that there is still a strong intellectual and emotional connection between women and animal liberation activism.

This review of recent ecofeminist publications shows that animal ecofeminism is still alive not only from a practical point of view, as it has been attested by the analysis of images in the previous sections, but also from a theoretical one. Such theoretical wealth contributes to the debate about women and animals with new and provocative ideas that need to be taken into account if there is a true intention to end the oppression of both groups.

#### 4.4. FINDING COMMON GROUND: ANIMAL ECOFEMINISM AND ANIMAL STUDIES

Once explained what ecofeminism is as well as the praxis and currency of the strand known as animal ecofeminism, a reflection upon the difficult relationship

maintained between animal ecofeminism and animal studies in the last decade might prove useful to map the terrain they share. In order to do this, attention will be paid in the following pages to the ecofeminist critique of mainstream animal ethics and to the development and use of intersectionality as a tool to disentangle the many axes (gender, race, culture, class, species, age, capability) that can intersect in the process of otherisation.

As it was abovementioned, in the summer of 2012 the journal of feminist philosophy *Hypatia* published an entire issue devoted to tracing the supposedly forgotten contribution of feminist animal theory to the field of animal studies.<sup>109</sup> Its editors, Lori Gruen and Kari Weil, sustain in their introduction that the first criticism of mainstream animal ethics, represented by Peter Singer and Tom Regan, came from feminist scholars. In this sense, they highlight the significant work of Marti Kheel as fundamental for the development of an ecofeminist ethics. They also mention the role played by Carol J. Adams who uncovered the existing connections between different forms of oppression in articles published in *WomanSpirit* (1976) and *Heresies* (1987). These were conducive to her groundbreaking book *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990). Gruen and Weil also pay attention to the work of Josephine Donovan, who in “Animal Rights and Feminist Theory” published in *Signs* in 1990, initiated the so-called feminist care tradition in animal ethics. Furthermore, these scholars do not forget to point out the pioneering work about animals done by ecofeminists since the early 1990s. In this respect, they call attention to the significance of a special issue of the journal *Hypatia* in 1991 on “Ecological Feminism” where Deane Curtin, Carol J. Adams, and Deborah

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<sup>109</sup> In Gruen and Weil’s introduction to this special issue of *Hypatia*, they use the expression “feminist animal studies” to refer to what Gaard named as “vegetarian ecofeminism” in her 2002 review and more recently refers as “animal ecofeminism” (see fn. 76). Other denominations are used by other contributors to this issue. Maneesha Deckha for example prefers “postcolonial, posthumanist feminist theory” (“Toward” 527) and Traci Warkentin uses “environmental/eco/feminist praxis in animal studies” (“Interspecies” 499).

Slicer offered alternative ways to thinking about other animals in mainstream animal ethics (477-78).

As Gruen and Weil remark, feminist theorists have directed three main criticisms against mainstream animal ethics. The first one has to do with its “abstract individualism”; the second revolves around the lack of analysis of the form of “tyranny” they condemn; and the third deals with the separation of reason from emotion and affect when thinking about human-animal relationships (478).

The first object of critique resonates with Plumwood’s denunciation of hyperactivity in *Environmental Culture* (2002) as one of the obstacles to a more balance coexistence with the more-than-human *other*. As she explains in her book:

...dominant forms of reason – economic, political, scientific and ethical/prudential – are failing us because they are subject to a systematic pattern of distortions and illusions in which they are historically embedded and which they are unable to see or reflect upon. These blindspots especially affect the way we understand our relationships to nature and to one another, and they derive especially from the hegemonic origins of these patterns of thought, which have identified the biospheric Other as passive and without limits, its frontiers an invitation to invasion. It is the special form of failure such monological and hegemonic forms of reason are subject to that they misunderstand their own enabling conditions – the body, ecology and non-human nature for example, often because they have written these down as inferior or constructed them as background in arriving at an illusory and hyperbolized sense of human autonomy. These distorted forms are currently devastating the world under the guise of reason. (*Environmental* 16-7)

When it comes to the animal such a model of reason produces a distorted interpretation of individuals and situations. These are ultimately assimilated into patterns that enclose them into fixed categories which often lead to generalizations. “[I]mportant situational and structural differences” are therefore downgraded since they do not facilitate the clean categorization of this form of rationality (Gruen and Weil 479).

Feminists also criticize in mainstream animal ethics the lack of substantive exploration of the tyrannical forces that oppress the *other* on the basis, for example, of sexual, racial, or species difference. Gruen and Weil explain that although both welfarists and rightists make the connection between the different objects of oppression

and the underlying structures that support such situation, they do not, as feminists do, explore the “conceptual link between the “logic of domination” that operates to reinforce sexism, racism, and heterosexism and the logic that supports the oppression of nonhuman animals and the more than human world more generally” (479). Ecofeminism does devote attention to the disentangling of these structures which affect otherized groups. It actually locates the solution to such oppression in the substitution of this hierarchical model by heterarchical forms of relationship (Murphy *Literature* 5).

Feminists also denounce the separation Singer and Regan establish between reason and emotion as if these could not work together. However, ecofeminists defend the need not to deny the importance and use of reason, but to recognize “the continuity between reason and emotion” (Bailey “On the Backs” 2). This is part of the ecofeminist attempt at deconstructing the dichotomies on which the Western master mentality is sustained. Moreover, animal feminists endorse a feminist care tradition in animal ethics. Such an approach, to which Adams and Donovan have paid close attention in *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics* (2007), is very different to the ethics of rights that guides the work of established animal ethics. The ethics of care, which will be more extensively commented upon in a future section, emerged in the 1980s thanks to the work of Carol Gilligan who in 1982 published her book *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* arguing that women understand the world in different ways than men. She concluded that women decide not on the grounds of rules but of the caring thing to do. This does not make women morally superior or inferior, just different. They develop in a way that focuses on connections among people, rather than separation, and with an ethics of care for those people, rather than an ethics of justice,<sup>110</sup> which is traditionally associated to men.

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<sup>110</sup> The expressions ethics of rights and ethics of justice are interchangeable.

In spite of these clashes between feminist animal theory and established animal ethics, Gruen and Weil adopt a conciliatory stand and find in Jacques Derrida's discourse on the animal a point of convergence between the two. This is so thanks to "[h]is rejection of abstract rules and, in particular, his attention to the pathos" that humans share with animals (Gruen and Weil 482). Like Peter Singer, in "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)," Derrida uses Jeremy Bentham's question "Can they suffer?" to build his argument but, unlike him, he does not use it from a rationalistic point of view measuring the amount of suffering animal share with humans, but concentrates really in the carnal experience of suffering and mortality.

This, according to them, makes possible for Adams and Donovan "to describe him as 'having adopted (without labeling it as such) a feminist ethics-of-care approach to the treatment of animals'" (qtd. in Gruen and Weil 482). Furthermore his "critique of the word *animal* as a term that legitimates violence by drawing a single, untenable line of difference between us and them and thereby denying the differences that exist between as well as within species" is also seen as "useful for feminist and queer theory's disruption of normative categories and normative relations between species, sexes, and genders" (Gruen and Weil 482).

Given the impact Derrida's philosophy has had for animal studies, it could be said that the two movements are theoretically closer than they are inclined to recognize. Moreover, Gruen and Weil's analysis reveals that feminist animal theory can really help to grasp the complexities of the human-animal relationship. This is so thanks basically to its methodological openness. This entails two main features: ecofeminism's appreciation of the connection between theory and practice and its endorsement of intersectional analysis.

#### *Chapter Four. Ecofeminism and the Animal*

From its early days ecofeminism has prized itself of combining theory and praxis. The famous sentence “the personal is political,” which is attributed to Carol Hanisch and that became the leitmotif of feminists by and large from the 1970s onwards, reflects one of the traits of ecofeminism and has special significance in the case of animal ecofeminism. This movement has usually among its ranks people committed to the promotion of moral vegetarianism as a way to endorse the cause of the nonhuman animals that are sacrificed daily for human consumption. Moral vegetarianism means the rejection of meat as well as other animal products—what would be called moral veganism—because “it is morally the right thing to do” (Warren *Ecofeminist* 125). This practical orientation in particular has sometimes been the source of heated discussion among ecofeminists. Known is the controversy raised about this form of ethical vegetarianism as a result of Kathryn Paxton George’s article “Should Feminists Be Vegetarians?” published in *Sign* in 1994 where she questions this practice as yet another form of gender and class oppression. Her article generated the comments of Carol J. Adams, Josephine Donovan, Greta Gaard and Lori Gruen in a 1995 issue of the same publication and a reply to them by George herself. A similar case is that recalled by Noël Sturgeon in her article “Considering Animals” (2009). In it she explains how in 1998 Val Plumwood rejected the label “ecofeminist” after presenting her position against what she called “ontological vegetarianism” at the Ecofeminist Perspectives Conference at the University of Montana (Sturgeon 153-54). She referred to this kind of vegetarianism as “ontological” because it was seen as intrinsic to the definition of the movement. Plumwood argued that ontological vegetarianism was “culturally ethnocentric and dualistic” and ended up publicly rejecting the label “ecofeminist” (qtd. in Sturgeon 154). Carol J. Adams and Marti Kheel who were also at the conference openly disagreed with her. Such debate has extended itself into the

twenty-first century with a further work by George, titled *Animal, Vegetable, or Woman?* (2000), where she defends the practice of a feminist aesthetic semi-vegetarianism<sup>111</sup> and criticizes the defense of a universal ethical vegetarianism by animal liberation groups and ecofeminists. Against this criticism Sheri Lucas in “A Defense of the Feminist-Vegetarian Connection” (2005) as well as Cathryn Bailey in “We Are What We Eat: Feminist Vegetarianism and the Reproduction of Racial Identity” (2007) reconceptualize ethical vegetarianism as a strategy of resistance to classist, racist, heterosexist, and colonialist systems of power. However, the debate continues in the 2012 *Hypatia* special issue on animal others where Traci Warkentin defends the practice of a “conscious diet” and Stephanie Jenkins still advocates veganism as a defining element of an ecofeminist ethics where all ecofeminists should be committed vegans, according to her.

Ecofeminists, therefore, have attempted to address the real animal since, after all, ecofeminism aims at connecting with the material aspects of the human relationship with nature in its many different forms. Animal studies have been precisely accused of distancing themselves too much from the material animal, privileging in its musings the figurative or philosophical animal. Famous is Cary Wolfe’s 2003 declaration that contesting speciesism “has nothing to do with whether you like animals” (qtd. in Clark 519), which has been interpreted by some as indicative of his attempt to distance himself from the feminine and feminism.

Animal ecofeminism also incorporates to its methodology an intersectional approach which actually implies addressing oppression from a multilevel perspective. This means taking into consideration the many axes (gender, race, culture, class,

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<sup>111</sup> In Chapter 7 of her book *Animal, Vegetable, or Woman?* (2000) George explains this expression as defining a kind of vegetarianism that is derived not from health but from aesthetic concerns. In this kind of vegetarianism “eating small amounts of meat is appropriate, but limited by the moral considerations prohibiting cruelty, violence, and waste” (*Animal* 163).

species, age, capability) that can intersect in the experience of marginalization. Intersectionality is a term traditionally associated with Critical Race feminists working in law (Deckha “The Saliency” par. 24). In the late 1980s and early 1990s they began to analyze gender as a social force that interacts with other forces. In this respect, seminal are the works of Patricia H. Collins and Kimberlé Crenshaw. Collins was the first one to start connecting the different forms of oppression to which black women were submitted in American society in her book *Black Feminist Thought* (1990). Crenshaw coined the term in her article “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” (1991). Today this feminist form of analysis, intersectionality, permeates animal studies as it is proved in publications such as the special issue on women of color and animals of the *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* (JCAS) edited in 2010 by Anastasia Yarbrough and Susan Thomas.

Gruen and Weil stress the importance of intersectionality as a feminist practice nourishing feminist animal thought (483). In the same way, Richard Twine highlights how ecofeminists have done significant work on the intersection between animals and gender, and mentions among others Carol J. Adams’s and Josephine Donovan significant contributions to the field in the form of books like *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations* (1995) and *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics: A Reader* (2007) (399). Equally interesting is the more recent work of Law professor Maneesha Deckha who adds a postcolonial perspective to the work of animal ecofeminism. Deckha, who in several articles<sup>112</sup> acknowledges the accomplishment of previous ecofeminists who have explored the intersections between gender and species, argues for the need to incorporate other axes of difference such as race and culture to the analysis of human-animal relationships. In “Intersectionality and Posthumanist

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<sup>112</sup> These articles are “The Saliency of Species Difference for Feminist Theory” (2006), “Intersectionality and Posthumanist Visions of Equality” (2008), and “Toward a Postcolonial, Posthumanist Feminist Theory: Centralizing Race and Culture in Feminist Work on Nonhuman Animals” (2012).

Visions of Equality” she identifies species as a determining factor in the othering of second class humans and puts this in relationship with colonial theories of civilization (250). She explains how Darwin’s theory of evolution unsettled the grounds of the moral consideration of humans by portraying them as another animal in the scale of beings. The rejection of such association by the West led to the strengthening of the “bestiality/humanness” divide (Deckha “Intersectionality” 252). Such reinforcement implied the development of a series of cultural strategies oriented to the establishment of a stratification of humans on the basis of how close they were from the standards of Western civilization. Deckha goes on to quote Raymond Corbey in *The Metaphysics of Apes: Negotiating the Animal-Human Boundary* (2005) who explains that:

In summary, human identity in European societies was articulated in terms of animal alterity. Traditional cosmological schemes were at play here, and had moral implications. People defined and redefined themselves through exclusion of what was perceived to be low and dirty. Concealment, stereotyping, and various other devices served for “distancing” beings which were put to human use, made to suffer or killed. Undesirable other humans were perceived as “apish” or “bestial.” The various aspects of attitudes to animals . . . were part of a typical modern “habitus” of the European middle classes . . . a corporally embedded regime of appreciation and feeling, which includes opinion as well as uneasiness, shame or disgust regarding what is considered improper or unbecoming to the “civilized” citizen. (qtd. in Deckha “Intersectionality” 252)

Since, as Deckha also explains, following postcolonial feminist theory, “it is impossible to understand gender difference independently of imperial conceptualizations of race and culture,” it is then possible to connect the axis of species to the oppression exercised on account of gender, race, and culture (“Intersectionality” 252-53). She supports this argument on the analysis of race-culture-gender-species matrix today by taking into account two practices. The first one is the process of racialization of otherized people through their association with animals or with the display of practices or characteristics that are related to animality. They were and still are frequently compared with animals and treated likewise. The second one consists in the transformation of animals in racialized and gendered objects. Animals in Western society are not simply defined in contrast with what is described as human. Animals in

fact, as Cary Wolfe and Jonathan Elmer have eloquently shown, fall into several categories of distinction that conform a grid where these intersect positioning them as handy objects through which humans organize their understanding of the nonhuman (qtd. in Deckha “Intersectionality” 258). Thus, according to them, there are “animalized animals,” which are the animals we use as food, part of our clothes, sources of entertainment, or proxies for research. A little bit above them, “humanized animals” are our companion animals, those who share their lives with us at home, and also special cases like the so-called “boundary animals.” These are animals whose level of consciousness and mental abilities situate them closer to humans: cetaceans and great apes, for example. One step above are the “animalized humans,” humans whose humanity is blurred by the traces that qualified them as closer to animals: a different color, a different culture, a different gender... anything serves the purpose of distancing them from the higher ranking “humanized humans.” This last group is the only one that merits the full qualification as human. Although, in postcolonial studies the white Western male stands for such category of human, it is true that from an intersectional approach that takes into account the matrix of relations determined by race, culture, gender, and species, such “humanized human” can be anyone exercising tyrannical authority upon another being.

After having explored the relevancy of animal ecofeminism for animal studies, attention will be paid to the ways in which animal ecofeminism may be useful for the study of animal literature, primate literature more specifically, through the lens of feminist ecocriticism. This will bring us to the question of how animal ecofeminism as philosophical background of feminist ecocriticism may inform the analysis of literary texts by emphasizing the need to restore the absent referent to the text through narratives of relationship where the self and the *other* relate on a same level. This will

lead to developing the fifth specific objective of this dissertation: that the ecofeminist project in the form of feminist ecocriticism suits well both the real and the literary animal.

## CHAPTER FIVE. FEMINIST ECOCRITICISM AND THE READING OF PRIMATE LITERATURE

### 5.1. MOVING FORWARD AND BEYOND: FROM ECOFEMINIST LITERARY CRITICISM TO FEMINIST ECOCRITICISM

In his editor's note to the 2010 Autumn issue of *ISLE*, Scott Slovic says of ecocriticism that it "is large, and it contains multitudes" (639). A similar description could be given of ecofeminism which, as explained above, has developed into many different branches and has significantly influenced many fields. By approaching the study of different systems of oppression (sexism, racism, speciesism, classism, heterosexism, ableism,...) from an intersectional perspective and guided by a feminist ethics of care that highlights the need of paying attention to other modes of life and other voices, ecofeminism has inspired critical directions such as ecocriticism, environmental justice, queer studies, animal studies, and material feminism. In terms of its literary reach, ecofeminist literary criticism emerged almost at the same time ecocriticism was beginning to be conceived as a solid critical movement. Patrick D. Murphy published the first attempt to describe a method to deal with literature from an ecofeminist perspective just a year before Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm edited their seminal first reader on ecocriticism, a book that it is still used worldwide as an introduction to the discipline. Murphy's book was titled *Literature, Nature, and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques* (1995). In it he describes a method of literary analysis based on Bakhtin's dialogics which he applies preferentially to fictional texts written by women (Dorothy Wordsworth, Willa Cather, Ursula K. Le Guin, Margaret Atwood...). His book was followed by a volume coedited with Gaard in 1998 under the title of *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*. This work consists mainly of some of the papers Gaard had collected for a special session on the subject of

ecofeminism and literary criticism to be presented at the annual convention of the Modern Language Association that was denied. Gaard then suggested to Murphy, founder and at that time editor of *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, to publish a special issue on the intersection of these two fields. The book expresses to perfection the double nature of ecofeminism as a movement that puts equal emphasis on theory and praxis. It contains theoretical essays, analysis of works as well as guidelines for the practice of ecofeminist literary analysis in class. Two years after Gaard's and Murphy's compilation saw light, Glynis Carr published *New Essays in Ecofeminist Literary Criticism* (2000). In its introduction she commented on the lack of development of the field in comparison with that of the philosophical and political strands of ecofeminism or with the sometimes parallel field of ecocriticism. However, she highlighted the early presence of feminism in ecocriticism by referring to the inclusion in Glotfelty and Fromm's volume of works by prominent ecofeminists and feminists such as SueEllen Campbell, Ursula K. Le Guin, Annette Kolodny, Paula Gunn Allen, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Vera Norwood (19). She seemed to be voicing what in the 2010 Autumn issue of the journal *ISLE* was acknowledged by Scott Slovic as the fundamental role played by ecofeminism in the beginning of the ecocritical movement (639).

However, the truth is that the relationship between ecofeminism and ecocriticism has not always been a peaceful one. In the introduction to her 2008 volume *New Directions in Ecofeminist Literary Criticism*, Andrea Campbell explained how Lawrence Buell had referred himself to the "conflicts and differences between the fields of ecocriticism and ecofeminism" (vii). Nonetheless, Buell values its contribution when saying:

Just as feminism was moved by minority and 'third world' feminisms during the 1980s and 1990s toward autocritique of its prior focus on Western white middle-class concerns, so during the past decade some ecofeminists have been among the leaders in a broader initiative to push

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environmental criticism toward substantive engagement with issue of environmental welfare and equity of more pressing concern to the impoverished and socially marginalized: to landscapes of urbanization, racism, poverty, and toxification; and to the voices of witnesses and victims of environmental injustice. (qtd. in Campbell ix)

It is probably ecofeminism's intersectional approach, its attention to the diverse forms oppression might take, as well as its recent aim of growing more and more cross-cultural (Campbell ix; Gaard "New Directions" 10-1; Gaard "Strategies" 49-50), and hence opening itself to other voices, other traditions, what turned it into a critical movement rich in possibilities for ecocriticism. As a matter of fact, ecofeminism continues infusing new energy into environmental criticism through what is beginning to be known as feminist ecocriticism. Certain confusion surrounds this term. Some authors use it interchangeably with precisely that of ecofeminist literary criticism—Carr, Vakoch—while others are more cautious and see in them specific nuances that distinguish one from another. Simon C. Estok for example in "A Report Card on Ecocriticism" (2001) and equally in "Bridging the Great Divide: Ecocritical Theory and the Great Unwashed" (2005) characterizes both as distinctly different on account of their main focus. As he explains, ecofeminism privileges the social while feminist ecocriticism subordinates the tenets of feminism to those of an ecocritical approach to literature. This means that feminist ecocriticism is first and foremost ethically committed to the natural world and does not place women and their resistance to oppression at the core of its concerns:

So even though "eco" comes first in both of the terms, in "ecofeminism" it is the second part of the term that has ontological priority. It means that ecofeminism is first a social theory, a human-centred approach; to some degree, ecocriticism tries to be something else, to move away from anthropocentric models. I would also propose that ecocriticism is always a feminist issue: as Karen Warren argues, "what makes something a feminist issue is that an understanding of it contributes in some important way to an understanding of the subordination of women" (Warren quoted in King, "Toward" 142). Ecocriticism that does not look at the relationship between the domination of women and the domination of the natural environment quite simply fails in its mandate to "make connections" and is quite simply *not* ecocriticism. (Estok "Bridging" 200; emphasis in original)

Needless to say that here Estok distorts the essence of ecofeminism and even attributes certain characteristics of ecofeminism to ecocriticism such as its propensity to

establishing connections. Were it not for ecofeminism's attention to otherness this concept would not be as much a part of ecocriticism as it is today. Ecofeminism both in its philosophical, social, political, and literary expressions, to name but a few, proved since its very beginnings to be the land of the many and not necessarily an all women's club where the subjugation of the female of the species was its main subject of exploration. Its very essence is precisely paying attention to oppression in its various forms because, as it is constantly demonstrated by ecofeminists, they are interconnected. Gaard is aware of the traps of misunderstandings in which ecofeminism has been involved when in her 2011 article in the journal *Feminist Formations* says:

Many believed ecofeminism would become feminism's "third wave," building on and transforming the anthropocentric critiques of first- and second-wave feminisms with an ecological perspective. But what happened was something entirely different: Focusing on the celebration of goddess spirituality and the critique of patriarchy advanced in cultural ecofeminism, poststructuralist and other third-wave feminisms portrayed all ecofeminisms as an exclusively essentialist equation of women with nature, discrediting ecofeminism's diversity of arguments and standpoints to such an extent that, by 2010, it was nearly impossible to find a single essay, much less a section, devoted to issues of feminism and ecology (and certainly not ecofeminism), species, or nature in most introductory anthologies used in women's studies, gender studies, or queer studies. ("Ecofeminism Revisited" 31)

Her awareness of these problems makes her wish for a more feminist ecocriticism as a response to the oblivion in which ecofeminism has fallen, as she denounces in her previous *ISLE* article "New Directions for Ecofeminism: Toward a More Feminist Ecocriticism." This piece is precisely interpreted by Serpil Oppermann's<sup>113</sup> as "[announcing] the emergence of feminist ecocriticism" which she describes in her 2013 article for the special issue on ecofeminism of the Spanish journal *Feminismo/s*, as "the new ecofeminist settlement":

... an emergent configuration that debunks the objectification of the natural world, women, matter, bodily natures, and nonhuman species, and opens new eco-vistas into exploring the dynamic co-extensivity and permeability of human and nonhuman bodies and natures. Feminist ecocriticism is the paradigmatic form of this new approach that attempts to bring sustaining meanings in the realm of materiality, discourse, and cultural imaginary for the purpose of dismantling dualistic otherness framed by "the gendered and dualistic symbolism" in Western thought. ("Feminist Ecocriticism: The New" 68)

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<sup>113</sup> Significantly, Greta Gaard, Simon C. Estok, and Serpil Oppermann joined forces to coedit a volume on feminist ecocriticism in 2013 with the title *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism*.

Thus this settlement makes ecofeminism and ecocriticism go beyond their traditional interests without disavowing them. This is made possible by their intersection with posthumanism and more specifically with the new materialisms which have led the humanities to be immersed in the second decade of the first millennium in the material turn which defines material feminism. This interest in matter and the nonhuman is best represented by many of the authors contributing to the seminal *Material Feminisms* (2008) edited by Stacy Alaimo and Susan Heckman and featuring articles by Elizabeth Grosz, Claire Colebrook, Karen Barad, Donna Haraway, Nancy Tuana, Vicky Kirby, Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands, Tobin Siebers, Michael Hames-García, Suzanne Bost, Elizabeth A. Wilson, and Susan Bordo.

Hence, while the 1990s were the years to institutionalize academic work on the environmental humanities in what can be described as a green or ecological turn, and the 2000s were the time for the incorporation of the animal as a valid subject of reflection in literary and cultural studies, the 2010s have brought with them the burgeoning of an interest for matter as agentic force. This attention to matter as the most recent stage in the ethical progression of the humanities implies overcoming the traditional Cartesian division and transforming the world into a locus of meaning with which we are in dialogue. Recognition of such ongoing conversation is possibly one of the best solutions there is to solve the ecological drama that surrounds us humans and nonhumans. Interestingly such appreciation for the voice of the other has been present in ecofeminist literary criticism from its beginning as the following section aims to illustrate.

## 5.2. CONVERSING WITH THE *OTHER*: READING AS ECOFEMINIST PRAXIS

In the preceding sections the origins of ecofeminism have been traced and put in relation to the specifics of the work done by some representative authors with regard to

women's and animals' shared oppression. It has also been emphasized how ecofeminism is open to paying attention to other "naturalized forms of othering" and how today ecofeminism is also at the forefront of critical enquiries into the consideration of matter as agent (Oppermann "Feminist Ecocriticism: The New" 70). Ecofeminism looks at literature as a site where the liberation of voices long silenced by a fragmented understanding of the universe may be enacted. Ecofeminist literary analysis focuses on the emancipatory strategies used by the author to give a voice to the *other*. Following Val Plumwood's analysis of dualisms and her call for developing counter-hegemonic strategies to change this logic, Spanish ecocritic Carmen Flys Junquera refers to these emancipatory strategies in her article "Dissolving the False Divide: Literary Strategies for Re-Situating Humans Ecologically and Non-Humans Ethically" (26). She explains that ecofeminist literature, such as the works by Linda Hogan she analyzes in her essay, may give a voice to animal *others* by: 1) "[affirming] the continuity and interdependence between the human and the nonhuman (...)" (28); 2) "[questioning] the superiority of human language for communication" (30); 3) "reversing popular perception" (32); 4) "[accepting] alternative ways of attaining knowledge" (32); and 5) using "literature's ability to give voice to those who do not have it" (34).

In the case of the works studied in this dissertation, the *other* is represented by a nonhuman primate, although other forms of othering besides speciesism may be at play too. Helen Tiffin, one of the pioneers of postcolonial ecocriticism, a field that situates animals on the same level of importance as the environment, declares the animal to be "the ultimate other"<sup>114</sup> on account of Cary Wolfe's reading of George Bataille's and Jacques Derrida's explorations of the concept of subjectivity ("Unjust" 30). Both

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<sup>114</sup> In a more recent article, Serpil Oppermann contends that the ultimate *other* is no longer "women's bodies and animal subjectivities" but the posthuman, a question that will be addressed later on in this dissertation ("Feminist Ecocriticism. A Posthumanist" 28).

authors see this concept as “inseparable from the discourse and institution of speciesism” (Wolfe qtd. in Tiffin “Unjust” 30). In order to grasp the ways in which ecofeminism works with literary texts it is worth remembering Patrick D. Murphy’s methodological proposal of an ecofeminist dialogics as well as Josephine Donovan’s approach to the text as a “thou”<sup>115</sup> rather than an it where new models of relationship are developed.

In *Literature, Nature, and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques* (1995) Patrick D. Murphy argues for the application of an ecofeminist dialogics, based on Bakhtin’s dialogical method, to the analysis of texts in order to challenge an anthropocentric worldview based on a hierarchical model emerging from the rule of patriarchy and dualistic thinking (12). Seen through the lens of ecofeminism, literature becomes a medium of liberation from the strictures of social and cultural constructions that erect boundaries between the elements of pairs such as male/female, human/animal, nature/culture, and so forth. It also becomes an instrument for the voicing of the voiceless—human and nonhuman beings silenced in modern Western thought since the Renaissance. But not all literature will serve this purpose. Murphy actually questions the ways in which nature is described in canonical American nature writing such as that written by Henry D. Thoreau or, more recently, by Annie Dillard. In these cases, nature is depicted more as a place for solace or refuge than as a “speaking subject” on its own right. As he says: “Thoreau, like Dillard, goes to nature to observe rather than to participate, forever aloof and transcendent, and to escape that part of nature known as human society. Alienation is disguised in both cases as autonomy” (Murphy *Literature* 32). This critical take on traditional nature writing makes Murphy favor fiction and

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<sup>115</sup> The second person pronoun “thou” is used by Donovan in “Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Reading the Orange” as a form of address that denotes respectful intimacy. Donovan uses it as a form that conveys her aspiration of bonding with the *other*. This is derived from an attempt not of using the *other*, but of creating and cultivating a relationship with the *other* so that it becomes a “thou.” In this respect, she is inspired by Martin Buber’s use of the term in *I and Thou* (1923).

poetry as better tools for the voicing of women, nature and nonhuman animals. More specifically, when it comes to the novel, the form analyzed in this dissertation, Murphy highlights the power of this genre to imagine alternative worlds and forms of relationship with the *other* (*Literature* 33). As he contends, we need a paradigm shift and literature can help to generate it. Essential to such new paradigm is a transition from otherness to anotherness, or being another for others, as well as an emphasis on interdependence and relationship facilitated by the practice of affective attention:

A dialogical orientation to the difference of (an)other can be based on the ecofeminist recognitions of interdependence and genetic diversity, dialogue at the most basic levels of energy/information exchange, as in gene pools and cross-fertilization. Anotherness proceeds from a heterarchical sense of difference, recognizing that we are not ever only one for ourselves but are also always another for others [...]. Otherness isolated from anotherness suppresses knowledge of the ecological processes of interdependency—the ways in which humans and other entities survive, change, and learn by continuously mutually influencing each other—and denies any ethics of reciprocity. (*Literature* 152)

Thus the task of the ecofeminist literary critic consists, as Murphy explains, in tracing the “emancipatory strategies” that women and also men with an ecofeminist consciousness have used in their writings “to give voice to the muted” and “challenge the illusion of “norms” that patriarchy persistently generates” (*Literature* 20). This implies a different conception of the text. Such conception is eloquently expressed in Josephine Donovan’s 1996 article “Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Reading the Orange” where, inspired by Carol J. Adams’s use of the idea of the absent referent, she considers language as a “dominative practice” when functioning in an ontology of domination where the referent, the actual animal, is erased:

To further develop Adams’s theory and to further refine our analysis of language as a dominative practice, let us consider the question of whether the concept *animal* (the *signified*) itself necessarily dominates the actual animal (*referent*). My answer is no. The signified, that is, the concept *animal*, need not be dominative if respect and careful attention are paid to the actual realities of the entity being designated. Nor need the signifier *animal* be dominative if the referent remains present in the signified as an active presence. It is only when the signifier *animal* is transformed into the signifier *meat* that an ontology of domination is enacted. It is the signifier *meat* that as an interpretant transforms the concept (animal) and the referent (real animal) into objects for use or exchange in a human chain of signifiers. The living being of the actual cow is thus repressed as the signifier meat takes over, inscribing the referent as an

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exchange object within a symbolic commerce, which legitimizes the actual commerce of the meat market exchange. (“Ecofeminist” 162; emphasis in original)

With this in mind, Donovan argues that in order to restore the absent referent, the thou, to the text, a return to narrative is needed (“Ecofeminist” 163). In this respect, she highlights the work of feminist and postmodernist critics who have criticized the elision of “the anomalous, the marginal, the local, the particular” in the texts of science and medicine (“Ecofeminist” 163). These same theorists have found that the absent referent, the thou, is restored through the telling of the personal story of the individual. An exemplary case in point is found in the development, since the late 1990s, of the field of narrative medicine in the United States thanks to the work of physicians Rachael Naomi Remen and Rita Charon. Narrative medicine works through methods such as the close reading of texts and reflective writing by both patients and doctors as paths to healing (Charon 2001). By recuperating the voice of the patient behind the objective description of her symptoms, doctors manage to connect in an empathic way with the *other* in a relational manner that turns her into an *another*. Such dialogue produces a two-way relationship where the usually hierarchical model of doctor-patient communication is dismantled. Narrative medicine discards, therefore, the traditional scientific model that refuses to acknowledge the singularities of each being in its attempt at building a homogenizing understanding of symptoms. Such a model erases the patient as a “thou,” alienates her into the objective but void description of her disease.

Donovan, however, is also aware of the fact that literary texts, even in narrative form, also “reshape, obscure, and dominate the ‘literal,’ subduing it to the claims of the ‘figurative’” (“Ecofeminist” 163). Nevertheless she claims to have found in the works of several women writers—Sarah Orne Jewett, Adrienne Rich, Clarice Lispector and Virginia Woolf—an obsession to remaining faithful to the literal, to the “thing itself”

("Ecofeminist" 163). Such "thing," the literal, is seen as animated by a spiritual presence which means that "[t]elling the 'thing' means expressing the thou character of the 'objective' world" (Donovan "Ecofeminist" 163). In this sense Donovan seems to be in line with Murphy's emphasis on the status of otherness, being another for others, of any "thing," "any material entity" (Murphy *Literature* 22). Likewise, she also sounds much in tune with the revaluation of matter as agent done by the field of feminist materialism which as Oppermann explains is contributing so much to the field of feminist ecocriticism ("Feminist Ecocriticism: The New" 67).

After analyzing various examples of how these authors elaborate their "nondominative literary practice," Donovan proceeds to define a theoretical basis for an ecofeminist literary criticism. This theory should try to be oriented toward finding texts that are "reconceived as vehicles for the disclosure of being rather than as mechanics for its elision, thereby helping to reconstitute the 'objects' of discourse as 'subjects'" ("Ecofeminist" 162). Since language is a dominative practice, literary texts, as one of its forms of expression, are also dominative and, hence, erase the literal by replacing it with the figurative. However, as Margaret Homans emphasizes, "Women's place in language...is with the literal, the silent object of representation, the dead mother, the absent referent, so that within a literary text the shift from figurative to literal connotes a shift from the place of the signifier, the place of the speaking subject, to the place of the absent object" (qtd. in Donovan "Ecofeminist" 164). This means that texts written with an ecofeminist sensibility can work as instruments of liberation for those who are generally rendered as silent. With this in mind is possible to say that literary criticism can become less dominative especially if it is guided by interdependence and relationship, attentiveness, and the material.

### 5.3. PRIMATE LITERATURE AS A NARRATIVE OF RELATIONSHIP

*To have a voice is to be human. To have something to say is to be a person.  
But speaking depends on listening and being heard; it is an intensely relational act.*  
(Gilligan xvi)

It has already been explained that animals have acquired a great cultural significance in the last four decades which is manifest in several areas: an increased social sensitivity towards animals, new legislation, and an entirely new field in the humanities where the animal is situated at the center of academic enquiry. Likewise, it is also relevant how the development of feminist studies and its contestation of speciesism have allowed a better understanding of the underlying connection between the oppression of animals and that of other peoples. This is why the aim of this section is to connect the ideas discussed thus far with the analysis of the four novels around which this dissertation revolves. Its main purpose is to justify the choice of ecofeminism, both as philosophical background in the form of animal ecofeminism and as literary criticism under the label of feminist ecocriticism, as the theoretical apparatus that illuminates the ensuing study. With this I hope to work toward supporting the fifth specific objective of this dissertation, that the ecofeminist project in the form of feminist ecocriticism suits well both the real and the literary animal.

In order to do this, I will refer to the role women have played in redefining science from the second half of the twentieth century onwards. Special attention will be paid to the practice of primatology by women which, seen through the lens of feminist epistemologies in its intersection with animal studies, will allow me to concentrate on the value human-animal relationships acquire in the novels under analysis. Interestingly, these novels do not portray human-animal relationships in the wild, but take non-domestic animals, apes, to spaces of domesticity or captivity—zoos, laboratories—where they become the spiritual guides of humans who are at a loss. Such a narrative

framework increases the possibilities of intimate encounters with animals who otherwise are associated with spaces from which women were traditionally excluded until the beginning of female primatology in the 1960s. However, except for the case of Peter Dickinson's *Eva*, these novels portray not women but men who initiate meaningful exchanges with nonhuman apes and thus, constitute a kind of refiguration of the traditional image of the female primatologist epitomized by the "trimates"—Jane Goodall, Diane Fossey, and Biruté Galdikas—and their followers. With this I want to insist in the value ecofeminism has as a tool for the analysis of texts that portray situations where the relational element becomes the seed of new formulations of human-animal relationships. These interactions, as will be shown, are based on the ethics of care advanced by ecofeminism. Moreover, although an appropriate instrument to undo the oppression based on the man/woman binary, ecofeminism also offers a point of departure from which to dismantle other binaries. The human/animal binary present in these novels is one of them, thus the value ecofeminism has for approaching these narratives.

Finally, primatology has shown that wild animals can be observed in the wild with a reasonable amount of respect and comprehension. In these novels the tables are turned and the apes become the observers of a humanity that is on the brink of exterminating them. However, their stories, since animals do not talk, are told by the humans who discover and love them. Seen under this light, literature becomes a metaphor of primatology. It also becomes a metaphor of the give-and-take relationships that happen each time we look into the eyes of the animal and become aware of the intensity of his presence. So happened to Derrida when being discovered naked by his female cat (Derrida "The Animal" 372) or to Aldo Leopold when he saw the fierce green fire dying in the eyes of the wolf he had hunted down (Leopold 138).

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The first factor that connects ecofeminism with primate literature is the fact that primatology, the study of primates, was perceived as a female science around the 1970s thanks to the work initiated in the 1960s by three women: Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, and Biruté Galdikas. All of them, without having any previous experience or scientific qualification, were encouraged by paleoanthropologist Louis Leakey to conduct field research.

Leakey was especially interested in the history of human development in Africa that he considered as the cradle of humankind. He thought that women with no previous background in science could be good observers of great apes in the wild. They would be able to look at the animals with new eyes, unbiased by the expectations of trained scientists. According to his friend Tita Caldwell, one of the creators of the Leakey Foundation, he was a firm believer in the powers of observation of women, their intuition, their sensitivity, and their tenacity (Montgomery Loc 1317). He thought women were especially well equipped to commit themselves to long-term projects. He recognized that quality in motherhood for example and he envisioned studies that would involve up to ten years of field research. This is what he expected from the young Jane Goodall, then a former waitress and secretary, when he chose her in 1960 to study chimpanzees in the Gombe Stream Reserve. At the beginning she laughed at his proposition, but ended up turning chimpanzees into the reason of her life (Montgomery Loc 1352). Likewise, in 1966 he met occupational therapist Dian Fossey and entrusted her with the task to observe mountain gorillas in the Virunga Mountains. And lastly, in 1969 he encouraged a former student of anthropology, Biruté Galdikas, to study orangutans in Indonesia on account not so much of her credentials but of her score on a playing-card test he had devised to assess the attention span and the awareness to detail of the candidates (Montgomery Loc 1218).

Although Leakey has been a somehow controversial figure due to his preference for women, which some have read more as a consequence of his sexual drive than as a genuine interest in certain characteristics typically attributed to women, the truth is that he discovered particularly perseverant women who were deeply inspired by him as mentor. Leakey had a tremendously magnetic personality. He was especially attractive to women and his allure translated in the case of the so-called “trimates” or “Leakey’s Angels” into relationships of pseudo-filial love with Goodall, romantic love with Fossey, and great admiration with Galdikas to whom he saw as a kind of niece. Described as someone whose nurturing skills made him a kind of social magnet, this was perhaps a factor that protected him from the attacks he received from some of his colleagues who criticized his often unconventional ideas. In her book *Walking with Great Apes* (1991), Sy Montgomery emphasizes how Leakey’s female pupils defied traditional ways of doing science normally associated with a male point of view that coincides with the tenets of the master mentality:

In the masculine world of Western science, where achievement is typically measured by mastery, theirs was an unusual approach. It was no accident that Louis Leakey, the paleoanthropologist who launched these long-term studies of the great apes, chose three women to lead the research. Although certain men have also learned how to relinquish control, the approach seems particularly feminine. This approach allows choice and the nurturing of a relationship on the Other’s term. (xix-xx)

But Montgomery also remembers to highlight how the Japanese primate researcher Kawai Masao in his 1969 book *Life of the Japanese Monkeys*, which was not translated into English until 1981 by Pamela Asquith, had already defined a new concept around which his research was based: *kyokan* or “feel-one” (Loc 4173). Masao coined this term after observing how a female researcher on his team was able to “recognize individual behavior, personality and emotional life better” (qtd. in Montgomery 4173). He explained *kyokan* or the “feel-one method” as “becoming fused with the monkeys’ lives where, through an intuitive channel, feelings are mutually

exchanged” (qtd. in Montgomery 4173). It is possible that such a perceptive person as Leakey had also arrived at the same kind of conclusion about women’s ability to connect with animals.

The fact of the matter is that Leakey’s expectations came to be true. His protégées did approach their subjects of study—chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans respectively—in a fashion uncommon until then. They gave them proper names, followed their life story, bonded with them, and even committed themselves to their protection leading worldwide campaigns. Their meaningful experience of intimate encounters with wild animals prompted their transformation into spokespeople for the great apes. Moreover, the transformative agency of these apes, their impact in the life of these women, came to be expressed not only in the scholarly papers these women produced, but also in their autobiographical accounts. In works such as Goodall’s *In the Shadow of Man* (1971), Fossey’s *Gorillas in the Mist* (1983), and Galdikas’s *Reflections of Eden: My Years with the Orangutans of Borneo* (1995) they reflect on their fascination for these animals and the strength of their connection with them. Such connection led them to turn their protection of great apes into the cause of a lifetime.

In her letters written while at Gombe during the first years of her research, Jane Goodall, who famously started naming the chimpanzees she found according often to similarities she saw between them and the people she knew, attributes a great deal of her success to her special relationship with the male chimpanzee David Greybeard. David was endowed with certain characteristics that made him Jane’s best ambassador into this new world she was trying to decipher. According to Jane, he showed a calm and gentle disposition as well as a curiosity for her person that turned him into the chimpanzee that best tolerated her presence (*In the Shadow* Loc 1210). David appeared on camp one day while Jane was not there. The camp’s cook saw him for about an hour

feeding in the fruiting palm tree near her tent. The next day Jane stayed on camp to see for herself. He came back that day and in the days to follow until the fruit was ended. After this Jane found out that leaving bananas in camp could have the same effect on David and the rest of the chimpanzees. Although it is true that this can be considered as a form of pernicious bribery to animals involving dangers such as a certain dependency of wild animals on humans, their habituation to them as well as the risk of fighting among the chimpanzees, Goodall saw this as an opportunity for access to the chimpanzees and took it. With time, however, she created a more controlled environment as a feeding station.

David Greybeard was also responsible for the two discoveries that made Goodall internationally famous (Montgomery Loc 1608). In the first year of her stay in Gombe, more specifically on October 30, during the fifth month of her stay, Jane observed a male chimpanzee, David, eating meat (Goodall *Africa* 164). Only a week after, on November 4, David also showed her that chimpanzees not only hunt, they also use tools (Goodall *Africa* 155-56). She observed him using long twigs to fish out termites. On account of such a discovery Leakey answered Jane: “I feel that scientists holding to this definition [that Man is a tool-using animal] are faced with three choices: they must accept chimpanzees as man, by definition; they must redefine man; or they must redefine tools” (qtd. in Montgomery Loc 1630-47).

Jane Goodall’s deep appreciation for David led her to dedicating her book *In the Shadow of Man* to him. From the beginning she felt they had a strong connection. He went up to her tent, took bananas from her hand, waited for her in Jane’s ramblings with the chimpanzees, and tolerated her presence in the mountains as part of the pack. Jane also spent many hours alone with David Greybeard. These led to some very meaningful moments when a mutual understanding was established. This represented for her “a

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triumph of the sort of relationship man can establish with a wild creature, a creature who has never known captivity” (*Africa* 270). She also recalls one day when she offered David a red palm nut on her open palm. At first, he turned his head away but, seeing that she insisted, he took the fruit and, at the same time, he held her hand firmly but gently with his own. He let go of her and looking down at the nut dropped it to the ground. She experienced this as a transcendental exchange between the human and the animal:

At that moment there was no need of any scientific knowledge to understand his communication of reassurance. The soft pressure of his fingers spoke to me not through my intellect but through a more primitive emotional channel: the barrier of untold centuries which has grown up during the separate evolution of man and chimpanzee was, for those few seconds, broken down. (*In the Shadow of Man* Loc 3984)

The male gorilla Digit played the role of eye opener in Dian Fossey’s case. Hers was not as rewarding a scientific experience as was Goodall’s because of her untimely death, however, her attachment to the gorillas she studied for years was as strong if not more than that of Goodall’s and Galdikas’s to their apes. Fossey and Digit are buried side by side in the Karisoke research station. A troubled but resourceful person, Fossey went to great lengths to protect the gorillas of the Virungas Mountains. She organized and frequently led parties to hunt down the poachers that were massacring the populations of gorillas that she loved so much. On one occasion she even set the hut of one of them on fire and kidnapped one of his sons to force him to give himself away. But nothing could sadden Dian more than the death of her beloved Digit. He had known her longer than he had known his own mother or father. His mother died or disappeared when he was five and his father died a year after Dian began observing him. When he was nine his agemates disappeared and he adopted Dian as a kind of playmate (Montgomery Loc 911). At one point in her book *Gorillas in the Mist* Fossey describes one of the many interactions with Digit where she could not help engaging with him in play:

He was always the first member of Group 4 to come forward to see who had arrived on any particular day. He seemed pleased whenever I brought strangers along and would completely ignore me to investigate any newcomers by smelling or lightly touching their clothing and hair. If I was alone, he often invited play by flopping over on to his back, waving stumpy legs in the air, and looking at me smiling as if to say, "How can you resist me?" At such times, I fear, my scientific detachment dissolved. (182)

In fact Montgomery describes Fossey's relationship with Digit as closer than the one she had with any member of her family from whom she was actually very much estranged (Loc 927). In her lectures she described Digit as her "friend" although she admitted this word could not define the sort of relationship they had. Field biologist and conservationist Ian Redmond, who visited Karisoke in 1976 for the first time, observes that the gorillas, in general, had a stronger relationship with Dian than with any of the other workers. After any of her absences, they will salute her by looking into her eyes as if "[reminding] themselves of her place with them" (Redmond qtd. in Montgomery Loc 994). Digit's death worsened Fossey's process of isolation. Diana McMeekin, ex-director of the African Wildlife Foundation, thinks that Fossey saw in the gorillas not the children or family she never had but her surrogate race (Montgomery Loc 4134). During a visit with her in Sacramento, Biruté Galdikas realized, as she declared in a memorial benefit for Dian's Digit Fund at National Geographic in March 1986, "that Dian's soul was already tinged and had already merged with the gorillas" (qtd. in Montgomery Loc 4134). She came to be one with the gorillas she so much loved and fought for.

Although by different means, each of these female primatologists managed to merge with the nonhuman animals they were studying. Biruté Galdikas, the last of the three, has mothered more than eighty ex-captive orangutans in Camp Leakey since the start of her project in Indonesia in the early 1970s. She has been able to study these lonely creatures thanks to her perseverance in overcoming all the difficulties their territory involves. The unbearable humidity together with the heat have not discouraged

a woman who has become an expert not only in the lives of the orangutans but also in the local culture. After divorcing her first husband, Rod Brindamour, Biruté married Pak Bohap bun Jalan, a member of the Dayak, the native people of Borneo. Thanks to this she became more knowledgeable of the native culture what opened her many doors into the realities of the country where she has found her mission in life. It is true that from the three, Biruté is the one who has produced less science, although she had the most promising start with the publication of her dissertation “Orangutan Adaptation at Tanjung Puting Reserve, Central Borneo” in 1978. Publishing has become a less important matter for her than protecting the orangutans she loves. This can also be said to be true of Goodall and Fossey who, although managed to be quite prolific, especially Goodall, have at some point or another turned their careers towards their activism mainly. Science, in its traditional modern sense, was too detached an instrument of knowledge for these women who in the process of studying these apes found themselves connecting with them. Their interactions led them to create relationships that allowed them to see the animals as individuals with their own life history and also to understand them better.

As was abovementioned, Leakey saw women as different from men in terms of their attention to detail, their powers of observation, and their empathy towards others. In a way, Leakey was able to perceive and value certain characteristics in women that were later explained in the fields of psychology and biology. Hence, for instance, Carol Gilligan in her seminal work *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (1982) studies how women develop psychologically differently than men. Women's response to moral conflicts is founded on a contextual assessment where relationships and concern for everyone's wellbeing matters most. Meanwhile, the response of males is more individualistic. Males first think of the fulfillment of their

interest and later of that of the group. Gilligan cites among other testimonies the conclusions drawn from the answers given by two eleven-year-old children, a boy and a girl attending the same sixth-grade class at a school, to one of the dilemmas designed by psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg to measure moral development in adolescence. In this moral dilemma the students are faced with deciding what to do in a situation where a man named Heinz has to decide whether or not stealing a drug he cannot afford in order to save his wife's life (Gilligan 25). Jake, the boy, defends the man should steal the drug on account of the superior value of the woman's life over that of the legality of the action. He comes to this solution by looking at this dilemma as it were a mathematical equation where the values of property and life are at odds and then decides that, since life has a superior value, the wife's life needs to be the man's priority (Gilligan 26-7). Meanwhile Amy, the girl, cannot find such a logical and categorical answer to this dilemma. She ponders on the situation not with the criteria of mathematical logic but with a more contextual and global view where preserving the relationship between Heinz and his wife is what matters most. Here are Amy's words as an example of her more comprehensive outlook:

If he stole the drug, he might save his wife then, but if he did, he might have to go to jail, and then his wife might get sicker again, and he couldn't get more of the drug, and it might not be good. So, they should really just talk it out and find some other way to make the money.  
(Gilligan 28)

Gilligan qualifies such a resolution of the moral dilemma as stemming from Amy's awareness of "a narrative of relationship that extends over time" (28). Amy takes into account the spouses' mutual need for each other as well as the dependency of the wife's survival on the preservation of a good relationship with the druggist. As Gilligan concludes:

[Amy's] world is a world of relationships and psychological truths where an awareness of the connection between people gives rise to a recognition of responsibility for one another, a perception of the need for response. Seen in this light, her understanding of morality as arising from the recognition of relationship, her belief in communication as the mode of conflict resolution, and her conviction that the solution to the dilemma will follow from its compelling

representation seem far from naive or cognitively immature. Instead, Amy's judgments contain the insights central to an ethic of care, just as Jake's judgments reflect the logic of the justice approach. Her incipient awareness of the "method of truth," the central tenet of nonviolent conflict resolution, and her belief in the restorative activity of care, lead her to see the actors in the dilemma arrayed not as opponents in a contest of rights but as members of a network of relationships on whose continuation they all depend. Consequently her solution to the dilemma lies in activating the network by communication, securing the inclusion of the wife by strengthening rather than severing connections. (30-1)

Of further interest to Gilligan's claim about the value the relational element, which is part of an ethics of care, has in the female psychology is also the not so distant discovery of mirror neurons by Italian neuroscientist Giacomo Rizzolatti at the University of Parma in 1996. Mirror neurons are found in both human and nonhuman primates and are fundamental for activating feelings of empathy for the *other* as well as responsible for the capacity to literally "read other people's mind." They, therefore, play an important role in the process of learning through the observation and imitation of others, a phenomenon that happens both in human and nonhuman primates.<sup>116</sup> According to Alice M. Proverbio, Federica Riva and Alberto Zani (2010), the mirror neuron system is more active in the female of the human species what means that women are better prepared to respond empathically to the *other*. Such scientific explanation can be a plausible explanation to why the "trimates" were capable of connecting so profoundly with the apes they were studying. However, this explanation, as well as the previous one based on Gilligan's studies, leaves behind male experiences of bonding with animals that are equally interesting. One example in special comes to mind having to do not with nonhuman primates but with horses.

Although there has been an acknowledgement of the specialness of the connection between horse and rider since the fourth century BC, when Greek historian Xenophon published his *Art of Horsemanship*, it was after the 1970s, according to Robert Miller and Richard A. Lamb, when alternative ways of initiating a horse's training, what has

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<sup>116</sup> The article "The Mirror-Neuron System" (2004) by Giacomo Rizzolatti and Laila Craighero offers further explanation on how the mirror-neuron system works.

traditionally been known as “breaking a horse,” took off. This shift in the handling of horses started in American cattle ranches thanks mainly to the influence of brothers Tom and Bill Dorrance. According to an article that appeared in the June edition of 2011 of the *Ranch & Reata Magazine*, it was the younger of the two, Tom Dorrance, who being a great lover of animals and not strong enough to apply the cruel methods that were the norm at the time, developed on his own a form of rapport with horses where the horse’s point of view was taken into account. He proved cowboys could be gentle to horses and get their willing cooperation in exchange. He was followed in this attempt by his brother and exercised a strong influence on another cowboy, Ray Hunt. Hunt became later a very significant influence on many riders such as Buck Brannaman<sup>117</sup> who together with Monty Roberts have been the “natural horsemen” who have gotten more media coverage in the last decades. Buck Brannaman came to be internationally known thanks to the widely acclaimed documentary *Buck* (2001) that offers a reflection on how Brannaman managed to overcome his past as an abused child and devotes now his life to promoting a nonviolent approach to horses. Monty Roberts, also abused by his father, was invited to show his “Join-Up” method to Queen Elizabeth II’s staff in 1989. Encouraged by that experience he decided to write his autobiographical book *The Man Who Listens to Horses* (1996) that was acclaimed worldwide.

Interestingly, both Brannaman and Roberts have made public how as children they were abused and exploited by their fathers and how they found refuge in their relationship with animals. In their clinics both of them often refer also to how these experiences helped them to put themselves in the horse’s place, to think like a horse. They both recognize that it was possible for them to connect or empathize with the fear

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<sup>117</sup> Buck Brannaman served as a consultant to Robert Redford while he was shooting the film *The Horse Whisperer* (1998).

of the animal because they had gone through a similar experience of helplessness. They, in sum, even though they are white Western males, have been in the position of the oppressed. Their lives are conformed around the experience of connection with the animals in whom they see a reflection of their former fears. Their approach to the horses is similar to that of the female primatologists mentioned above. They enact an ethics of care that is not so much based on the philosophical arguments of the ethics of justice<sup>118</sup> typical of mainstream animal rights, but in “an emotional and spiritual conversation with nonhuman life-forms” (Donovan “Animal Rights” 375).

Curiously, in the novels that are at the core of this dissertation, three revolve around male human protagonists. All of them occupy positions of disentanglement. In *Ishmael* the gorilla’s student searches an alternative paradigm to that of the Western world where consumerism and exploitation of the natural world and indigenous people are the rule. He is an outsider and learning from the gorilla, although inspiring, will alienate him even more. In *Wish*, J.J., the Sign teacher, is socially disowned by being overweight, divorced, and ultimately by falling in love with his pupil Eliza, a female gorilla. In *Animal Heart*, Marshall McGregor is emotionally isolated because he fears intimacy, but he is finally liberated from this emotional void by entering into contact with the animal whose heart he carries in his chest.

All these examples of intimate relationships between human and nonhuman animals, from that of the woman naturalist with the nonhuman ape, to that of the abused child who finds solace in his horse companion as well as the adults of these novels whose life gains meaning through an animal guide, show an undercurrent of a narrative of relationship common to all of them. Relationships and their narratives become the

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<sup>118</sup> The ethics of justice is also known as the ethics of rights.

key to understanding the successful crossing of the space that separates the human and the nonhuman.

Feminist epistemologists have dealt with the issue of relationality and have come up with interesting responses to this kind of divide between sameness and difference. Lorraine Code puts a lot of emphasis in the importance narrative has for knowing the *other*, that who occupies a space beyond ourselves. In her article “‘They Treated Him Well’: Fact, Fiction, and the Politics of Knowledge” (2011), she shows how fact and fiction working together “can inform a moral epistemology that moves toward deriving principles for understanding difference” (205). To develop her thesis she uses Nadine Gordimer’s novel *July’s People* (1981) set in South Africa during the dismantling of apartheid and dealing with the paradoxical situation of a family, the Smales, who have to seek refuge in their servant’s village. She focuses on the phrase “they treated him well” associated in the novel to the relationship between the Smales and July, their servant, to illustrate the flaws that affect their mutual knowledge and understanding which is not leveled since July knows the white family better than the Smales know him. From her reading of Gordimer’s novel, she concludes that fictional narratives of this kind where an epistemological distance is shown as derived from a long history of misunderstandings and ignorance may create a context where a mutual knowledge is possible. Thus she concludes that:

Reading human lives through narratives that make new sense of them, if never definitively or completely – whether they present themselves as straightforwardly fictional, as autobiographical, as ethnographical investigations – opens the way for readers to re-imagine forms of life that cannot have been theirs, challenges their expectations in matters of recognition and oppression, and can animate strategies of thinking toward a critically creative instituting social imaginary where the occupants of positions of privilege might begin to take responsibility for how that privilege has made them. (216)

Code refers here to “human lives” but the same could be said to be true of “animal lives.” In fact, as it was abovementioned, Donovan appreciates the value of personal story to restore the absent referent, the thou. In this same vein, ecofeminist

philosopher Karen J. Warren also sees in the use of the first-person narrative, “a way of raising philosophically germane issues in ethics often lost or underplayed in mainstream philosophical ethics” (“The Power” 25). One of these issues is the human relationship with the more-than-human world whose redefinition in a non-oppressive conceptual framework features at the core of the kind of ecofeminist ethics proposed by Warren. She finds four advantages in the use of the first-person narrative of the kind used by the primatologists referred above. First of all, this kind of narrative gives voice to “a sensitivity to conceiving oneself as fundamentally ‘in relationship with’ others” (Warren “The Power” 27). Second, this kind of narrative expresses the contrast between two kinds of relationship with the *other*: “an imposed conqueror-type relationship, and an emergent caring-type relationship” (Warren “The Power” 27). Third, the first-person narrative allows for the expression of “the historical, material and social realities” of each moral subject, hence making the voices of otherwise oppressed subjects heard (Warren “The Power” 27). Fourth, the first-person narrative is helpful in determining how to solve a particular ethical situation because it helps to question the narrator what the right course of action is.

All in all, this emphasis in personal narration and relationship indicates that literature has the power to create new worlds where new interactions are possible. This will be shown in the section to come where a telepathic gorilla teaches a human how to save the world, a Sign teacher falls madly in love with his gorilla pupil, the transplanted heart of a baboon saves both physically and spiritually a man who had lived a life of emotional isolation, and a teenage girl’s neuron memory animates the body of a chimpanzee who still inhabits her former self.



## **PART TWO**

### **HUMAN-ANIMAL DIALOGUES**



In his work *Animal Rights and the Politics of Literary Representation* (2002) John Simons distinguishes three modes of literary representations of animals: 1) the use of animals as symbols;<sup>119</sup> 2) anthropomorphism; and 3) narratives of transformation (85). Generally speaking, the works that will be analyzed ahead respond to at least the two last types of treatment. Daniel Quinn's *Ishmael* (1992) conforms to the standards of the ape fable and in it the gorilla protagonist speaks, although telepathically, on behalf of nonhuman animals and the interests of indigenous people. The following three, Peter Goldsworthy's *Wish* (1995), Brenda Peterson's *Animal Heart* (2004), and Peter Dickinson's *Eva* (1988), involve processes of physical and psychological transformation of both the human and the nonhuman animal protagonists. In this regard, transformation seems to be the key element in all of these narrations for humans are always changed by their relationships with nonhuman animals, although these transformations affect in the first two novels more the realm of the mind and in the second pair that of the body. This is why I have decided to entitle the following sections Dialogues of the Mind and Dialogues of the Body.

I am aware of the fact that this organization involves sticking to the mind/body dualism where the human animal is identified with reason and the nonhuman animal with matter or physicality. But, by highlighting this division in each of the following sections, I actually intend to arrive at the conclusion that the human-animal relationships described in these novels are solved through a process of transformation that involves an empathic dialogue where the human takes the place of the nonhuman, making possible the crossing of boundaries and thus their erasure. This implies a critique of the Western dualisms ecofeminism aims at deconstructing. Likewise, it serves to illustrate the sixth specific objective of this dissertation, that animal literature

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<sup>119</sup> An apt example of this first usage is the beginning of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) where the silence of birds is used as a symbol of a dwindling nature.

is but a first step into the evolution of the humanities into a new paradigm that can be described as the posthuman humanities. This is promoted by a movement from language to matter, from words to bodies.

## CHAPTER SIX. DIALOGUES OF THE MIND: LEARNING FROM THE ANIMAL

The novels that are going to be discussed in this section, Daniel Quinn's *Ishmael* (1992) and Peter Goldsworthy's *Wish* (1995), revolve around teacher-student relationships of a peculiar kind for they involve the interaction between an animal, more specifically a gorilla, and a human. In the first case, a telepathic gorilla, Ishmael, tries to teach his human pupil, who remains nameless throughout the novel,<sup>120</sup> that Westerners should change their lifestyle if they want to save the world from environmental catastrophe. *Ishmael* works as a modern fable with the aim to raise human awareness about the consequences of our actions for the planet's health. In the second case, the roles of teacher and student are ultimately switched: the animal, a female gorilla known as Eliza, is taught Sign by a human teacher, J.J., and thus humanized through the acquisition of language. Teaching derives in mutual admiration that grows into love in *Wish*. The parallel processes of feminization of the gorilla student and animalization of the human teacher reach their realization once they make love. Interspecies sex becomes then the expression of the fusing of bodies and thus, signifies the crossing of the species boundary. But this transgression will mean the end of their relationship because it is met with the incomprehension of human society.

### 6.1. FABLING THE BEAST: DANIEL QUINN'S *ISHMAEL: AN ADVENTURE OF THE MIND AND SPIRIT* (1992)

There is more than one way in which animals can be featured in literature. A traditional form is the fable where a talking animal teaches the human a lesson of a moral kind. The book *Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and the Spirit* (1992) by American writer Daniel Quinn responds to both the didactic aims of the fable and its

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<sup>120</sup> The narrator's name, Alan Lomax, is revealed in *Ishmael's* sequel *My Ishmael* (1997).

form as a dialogue between a human and a nonhuman animal. Historian J. Donald Hughes analyzes this novel as a philosophical dialogue in the manner of Plato “set within a minimal, contrived narrative” where the gorilla takes the place of Socrates (705). It tells the story of an unusual encounter between a human in need of a vision to work for and an animal, a gorilla named Ishmael, who becomes his teacher and the provider of such a vision. Throughout their conversations the reasons behind the environmental crisis are discussed and the need for a shift in the Western paradigm is defended.

The narrator of the story is a man who responds to an ad he finds in a newspaper. This ad reads: “TEACHER seeks pupil. Must have an earnest desire to save the world. Apply in person” (*Ishmael* 4). Intrigued by the idealism behind the ad, he decides to meet with such teacher and discovers that he is a male gorilla who can communicate telepathically with humans. As an expert in captivity, the gorilla Ishmael promises his human student to teach him a lesson on how to liberate humans, more specifically Westerners, from the captivity imposed on them by Mother Culture. He begins by telling his pupil the story of his life.

Ishmael was taken from his home in Africa and turned into a captive first in a zoo, later in a menagerie, and finally located in a belvedere thanks to Walter Solokow, his human savior. Mr. Solokow, a Jewish man who lost his family in the Nazi Holocaust, saw in the gorilla the suffering of his people and decided to rescue him. Ishmael uses storytelling as his basic technique for making his student understand that the problem with humankind derives from a flawed understanding of what their role in life is. He divides humanity in two kinds of people, the Leavers and the Takers, according to their different narratives of the world. The Leavers, who are identified with indigenous peoples, respect nature’s cycles and see themselves as part of a system of

interdependency with all living creatures. The Takers are controlled by consumerism and see themselves as the owners of Earth's resources with the right to use them without control. Only by changing the way in which the Takers see themselves, turning them from masters into Earth's stewards, can the ecological crisis be stopped.

Interestingly, after its publication, Quinn's book not only received the prestigious Turner Tomorrow Fellowship, an award given to literary works offering solutions and inspiration for the coming future, but also created a legion of followers or *ishmaelists* who launched their own online communities to contribute to the enactment of Ishmael's vision:<sup>121</sup> a substitution of civilization by the practice of the principles of sustainable communities. This vision is revealed by Quinn in *Providence: The Story of a Fifty-Year Vision Quest* (1994), a book where he explains the ideas that led him to the writing of *Ishmael*. This vision is referred to as the "New Tribal Revolution" in *Ishmael's* sequel *My Ishmael* (1997) (218). Furthermore, *Ishmael* has also been highly praised by the educational community both in high-school and college levels. This is well documented in *The Ishmael Companion* (1995),<sup>122</sup> edited by Sally H. Maher and Rennie Quinn, in which several teachers comment on the ways in which *Ishmael* has proved to be an engaging teaching tool. To the animal studies scholar it seems paradoxical to find that in a world where species continue disappearing, the lessons of a literary gorilla might take root with such strength. However, the impact this fable has had in American culture as inspiration of new and alternative ways of living shows the value animal literature has had since the twentieth century to raise awareness about environmental concerns.

Consequently, in this section attention will be paid to the role of the animal in the modern ape fable. In order to do this, two main aspects will be tackled. Firstly,

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<sup>121</sup> A good site to start this journey is [www.ishmael.org](http://www.ishmael.org)

<sup>122</sup> This book can be accessed at [www.ishmael.org/origins/ishmael/companion/](http://www.ishmael.org/origins/ishmael/companion/)

issues of animal representation will be discussed in relationship with the charge of anthropomorphism. In this sense, special attention will be given to the ways in which interspecies communication is portrayed through the teacher-student relationship. Secondly, Ishmael's narrative function will be analyzed in relationship with his role as teacher of environmental wisdom.

#### 6.1.1. Animal Representation in *Ishmael*

*Ishmael* is a modern fable and as such it can be classified into the second category of Simons's model, anthropomorphic representation of nonhuman animals. Advocates of animal rights have traditionally argued against anthropomorphism because, according to them, it implies the erasing of the real animal behind the story and it is therefore a speciesist form of representation. Yet as Simons and others argue, myself included, anthropomorphic representation does not necessarily go in detriment of the animal as will be conveniently explained.

One of the characteristics of the fable is the use of speaking animals. *Ishmael* updates the genre by featuring not a talking but a telepathic gorilla. This mind to mind form of communication shared by both the human and the nonhuman animal has its advantages because it does not privilege verbal language, the realm of humans. However, *Ishmael* is stereotypical in the sense that it uses an animal to convey a moral lesson, although one that implies beneficial consequences for the nonhuman world. Nonetheless, at all times the gorilla proves to be wiser than his human student who struggles to understand the wrongs of humans and what is needed in order to save life on Earth.

Using an animal's voice has its advantages in the context of this work. The first advantage derives from the fact that the fable has for a long time been the traditional habitat for the literary animal. The genre itself makes possible belief in the gorilla as a

kind of Socratic teacher motivating his human pupil to think critically about Westerners' way of living. It allows the impossible to become possible through a suspension of disbelief inherent in this form. In this context, the accusation of anthropomorphism loses part of its force since the form of the text requires a talking animal. Still some may regard the anthropomorphism of this text as undesirable. It is true that the development of a certain set of ideas under the umbrella of the animal rights movement has led many to claiming the restoration of the real animal behind the story. Indeed, animal literature has a tendency to sway between poles, from the supposedly objective description of the nature writer to the fictive creations of the fiction writer. Perhaps the clearest case is that of the "nature fakers controversy" previously mentioned. This brought about a heated debate between the so-called real naturalists and the sham naturalists. The real naturalists were represented by John Burroughs who criticized William J. Long's style of dealing with animals. Long attributed human responses to the animal protagonists of his stories and claimed that that was the product of his true observation of nature. Burroughs on his part accused him of going against the common knowledge shared by all naturalists and of fictionalizing his animal characters. Later on another attempt at being faithful to the real nature of the animal was made by Rachel Carson and Sally Carrighar in their respective works *Under the Sea Wind* (1941) and *One Day on Beetle Rock* (1944). Here animals were described in strict detail by these biologists and there was little left to the imagination. However, it is precisely within the illusive confines of the imagination where it seems that the animal has had a most enduring effect. An illustrative example are the animal characters of children's literature and young adults' literature.

Interestingly, since the 1990s there has been an attempt at vindicating the role of the fictional animal within literary studies and absolving both scholars and writers of

any accusations of anthropomorphism (Murphy *Literature* 14). Regarding this, it is possible to justify the use of anthropomorphisation in animal literature when the writer acts as either advocate or translator of the animal.

In reference to the role of the writer as advocate, in 1783 Dorothy Kilner published *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* which is considered by some the first biography of an animal ever to be written (Russell 196). Dorothy Kilner, herself a prolific writer of children's books, firmly believed that there was a connection between children's education and cruelty to animals. This link had already been established by then by John Locke and was agreed upon by other famous writers of the time, Mary Wollenstonecraft and Samuel Taylor Coleridge among them (White *Natural* 200). Kilner, for instance, writing in 1799 under the pen name of Mary Pelham produced a book, *The Rational Brutes, or, Talking Animals*, with the aim of denouncing the ill-treatment of animals by children and encouraging mothers to instill in their sons a love for every living creature. At times, she gets so carried away in her writing that she even wishes the death of every "boy upon the island" if that were to give some peace of mind to animals:

Well, I think it would be the happiest thing for this nation that ever yet was thought of, if some plan could be contrived to destroy every *boy* upon the island; there certainly is no animal in the creation so destructive as *boys*; they do more mischief than all the race of *foxes*, *rats*, or *hedge-hogs* put together, and are ten times more barbarous than *hornets* or *gadflies*. If it was not for *boys*, one might pass one's time comfortably enough; but they destroy the happiness of one's life by their inhumanity, and their tricks. I do not wish to be vain, or make nay boast of my own good qualities; but yet, in justice to myself, I must say, that I have not the smallest desire to hurt any one, and am as patient, and as inoffensive, as any living creature can be. (Pelham 20-1; emphasis in original)

Interestingly, in a previous work of hers, she had also connected the cruelty inflicted upon animals with that suffered by the black slaves. Thus, in *The Rotchfords* (1786) she tells the story of a young African slave, at some point described as a "lazy *black dog*," dismissed by his former master and rescued by a virtuous family (qtd. in White *Natural* 179; emphasis in original). The truth is that people from foreign latitudes had

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traditionally been described in animal terms, although this view was combined paradoxically with that which turned the savage into a noble being, more rational than its civilized fellows. These two sides of the identification between the animal and the foreign *other*, as will be explained later on, is defined as therio-primitivism.

The eighteenth century saw as well the rise of the humanitarian movement which not only strived to dignify women, children, and slaves but also planted the seed of the modern animal movement which is traditionally identified in literature with Enlightenment, Romantic and Victorian sentimentalism (Armstrong 220). Within this framework, it was only natural that the nineteenth century saw the publication of Anne Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877).

Throughout the nineteenth century it had become stylish to adorn every funeral with a coach drawn by black horses who were tacked with reins that held their heads erect for long periods of time causing them severe discomfort. *Black Beauty* offered some insight in what it was like to be a horse at a time when the denunciation of the abuse inflicted on horses on the streets of London had become one of the main causes embraced by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). Sewell's book became so popular that "the RSPCA endorsed a number of editions of the book and in the United States George Angell, the founder of the American Humane Society, issued free copies to American cabmen with the subtitle "The Uncle Tom's Cabin of the Horse" (Kean 79).

These two examples help to illustrate the first of these categories, the author acting in a conscious manner as advocate of the animal. Both Kilner and Sewell felt an empathy for animals that was conveyed in their writing. Through this effort, they aimed at transforming society. Kilner believed in the need to educate children to restrain their sadistic impulses against animals. Sewell, who spent a life of poor health and physical

disability that condemned her to depend on horse-drawn carriages for her mobility, believed she could change those employed in the horse business.

Within the second category abovementioned, that of the writer as translator or mediator, the position sustained by Canadian writer Margaret Atwood in her article “Animal Victims” (1998) results especially interesting. In this piece, she basically invalidates the need to make the animal story real. She opines that the very subject of this genre, speaking about a creature with whom we do not share a common language, renders its realism all in all impossible:

...“realism” in connection with animal stories must always be a somewhat false claim, for the simple reason that animals do not speak a human language; nor do they write stories. It’s impossible to get the real inside story, from the horse’s mouth so to speak. “Animal” stories must be stories written by people *about* animals, just as “Indian” stories have until very recently been stories written by white people *about* Indians. In the latter case the Indian tends to be made into a symbol; onto him the white man projects his own desire or fear. And so with the animal. (“Animal” 216-17; emphasis in original)

If this is the case, if giving a faithful account of the real animal is unattainable, it is important to reflect on the role of the writer, especially when creating fiction about animals and not nature writing with pretenses of veracity. The animal fiction writer and even the nature writer purposely or not become translators of the animal. Since humans cannot communicate verbally with animals, or at least not to the same degree of complexity we are used to with other human beings,<sup>123</sup> we have to rely on the writer, be this a naturalist or an artist, to get the story behind the animal gaze. Interestingly, ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood is a proponent of this take on animal literature. She sees a parallelism between writings on animals and “any cross-cultural” project (Plumwood *Environmental* 58). It is in fact the idea that any cross-cultural and cross-species representation will always be hindered by the need of adaptation for the target

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<sup>123</sup> Perhaps the most telling example of interspecies communication, as will be referred more extensively in the analysis of *Wish*, is that promoted through Sign language experiments with apes. However, there are also other examples involving the observation and learning of the body language of the nonhuman species. This method has acquired a tremendous popularity with regard to two popular companion species: dogs and horses.

audience which enables her to dismantle any accusations of anthropomorphism. And to this effect she writes:

What mode of representing, animal subjectivity or communication, beyond its bare recording without any attempt to convey a meaning or place in, say, an animal's life (as in commentary-free films of wolves howling or whales making sounds), would not be subject to this kind of objection? Any representation for a human audience will have to be, in some sense, an interpretation in human terms, just as any representation of a non-European culture's speech for a European audience would have to be in European terms, in the sense that it will have to try to locate the meaning of the speech in terms of the closest equivalent forms of life. The problem we run into here is the problem familiar from the case of representing human cultural difference, of translation and indeterminacy. There are many well-known traps and difficulties in such representation and in establishing or assuming equivalence in forms of life. There can be real problems in representing other species' communicative powers or subjectivities in terms of human speech, but they do not rule out such representation in any automatic way. (Plumwood *Environmental* 58-9)

Moreover, if animal literature is seen as human-animal translation, it is possible to assume that through literature the animal writer may acquire the role of mediator between the human and the animal cultures. This is so because the writer is the one who, through her writing, makes possible not only an understanding, but an awareness of difference and commonalities, and a sensibility to other experiences of life. Besides, as some literary critics argue, fiction, through the use of imagination, has the potential to generate alternative ways of dealing with reality (Huggan 710; Murphy *Literature* 11) that can help humans learn how to deal with what they do not fully understand.

In the case of Quinn's *Ishmael*, the gorilla representation responds to the tradition of the wise animal typical of the fable. He is capable of rational thinking and can be defined as a philosophical animal in the manner of Kafka's ape fable protagonist Rotpeter. The author uses him as a recourse to explain his moral vision which has to do with a critique of a supposedly civilized mode of life and the need to put into practice a change of paradigm that contributes to a more sustainable living. Nonetheless, he also turns him into a spokesperson for the nonhuman world, in a tradition of animal environmentalists that has become widespread throughout twentieth-century literature. He is more clever than his human student but were it not for his telepathic powers he

behaves like a gorilla. Actually, the first impression his student receives of him is olfactory: “the place reeked of the circus—no, not the circus, the menagerie: unmistakable but not unpleasant” (*Ishmael* 7). He is later impressed by the enormity of his size: “He was terrifyingly enormous, a boulder, a sarsen of Stonehenge. His sheer mass was alarming in itself (...)” (*Ishmael* 8). However, he is reassured by the peacefulness of his disposition: “...he was half-sitting, half-reclining most placidly, nibbling delicately on a slender branch he carried in his hand like a wand” (*Ishmael* 8).

Daniel Quinn explains in his website that he chose a gorilla as narrator of his story for two main reasons. The first one has to do with the fact that he considers that as inhabitants on planet Earth humans have to be aware of the fact that they are not alone, they “must listen to what [their] neighbors in the community of life have to tell them” (Quinn “Why did you make Ishmael a gorilla?” Question ID No 7). The second is derived from the symbolic associations of the gorilla with characteristics such as strength, power and authority. Quinn needed an animal with an imposing presence to perform the role of teacher and using a gorilla was also useful as a reminder of human animality given the similarities between the two. As will be explained in the following pages, the entire book revolves around the idea of captivity and a captive gorilla was perhaps the best illustration of this.

#### 6.1.2. Ishmael’s Narrative Function: Animal Lessons on Captivity

Two types of captivity are described in *Ishmael*. On the one hand, there is animal captivity represented by Ishmael himself who was captured by men in Africa and made into a living attraction, first in a zoo and later in a menagerie. On the other, there is a more subtle form of captivity, humans being captive of a culture. This is represented by two examples: the captivity of the German people under the Nazi regime and the captivity of a sector of humankind, the Takers, at the hands of Mother Culture.

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According to Ishmael, “[a] culture is a people enacting a story” (*Ishmael* 41). Both the Takers and the Leavers enact a different story according to their Mother Culture. The Takers can be identified with the so-called civilized peoples of the world and Mother Culture is their system of beliefs that Ishmael deconstructs and criticizes as being too individualistic and materialistic. In the case of the Takers, Mother Culture promotes the development of the capitalist system ruling in many parts of the globe, while in the case of the Leavers, Mother Culture advances a sustainable form of living.

Animal captivity is mainly described in the first of the thirteen parts in which the book is divided. This is the section of the novel that more directly denounces the cruelty involved in keeping wild animals in enclosures with little or no stimuli to substitute for what their lives would have been in the wild. However, its main role is to work as preparatory lesson, term of comparison, or metaphor for the other two kinds of captivity described in the novel. All in all, the book’s development depends on the physical limits Ishmael’s captivity imposes on the gorilla’s relationship with his pupil. Ishmael only enjoys a certain amount of liberty while under the protection of Mr. Solokow and his daughter Rachel. Thanks to that he is capable of working as a private teacher, but, after his rescuer’s death and once the funds to support him are cut down, he is sold to a carnival and later to a circus where he finally dies without his pupil being able to do anything to protect him. Ishmael’s experiences of captivity have made him become an expert on this subject. That is why his role as teacher of captivity is the determining factor of the narration.

Much in the manner of a Socratic teacher, Ishmael uses storytelling and question-making as his main teaching methods. He begins by telling his student the story of his life which he uses as starting point of his lesson. He tells his pupil how he was caught as an infant in the forests of equatorial West Africa in the 1930s. He was

then sold to a zoo in some small northeastern city where he lived and grew for several years. This is a period in which, through observation and inference, he reaches a series of conclusions. His “interior life,” as he calls it, begins prompted by his questioning of the lives of animals in captivity. He finds this unfair to the animals and against their nature. He explains how their incomprehension leads them into a state of lethargy close to death:

In such places (he went on at last), where animals are simply penned up, they are always more thoughtful than their cousins in the wild. This is because even the dimmest of them cannot help but sense that something is very wrong with this style of living. When I say that they are more thoughtful, I don't mean to imply that they acquire powers of ratiocination. But the tiger you see madly pacing its cage is nevertheless preoccupied with something that a human would certainly recognize as a thought. And this thought is a question: *Why?* “Why, why, why, why, why, why?” the tiger asks itself hour after hour, day after day, year after year, as it treads its endless path behind the bars of its cage. It cannot analyze the question or elaborate on it. If you were somehow able to ask the creature, “Why *what?*” it would be unable to answer you. Nevertheless this question burns like an unquenchable flame in its mind, inflicting a searing pain that does not diminish until the creature lapses into a final lethargy that zookeepers recognize as an irreversible rejection of life. And of course this questioning is something that no tiger does in its normal habitat. (*Ishmael* 11; emphasis in original)

Ishmael also begins to ponder the same question the tiger asks but, instead of falling into depression like this animal who symbolizes the rest of caged beasts, Ishmael is saved by his intellectual superiority. He describes himself as “[b]eing neurologically far in advance of the tiger” (*Ishmael* 11). The gorilla's powers of ratiocination become an important factor behind the development of the story and turns him into a kind of philosopher. It is also here in his questioning of the cause of his captivity that Ishmael initiates a progression into personhood. This is made possible by his being discovered by his savior Walter Solokow. The Jewish merchant becomes Ishmael's creator by, firstly, singling him out with his gaze and, secondly, renaming him as Ishmael. This process is interesting for a number of reasons. It is characterized by its biblical undertones, it shows the power looking has in the creation of the *other*, and it also demonstrates the power of naming, of the word, to redefine him.

Ishmael becomes aware for the first time of his individuality while being in the menagerie. At the zoo he was one gorilla among many others who enjoyed looking at

their human visitors. “They were a curiosity” for the captive animals (*Ishmael* 13). Ishmael acquires a sense of self for the first time when he is called for at the menagerie. This discovery is made possible through his acquisition of a name, Goliath, the one the human visitors read on the sign placed on his wagon:

The wagon to the right of mine was occupied by a female chimpanzee with an infant, and I had already observed that visitors spoke to her in the same way they spoke to me. Now I noticed that visitors employed a different recurrent sound to attract her attention. At her wagon, visitors called out, “Zsa-Zsa! Zsa-Zsa! Zsa-Zsa!” At my wagon, they called out, “Goliath! Goliath! Goliath!”

By small steps such as these, I soon understood that these sounds in some mysterious way attached directly to the two of us *as individuals*. You, who have had a name from birth and who probably think that even a pet dog is aware of having a name (which is untrue), cannot imagine what a revolution in perception the acquisition of a name produced in me. It would be no exaggeration to say that I was truly born in that moment—born as a person. (*Ishmael* 14; emphasis in original)

Naming brings about an epiphany for Ishmael who suddenly realizes that he is being singled out as a person. This realization is meaningful in the context of this analysis for three reasons. Firstly, the act of naming in this novel cannot be fully understood without putting it in relationship with the *Genesis* to which there are constant references throughout the book. Secondly, since gorillas are a species often used in experimentation, it might prove fruitful to consider the role naming has had in the sciences as an act of animal empowerment. And thirdly, some consideration should be given to the meaning that Ishmael’s acquisition of personhood through being named has in the book and how this facilitates his believability as character.

In *Genesis* 2:19 it is said that God gave man authority to name all living creatures: “And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the sky; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof” (*Holy Bible* 2; emphasis in original). In the reference quoted above, the gorilla Ishmael has been capriciously named Goliath by the people working at the menagerie. Curiously, Goliath was the name of the giant that wanted to finish with the people of David, the Jewish

people, and in the novel this is the reason why the Nazis, during World War Two, chose the image of a ferocious gorilla that Ishmael's savior, Mr. Solokow, rejects when he discovers the gorilla at the menagerie and proclaims "You are *not* Goliath" (*Ishmael* 16; emphasis in original).

Mr. Solokow, like the gorilla, knows what is like to be a victim at the hands of human nonsense. He lost his family in the Holocaust and now wants to soothe his pain by rescuing this gorilla:

He [Mr. Solokow] went in, approached my wagon, and by gazing into my eyes, soon realized that I was no relation to the bloodthirsty monster in the painting—and indeed no relation to the Philistine tormentor of his race. He found it gave him no satisfaction whatever to see me behind bars. On the contrary, in a quixotic gesture of guilt and defiance, he decided to rescue me from my cage and fashion me into a dreadful substitute for the family he had failed to rescue from the cage of Europe. (*Ishmael* 20)

Solokow is also who decides on the gorilla's new name. He chooses the name "Ishmael," a telling decision since Ishmael was one of the sons of Abraham and a great leader to his people. This change of names provokes a second and more definitive change in the animal for he becomes, as he declares, "whole as a person" for the first time (*Ishmael* 18). This is so because he identifies with the identity associated with the name Ishmael much better than with that of the terrible Goliath of the Nazi propaganda poster:

"Yes, I was right. You are not Goliath. You are Ishmael."

Once again, as if everything that mattered was now finally settled, he turned and walked away.

And once again I was thunderstruck—but this time by a feeling of profound relief, for I had been redeemed from oblivion. More, the error that caused me to live as an unwitting impostor for so many years had been corrected at last. I had been made whole as a person—not again but for the very first time. (*Ishmael* 18)

These episodes serve to illustrate how naming becomes an act of creation in the book, although it works differently on the animal depending on who does it. Those who do not care for the animal behind bars, who use him as a commodity, apply to him the name that can result in a higher profit. They do not connect with the animal, but simply have a

utilitarian vision of him. It is true that ultimately they make the gorilla aware of his individuality by calling on him by the name Goliath, but they do not manage to understand his true identity. However, Mr. Solokow represents another side of humanity, that which commiserates with the captive animal. He is a former victim and is capable of a sympathy for the animal that turns him into the discoverer of his real identity. And ironically, it is through this process that Quinn begins to rewrite the story of creation laid out in the *Genesis*, although this time “God” is a Jewish man and Adam is a gorilla waiting to be found:

[...] He [Mr. Solokow] was to me a supernal being. To a mind ready for mythology, he was the beginning of what is meant by *godlike*. [...] Despite all these unanswerable questions, the overwhelming fact remained that this uncanny creature had twice sought me out in order to address me in an unprecedented way—as a person. (*Ishmael* 19; emphasis in original)

Furthermore, considering the effects that naming has had in the sciences may bring some light into our analysis of the animal character. Naming can empower the animal and change how she is seen by the researcher. Traditionally, scientists have not named but numbered their subjects of study. Supposedly, this practice secures the objectivity of their research since the researcher finds it harder to humanize the animal. Ironically, in some cases science has used naming for its own benefit. An illustrative case is the history of the United States space program. Since 1948 when the first animal, a rhesus monkey named Albert I, was sent into space, until 1985, naming space animals was the norm. By naming the space monkeys and dogs, NASA could get both the social and financial support that it needed to beat the Russians. Naming made possible the individualization of the animals who were portrayed as heroes and heroines in a battle against communism and, as sociologist Mary T. Phillips contends, it also afforded the creation of animal biographies that were followed by many in the media (123). Thus, for twenty-five years the birthdays and occasional illnesses of Miss Baker, a squirrel monkey that had been sent into space on May 28, 1959, were followed in the press and

other means of communication with the same attention than those of any other celebrity (Phillips 124). This practice had to be discontinued by NASA because in the 1980s the use of animals in experimentation was already meeting great criticism.

In other fields, such as primatology, naming the animal has triggered a change. As recalled by Marc Bekoff, Jane Goodall was the first scientist to insist on naming the chimpanzees she was studying (“Deep Ethology, Animal Rights” 289). She even had the publication of a paper rejected for referring to animals by their given names and for using the pronouns “he” or “she” instead of “it” to refer to them. Goodall insisted on individualizing the animals and bonding with them and this brought about an ontological change to primatology. The animal was no longer the anonymous subject of a study, it was not a number, it became an individual. Thus naming can be regarded as a liberatory force since not only sets out the animal’s biography but also releases her from the otherization of not being named.<sup>124</sup> As Lynda Birke explains in her study of the consequences of nonnaming for rats and mice used in laboratory experimentation, nonnaming causes a double otherization of the lab animal who is already otherized from the rest of the animals—she is not pet, not wild, not vermin. This second otherization implies that she is refused the possibility of belonging to the category of the namable animals, those like pets who normally share the privilege of a moral status among humans (Birke “Who” 207).

At the beginning of Quinn’s book, the gorilla is named twice and both times the act of naming is described as a liberation. The first time this liberation consists in becoming an individual, more specifically a person, the second time it means being

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<sup>124</sup> Ursula K. Le Guin offers a very different perspective on the issue of naming in her short story “She Unnames Them.” Located in the biblical Eden, it implies a deconstruction of the Christian creation story. Animals and the first woman, Eve, who, according to Scripture, were named by Adam and God respectively decide to give back their names in what may be interpreted as an act of liberation from the forces of patriarchy and logocentrism. With this they enact a transition from the linguistic to the material turn that will be later on described in this dissertation.

liberated from oblivion and from a name that did not match the true identity of the gorilla: that is when he is finally made whole as a person. This realization of personhood facilitates the believability of the animal character as agent. In order to understand the relevance of such a category, philosopher Daniel Dennet's definition of personhood can be used as a starting point. According to him, the condition of "personhood derives first from three mutually interdependent characteristics: being rational, being intentional and being perceived as rational and intentional" (178).<sup>125</sup> In *Ishmael* the gorilla's acquisition of personhood follows quite closely this threefold pattern and is mainly sustained in the act of looking, touching, and speaking—although telepathically.

Ishmael is a thinking gorilla. From the onset of the narration he is described as an observant creature who reaches his own conclusions from his study of the surrounding world. This is so, first in the zoo and second in the menagerie. Actually, it is because of questioning himself about the reasons for his captivity, for the way in which he and other animals are kept as well as the way in which they are observed and spoken to by people that Ishmael starts having an interior life: "It was in puzzling out such small matters as these that my interior life began—quite unnoticed" (*Ishmael* 12). But his personhood is not exclusively sustained by his ability to think. The power of looking, of recognizing oneself in the eyes of the *other* also has remarkable value in the context of the book. In fact, the reader becomes aware of this from the description of the first meeting between the pupil and his teacher that Ishmael's student gives: "I could look at nothing else in the world but his face, more hideous than any other in the animal

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<sup>125</sup> Dennet's argument exemplifies the similarity approach upon which mainstream animal ethics is proposed. This involves granting moral status on the basis of what is similar between human and nonhuman animals. David Scholsberg criticizes this position and defends recognition not "on extending what is purely human to [...] nature" but on "[recognizing] what is *natural* and not necessarily unique to humans" (136; emphasis in original). In *Ishmael*, Quinn seems to be too much caught in the standards of moral recognition that are at the core of positions such as those defended by Paola Cavallieri and Peter Singer in the Great Ape Project: the animal's rationality and self-awareness play a key role in the development of the novel.

kingdom because of its similarity to our own, yet in its way more noble than any Greek ideal of perfection” (*Ishmael* 8). And as it can be seen, in this act of looking the human recognises himself in the face of the gorilla. This makes him feel uncomfortable because it reminds him of his animal nature, his animality, that which is denied because it is characterized as evil, savage, without restraint or control.<sup>126</sup> However, little by little, the human finds meaning in the eyes of the gorilla: “For no conscious reason, I lifted my eyes to those of my beastly companion in the next room. As everyone knows, eyes *speak*. A pair of strangers can effortlessly reveal their mutual interest and attraction in a single glance. *His eyes spoke, and I understood*” (*Ishmael* 10; emphasis in original).

A similar process, but of a reverse nature because this time it is the man who provokes recognition, happens when Mr. Solokow finds Ishmael in the menagerie:

Perhaps three or four years passed. Then one rainy day, when the lot was deserted, I received a peculiar visitor: a lone man, who looked to be ancient and shriveled to me, but who I later learned was only in his early forties. Even his approach was distinctive. He stood at the entrance to the menagerie, glanced methodically at each wagon in turn, and then headed straight for mine. He paused at the rope slung some five feet away, planted the tip of his walking stick in the mud just ahead of his shoes, and peered intently in my eyes. I have never been disconcerted by a human gaze, so I placidly returned his stare. I sat and he stood for several minutes without moving. I remember feeling an unusual admiration for this man, so stoically enduring the drizzle that was streaming down his face and soaking his clothes. (*Ishmael* 16)

As it can be noticed the act of gazing at each other in the eyes becomes a point of encounter, of recognition, and this recognition by the *other* of your existence as a conscious being is essential for the existence of personhood. In this respect, psychologist Robert W. Mitchell, in his advocacy of the attribution of personhood to great apes, explains that: “On one persuasive view of what is to be a person, that I am a person requires, at some point in the development of personhood, that I recognize that you recognize that I have consciousness” (238).

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<sup>126</sup> In his essay *About Looking*, John Berger refers to this moment of awareness of the “familiar” that takes place each time the human returns the look of an animal (5). He also comments how this moment of recognition was altered from the nineteenth century onwards due to the separation from the animal brought along by industrialization (Berger 3). Together with this came the apparition of the zoo, a derivation of the royal menageries, which led to an even higher level of marginalization of the animals imprisoned in them and the isolation of humans from the nonhuman animal unable to return their look (Berger 28).

Touching also becomes a fundamental step in the process of recognition of personhood. Once Ishmael is settled down in his new location, thanks to Mr. Solokow who has bought him, Ishmael responds to his carer by touching his hand. This frightens his new carer but he finally understands that he is dealing with an empathic creature:

After an hour or so, Mr. Solokow sent him away [the handler], and we gazed at each other in a long silence as we had already done twice before. Finally—reluctantly, as if surmounting some daunting interior barrier—he began to speak to me, not in the jocular way of the visitors to the menagerie but rather as one speaks to the wind or the waves crashing on the beach, uttering that which must be said but which must not be heard by anyone. As he poured out his sorrows and self-recriminations, he gradually forgot the need for caution. By the time an hour had passed, he was propped up against my cage with a hand wrapped around a bar. He was looking at the ground, lost in thought, and I used this opportunity to express my sympathy, reaching out and gently stroking the knuckles of his hand. He leaped back, startled and horrified, but a search of my eyes reassured him that my gesture was as innocent of menace as it seemed. (*Ishmael* 20-1)

After this significant moment of understanding between the gorilla and his savior, there comes the need for normalizing the communication between them. Mr. Solokow tries whatever is at hand to make the gorilla talk but the animal lacks the phonic conditions to do so. Finally, it is the gorilla who finds a way to speak to his guardian, and this is done through telepathy: “But at last there came a day when I couldn’t go on, and in my anguish, at not being able to *tell* him this, I *thought* him this, with all the mental power I possessed. He was stunned—as was I when I saw that he’d heard my mental cry” (*Ishmael* 21; emphasis in original). This marks the beginning of a relationship between the gorilla and his carer where soon the gorilla will outrank his carer in curiosity and knowledge. And it is by virtue of his intellectual evolution that he becomes an expert on captivity and a teacher with the mission to save the world. This evolution allows for the full development of the animal’s narrative function in the book. He is depicted as morally superior to humans and as such fulfills his didactic purpose as environmental advocate.

6.1.3. *Ishmael's* Ecological Lesson

*To know and not to act is yet not to know.*  
(Chinese Proverb)

As was explained in the previous section, animal captivity is used in *Ishmael* as a metaphor for the kind of captivity that keeps humans prisoners of a culture. Ishmael learns about this first through the experiences of Mr. Solokow who lost his family in the Nazi Holocaust. German people fell captive to a culture that defended the primacy of the Aryan culture above other forms of civilization. The Nazi regime made many people defend this ideal of purity with the force of arms provoking the death of millions of Jewish people, gypsies, and disabled people.<sup>127</sup> The second story, the one around which Ishmael's lesson to his student revolves, is that of humanity being captive at the hands of Mother Culture. This is a story with an ecological message where the negative effects of the expansion of Western civilization around the world are exposed. So-called civilized peoples—the Takers—are contrasted with primitive ones—the Leavers—and the role of humans on Earth is revised and redefined while at the same time the need for human interdependency with the rest of species is highlighted.

In *Ishmael* the nonhuman animal plays the role of spokesperson for the Earth and its creatures. The gorilla acts as a kind of ambassador between the human and the nonhuman world. Such function makes sense in the socio-historical context in which this novel was written. *Ishmael* was published in 1992. In that same year the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)<sup>128</sup> was held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). One of the results of this conference was the so-called *Agenda 21*, a plan for sustainable development in the twenty-first century that was the result of a

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<sup>127</sup> Although a very sensitive topic, one of Elizabeth Costello's arguments in J. M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* (1999) is that the German people preferred to ignore what was happening in the concentration camps rather than to act: "It is not because they waged an expansionist war, and lost it, that Germans of a particular generation are still regarded as standing a little outside humanity, as having to do or be something special before they can be readmitted to the human fold. They lost their humanity, in our eyes, because of a certain willed ignorance on their part" (20).

<sup>128</sup> This conference is also known as Earth Summit, Rio Summit, or Rio Conference.

process begun in December 1989 (United Nations n.pag.). The Earth Summit tackled issues such as the production of substances with toxic components, the need to find alternative sources of energy to replace the use of fossil fuels which were already identified as one of the main factors behind climate change, the use of public transportation systems to reduce vehicle emissions responsible for the pollution of the air, and the scarcity of water. In *Ishmael* Daniel Quinn writes a manifesto for a more sustainable form of living that he calls New Tribalism. His approach is a form of primitivism, that is, it implies going back to tribal forms of living. This means a rejection of civilization as it is known today and its substitution by forms of inhabiting the Earth where there is respect for the nonhuman *other* as well as a rejection of hierarchical forms of organization among people. In this context of vindication of primitivism the choice of a gorilla is justified since as Philip Armstrong has shown, the gorilla “has become an icon of the environmentalist movement” (200). This has to do as well with the evolution of the term therio-primitivism or the identification between so-called primitive peoples and the nonhuman animal. During the nineteenth century the rejection of the consequences Darwin’s theories have for the ontological consideration of humans within the category “animal” grew into the animalization of uncivilized peoples and their identification with wild animals. In the twentieth century, however, this process is reversed and, as Armstrong contends, such reversal is epitomized by the figure of the gorilla, more specifically, by that of King Kong (200). This king of the jungle goes from being represented as ferocious beast in Merian C. Cooper’s 1933 version of the film to becoming a symbol of protest against the expansion of mercantilism around the world in John Guillerman’s 1976 remake. In this film the gorilla and his habitat are threatened by the expansion of an oil company and his fall from the World Trade Center towers turns him a victim of capitalist interests. Finally, as

Barbara Creed shows, in Peter Jackson's 2005 remake of the film the story of the gorilla becomes the story of the end of nature—emphasis is put on the fact that the gorilla lived in one of the last virgin spots of Earth—and of human-animal relationships represented by the gorilla's impossible friendship with her female protector Ann played by Naomi Watts (192). Thanks to this analysis, Ishmael can be interpreted as a dignified inheritor of the King Kong tradition. Moreover, in the case of Quinn's narrative the gorilla moves between the roles of Zen master and prophet. This is proved not only by his stoicism but also by the use he makes of koans and stories, mainly the jellyfish and the Bwana stories.

According to *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, a koan can be defined as "A riddle in the form of a paradox used in Zen Buddhism as an aid to meditation and a means of gaining intuitive knowledge." In this book there are two koans. The first one is placed at the beginning of the novel and works by setting both the emotional and the philosophical tone of the work. The prospective human student, in his search for answers, has responded to an ad posted by a teacher interested in anyone wanting to save the world. When he enters the room where Ishmael resides he finds a koan that leaves him wondering about its meaning. Together with this he also finds a gorilla. He is disturbed by his presence because he sees the animal as an "animate *illustration* for [the] koan" and pities the prisoner of such an artifact:

Nevertheless, this search, with the thought of written communication in mind, brought to my attention something I've overlooked in the room that lay beyond the glass; it was a sign or poster hanging on the wall behind the gorilla. It read:

WITH MAN GONE,  
WILL THERE  
BE HOPE  
FOR GORILLA

This sign stopped me—or rather, this text stopped me. Words are my profession; I seized this and demanded that they explain themselves, that they cease to be ambiguous. Did they imply that hope for gorillas lay in the extinction of the human race or in its survival? It could be read either way.

*Chapter Six. Dialogues of the Mind: Learning from the Animal*

It was, of course, a koan—meant to be inexplicable. It disgusted me for that reason, and for another reason: because it appeared that this magnificent creature beyond the glass was being held in captivity for no other reason than to serve as a sort of animate *illustration* for this koan. (*Ishmael* 9; emphasis in original)

This first koan works in connection with the second one appearing at the end of the book:

It wasn't till I got Ishmael's poster to the framing shop that I discovered there were messages on both sides. I had it framed so that both can be seen. The message on one side is the one Ishmael displayed on the wall of his den:

WITH MAN GONE,  
WILL THERE  
BE HOPE  
FOR GORILLA

The message on the other side reads:

WITH GORILLA GONE,  
WILL THERE  
BE HOPE  
FOR MAN?

(*Ishmael* 262-63)

Thanks to this device the narration comes full circle. Quinn, who aims at narrating the story of human captivity at the hands of Mother Culture, emphasizes how the key to saving the planet lies in humans acknowledging their interdependency with all living beings. These koans work well at showing how the survival of the gorilla—a metonym for the animal kingdom and the human groups respecting the natural cycles—and of man are intimately related. One cannot survive without the other because the disappearance of any of these groups means the disappearance of the other in the long run.

However it seems that the Takers do not react to the ecological crisis and the drama of endangered species and civilizations. This is so because they have become captives of the materialism of Mother Culture and this has disconnected them from the community of beings. They have been given a story that explains who they are and what they are supposed to be doing in the world and they do not care for whatever or

whoever is located outside of those parameters. This is what the gorilla is trying to make his pupil aware of:

“You’re not really thinking, I’m afraid. You’ve recited a story you’ve heard a thousand times, and now you’re listening to Mother Culture as she murmurs in your ear: ‘There, there, my child, there’s nothing to think about, nothing to worry about, don’t get excited, don’t listen to the nasty animal, this is no myth, nothing I tell you is a myth, so there’s nothing to think about, nothing to worry about, just listen to my voice and go to sleep, go to sleep, go to sleep...’”  
(*Ishmael* 53)

Fortunately, Ishmael is as good as Mother Culture at using stories. He wants his student to deconstruct the story of humanity as told by Mother Culture because there is still hope for humans if they manage to change the story they are enacting. But first he has to make them understand where the main flaws of humankind come from. In order to teach his pupil that one of the main problems of humans is their anthropocentrism, he tells him the jellyfish story. In this tale Ishmael comes to the conclusion that man is no more no less important than any other living creature, even though Mother Culture insists at placing man at the top of creation. Man is as significant in the order of things as a jellyfish:

“Of course. Everyone in your culture knows this. The pinnacle was reached in man. Man is the climax of the whole cosmic drama of creation.”

“Yes.”

“When man finally appeared, creation came to an end, because its objective had been reached. There was nothing left to create.”

“That seems to be the unspoken assumption.”

“It’s certainly not always unspoken. The religions of your culture aren’t reticent about it. Man is the end product of creation. Man is the creature for whom all the rest was made: this world, this solar system, this galaxy, the universe itself.”

“True.”

“Everyone in your culture knows that the world wasn’t created for jellyfish or salmon or iguanas or gorillas. It was created for man.”

[...]

He [Ishmael] nodded toward the world outside his window. “Do you see the slightest evidence anywhere in the universe that creation came to an end with the birth of man? Do you see the slightest evidence anywhere out there that man was the climax toward which creation had been straining from the beginning?”

[...]

“But you know that neither of these things happened in fact. Very far from it. The universe went on as before, the planet went on as before. Man’s appearance caused no more stir than the appearance of jellyfish.” (*Ishmael* 57-8)

Ishmael denounces man's pride to his student and makes him aware of the need for man to become part of the community of life if he does not want to be responsible for a disaster. In order to become part of this community, he needs to respect its laws which can be summarized in one, the law of biodiversity. Curiously this law, as explained by Ishmael, does not only have to do with the diversity of beings but also with the diversity of cultures:

“Of course. Now, you know that the knowledge of what works well for production is what's valued in your culture. In the same way, the knowledge of what works well for people is what's valued in Leaver cultures. And every time the Takers stamp out a Leaver culture, a wisdom ultimately tested since the birth of mankind disappears from the world beyond recall, just as every time they stamp out a species of life, a life form ultimately tested since the birth of life disappears from the world beyond recall.” (*Ishmael* 206-07)

Nonhuman animals and indigenous people are necessarily connected since they are the victims of the same socioeconomic system. In this sense, *Ishmael* becomes a suitable work to illustrate the ways in which the world is divided between Leavers and Takers. This is the same as saying that the world is divided between those who respect the laws of nature, which basically come to respecting biodiversity and not placing oneself above the rest of humanity or living beings, and those contrary to this system. Ishmael paves the way to make his pupil understand that the world and the living creatures that populate it are the result of a long process of evolution where none took the place of the other imposing its own condition, but respected a few basic rules such as respecting each others' territory and food and not competing to destroy them: “This law that you have so admirably described defines the limits of competition in the community of life. You may compete to the full extent of your capabilities, but you may not hunt down your competitors or destroy their food or deny them access to food. In other words, you may not wage war.” (*Ishmael* 129)

This discourse on Takers and Leavers permits the book to function as a wake-up call on the perils of the ecological catastrophe provoked by industrialization. In this

respect, it highlights the overriding paradox of Western culture. That is, the story of human captivity in the hands of Mother Culture and how this makes us victims of our own selfish pride. At the same time, the book underlines the potential for hope that can be apprehended by looking at the ways in which animals and Leavers live. Quinn, to a certain extent, uses and abuses the traditional dualisms that set apart civilization and primitivism, human and animal, but it serves well his purpose to illustrate the flaws and perils of civilization. Thus the therio-primitivist construction of the book is necessarily understood in connection with the idea that in a state of nature humans are as happy as animals. This results in an interesting conclusion in relationship with human animality since it does reconcile us with our animal nature. To this effect, Quinn uses the Bwana story where a member of a tribe converses with a civilized man. In this conversation, the “primitive” man laughs at the civilized man’s obsession with control. His tribe does not need such certainties to live a happy life, however the Western man is constantly preoccupied:

“Look, I’ll get you started....Bwana, you tell us that the way we live is wretched and wrong and shameful. You tell us that it’s not the way people are meant to live. This puzzles us, Bwana, because for thousands of years it has seemed to us a good way to live. But if you, who ride to the stars and send your words around the world at the speed of thought, tell us that it isn’t, then we must in all prudence listen to what you have to say.”

“Well...I realize it seems good to you. This is because you’re ignorant and uneducated and stupid.”

“Exactly so, Bwana. We await your enlightenment. Tell us why our life is wretched and squalid and shameful.”

“Your life is wretched and squalid and shameful because you live like animals.”

Ishmael frowned, puzzled. “I don’t understand, Bwana. We live as all others live. We take what we need from the world and leave the rest alone, just as the lion and the deer do. Do the lion and the deer lead shameful lives?”

“No, but that’s because they’re just animals. It’s not right for humans to live that way.”

“Ah,” Ishmael said, “this we did not know. And why is it not right to live that way?”

“It’s because, living that way...you have no control over your lives.” (*Ishmael* 222)

In this process of disenchantment with civilization, Ishmael’s student also discovers that he is a captive of Mother Culture. The recourse to this figure by Quinn points in the direction of another dualism, that of culture/nature. In *Ishmael* there is a lack of female

characters<sup>129</sup> although it is a female construct, Mother Culture, the dominating figure that submits humans to a story of conquest and domination. Culture is defined as a mother by Ishmael “because culture is inherently a nurturer—the nurturer of human societies and life-styles. Among Leaver people Mother Culture explains and preserves a life-style that is healthy and self-sustaining. Among Taker peoples she explains and preserves a life-style that has proven to be unhealthy and self-destructive” (*Ishmael* 148). However, the contrasting term Mother Nature is never used although the whole book revolves around the idea of an impending end of nature that will mean the end of all forms of life on Earth, humans and gorillas included. That is indeed the message evoked by the combination of the two koans that the student finds on Ishmael’s poster. The first, “WITH MAN GONE, / WILL THERE / BE HOPE / FOR GORILLA,” compelled the gorilla to do something to save man; that is why Ishmael became a teacher. The second, “WITH GORILLA GONE, / WILL THERE / BE HOPE / FOR MAN,” a kind of epitaph for Ishmael, is the gorilla’s last cry for help as Mother Nature’s representative. As animal spokesperson Ishmael has been speaking for nature and all those who live according to her rules. Thus the gorilla embodies the conflicts arising from a culture that is based on ideals of mastery and exploitation which has led to what Plumwood calls “the ecological crisis of reason” (*Environmental* 4). This is the result of our current “rationalist culture and the associated human/nature dualism characteristic of the west” that has to be substituted with “a new kind of culture” if we want to continue living on this planet (*Environmental* 4). This new kind of culture is exemplified in *Ishmael* by the Leavers who live in accordance with “the laws governing life” (*Ishmael* 101), the laws of nature, and recognize that humans are one among the many species that belong to “the community of life” (*Ishmael* 99). The Takers therefore

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<sup>129</sup> The only women that appear in the text are completely contrary to each other. One is Mrs. Solokow who represents domesticity and is against her husband’s wish of keeping the gorilla. The other is Mr. Solokow’s daughter, Rachel, who since a very early age forges a close relationship with Ishmael.

need to move from a narrative, a story, that describes them in terms of exceptionalism, to one where they see themselves responsible for the rest of creatures. They need to become the “pathfinder[s]” for creation according to Ishmael (*Ishmael* 243).

This type of philosophy may be distilled into the sort of ethical proposals that ecofeminist authors like Carolyn Merchant and Val Plumwood defend under the respective labels of a “partnership ethic of earthcare” (*Earthcare* 209) and a “dialogical interspecies ethic” (*Environmental* 167-195). These propose a stewardship for the Earth and for the more-than-human world based on a caring attitude that allows us to pay attention to what nature is telling us. This kind of ethical program, as Merchant explains, “is enacted by listening to, hearing, and responding to the voice of nature” (*Earthcare* xix). Only through this attentive listening to nature’s *others* can the borders between nature and culture dissolve. The following novel works well as an example of such dissolutions by taking a more daring stand on human-animal relationships.

## 6.2. THE MODERN PYGMALION: CROSSING BOUNDARIES IN PETER

### GOLDSWORTHY’S *WISH* (1995)

*Does the Savage speak? If he is not deaf why does he not speak?*  
(Jean-Marc-Gaspard Itard qtd. in *Candland* 27)

For a long time, scientists and philosophers alike have tried to find the distinctive element separating humans from nonhuman animals. As Helen Tiffin contends, today, thanks to a new approach to the animal question by science and animal studies, those traits that were in the past deemed peculiar to humans are now also attributed to animals (“Animal” 38). Among these she lists “tool use, language, consciousness, self-consciousness, emotions (and emotional complexity), even symbol and ritual” (“Animal” 38). In his novel *Wish* (1995) Australian author Peter Goldsworthy uses a pygmalionesque framework to deal with one of these categories,

language, and sets it in the context of an experiment: teaching Sign to Eliza, a female gorilla who later will be renamed as Wish. The story brings to mind the ape language experiments dating back to the late 1960s when psychologists Allen and Beatrix Gardner started teaching Sign to a female chimpanzee, Washoe, at the University of Nevada, Reno, and which span to the present with Dr. Duane Rumbaugh and Dr. Sue Savage-Rumbaugh's experiments with bonobos in Des Moines, Iowa.<sup>130</sup> But it most importantly highlights humans' contradictory way of dealing with the human/animal divide, as well as the arbitrariness of the attribution of the category of person to two groups situated in the margins who often intersect, animals and the disabled. That is why Sign, the language of the deaf, acquires great significance throughout the novel as the instrument of transformation of the gorilla Eliza into person. Thus if the previous novel, *Ishmael*, served to illustrate part of the sixth objective of this dissertation, how animal literature and more specifically primate literature is put at the service of the environmental cause, *Wish* exemplifies the blurring of boundaries between the contrasting elements of the human/animal and the abled/disabled binaries.

Focusing on the initial metaphor of Sign as the symbol of the dissolution of the species boundary and using references to George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1912) as structuring device, this analysis aims at reflecting on the process of transformation from animal to person and vice versa experienced by the novel's main protagonists. Such metamorphosis affects both human and animal characters in reverse ways. Hence, throughout the novel, Sign teacher John James, J.J. in short, will undergo a process of animalization in the eyes of himself and of the rest of society, while female gorilla Eliza will be humanized, almost turned into a woman. These transformations will have the body as their site of realization for interspecies sex will serve to signal, at the end of the

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<sup>130</sup> The Great Ape Trust website ([www.greatapetrust.org](http://www.greatapetrust.org)) offers a well-documented timeline of the history of ape language as well as the latest in this field, especially in relation with the use of lexigrams, graphical symbols that represent words, by bonobos.

novel, the crossing of categories and will highlight the continuities between species. And ultimately, Wish's death, another transformation of the body, will become a symbol of such continuity for as Cora Diamond observes, "The awareness we each have of being a living body, being 'alive to the world,' carries with it exposure to the bodily sense of vulnerability to death, sheer animal vulnerability, the vulnerability we share with them" (74).

### 6.2.1. Disabling the Species Boundary through Sign

Peter Goldsworthy's novel is divided in four parts that describe the education into Sign of Eliza/Wish, a gorilla whose intelligence was biologically enhanced<sup>131</sup> in the laboratory while still in her mother's womb. After being taken from the laboratory, she is put under the care of two animal rights activists, Dr. Clive Kinnear and poet Stella Todd, who pursue to turn Eliza into an animal spokesperson for animal liberation.

The first part of the novel focuses on the male protagonist, J.J., a teacher of Sign and the narrator of the story. It presents him invested with the role of intermediary between the worlds of the hearing and the non-hearing. Such function will actually be enlarged in the second part where he becomes Eliza's teacher and interpreter. The second part describes Eliza's education not only in Sign, but also in disciplines such as mathematics, painting and music. With time, this process of education will be superseded by a relationship of a different nature to that between teacher and student since both Eliza, already identified as Wish, and J.J. will fall in love with each other. The third part of the book develops J.J.'s and Wish's realization of their love which culminates in a scene of sexual climax in Wish's room. The fourth part describes the

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<sup>131</sup> In the acknowledgements section, Goldsworthy refers to the work of Rachel Yehuda on enhanced rat intelligence. This work is based on the removal of the adrenal glands. This stops the secretion of cortisone, a hormone involved in interrupting the growth of the infant brain. By doing this, the brain cell can proliferate leading to a more intelligent individual. This same technique is applied to the gorilla Eliza (*Wish* 226-27).

consequences of J.J.'s and Wish's illicit love. He is charged with bestiality and she is put into a zoo far away from her lover and from the animal haven where she used to live. Having no reason to go on living, Wish will eventually kill herself.

This unconventional love story is sustained in the interaction between two characters who do not conform to standards of normalcy: Wish, the gorilla with enhanced intelligence, and J.J. the speaking son to deaf parents. As Oliver W. Sacks reveals in his book *Seeing Voices: A Journey into the World of the Deaf* (1990), those deprived of hearing since birth face the drama of being considered mentally retarded since they are kept in a prelinguistic stage that impedes them to organize their world and be part of society (8-9). Prior to the invention of Sign the congenitally deaf used to be isolated from human society. In *Wish*, however, there is little victimization on the part of the deaf who are described in the story. J.J. reckons his parents are deaf but they are also "proud as peacocks," proud of being deaf (*Wish* 4). However, the reader does come to see how the hearing may sometimes take advantage of the non-hearing—J.J. confesses to have tricked his parents in the past (*Wish* 25)—or may even be extremely patronizing—J.J. ironically comments on how Mr. Hinkley, the director of the institute where he works, seems to see his own marriage to a deaf woman as "a charitable organisation" (*Wish* 145). But even so, the deaf are never portrayed as inferior. They are generally equipped with keen independence from the world of the hearing, like J.J.'s parents, and also demonstrate their own sense of humor emanating from a culture of their own which they defend as being better and subtler than that of the hearing. As such, for example, Mr. Hinkley, J.J.'s boss, is jokingly called by the deaf at the institute where J.J. works, "Mr. Miss-the-Point" because no matter how hard he tries, he never manages to fully understand the deaf culture and language he pretends to master. In this sense, J.J. feels himself a native signer, and therefore, superior to his boss.

Throughout the book, Sign is given a predominant role in the novel and is placed above speech, thus working against logocentrism. It also serves to draw attention to the materiality of the body for, as Lennard J. Davis explains, Sign language “occupies the interstice where space and silence come together,” being as it is “the locus where the body meets language” (117). Sign is a system of hand signs or gestures which together with body language serve to convey meaning. As a system of communication for the deaf, Sign was created in the eighteenth century by Abbé de l'Épée in France<sup>132</sup> and later transferred to the States giving way to its different variations from AMESLAN to AUSLAN—the type of Sign described in this novel. Due to the visual nature of Sign, J.J., the narrator, who tells his experience in first person, incorporates not only detailed descriptions of each sign, but also illustrates them with drawings in asides he shares with his reader. However, J.J. is always left feeling there is a lack, something is missing even though he tries to give the best possible description. It is in this acknowledgement of the void, this emptiness, that J.J. acquires the role of interpreter between the worlds of the hearing and the non-hearing. But what is more important is that there is always the sense that Sign is, contrary to what could be expected, a privileged means of communication, more subtle and nuanced than any spoken language, more direct and beautiful. As such, J.J. describes learning Sign as a privilege, a language not everyone, not even the director of the Institute for the Deaf, should have access to: “Irritated, I spoke to [Mr. Hinkley] for the first time in English, excluding Stilts [Mr. Hinkley’s deaf wife] myself. Suddenly I didn’t want to sign, the language seemed too good to waste on him, a string of pearls cast before a swine” (*Wish* 146).

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<sup>132</sup> Sign was based on Abbé de l'Épée’s observations of a very rudimentary method of sign communication used by the deaf of Paris. He systematized such a system into a book, *Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Using Methodical Sign*, he published in 1776. He also wrote a dictionary of Sign, *The Dictionary for the Use of Deaf Mutes* (1791).

This first transgression which undermines the role speech plays in the human world is later reinforced by J.J.'s successful teaching of Sign to a gorilla who will, in the end, be described as morally superior to any of the human characters described in the novel. On account of this, *Wish* serves to shake traditional assumptions about the dominant role played by verbal language and the human. Goldsworthy creates a story of transgressions that aims at questioning our assumptions about disability and species continuity, and that is aimed at blurring the boundaries that separate the abled from the disabled, the human from the animal.

### 6.2.2. Sign and Human-Animal Continuity

In Book IV of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Gulliver travels to the land of stoic horses, the Houyhnhnms, where he also meets a group of beastlike creatures, the Yahoos, that frighten him with their uncanny resemblance to humans. In the previous books, Swift denounces many of the vices to which humans are prone to, but it is in this last book where these are shaped into the monstrous through the Yahoos. Their humanoid appearance unsettles Gulliver who prefers not to be associated with them. They are too vicious, too driven by their instincts. Swift aptly manages to reverse the human and animal categories by associating virtue with animals and vice with humans and, with this, he tackles one of the crucial questions of the Enlightenment: the definition of the human. For many eighteenth-century intellectuals, language was the defining element separating humans from animals.<sup>133</sup> As a matter of fact, the feral Yahoos are only capable of mere grunts and gestures, while the virtuous horses explain their moral living in elegant words. Since it is through language that thoughts are

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<sup>133</sup> An interesting study on the debates taking place in eighteenth-century Europe on the importance of language as a defining characteristic of humans is Avi Lifschitz's *Language and Enlightenment: The Berlin Debates of the Eighteenth Century* (2012).

shaped into ideas that are later uttered, what happens in the absence of language? Does this absence exclude someone from the club of humanity?

The Age of Reason offers two examples, deaf-mutes and feral children, where language features at the center of the distinction between human and animal. In the two cases, both categories are blurred highlighting the contradiction inherent to traditional distinctions between human and nonhuman animals. But what is most significant is that these two cases serve to underline another area of human self-contradiction, that revolving around the definition of human normalcy which is expressed in the contrast between ability and disability. The same set of tensions can be located in Goldsworthy's novel where a gorilla, a nonhuman animal, is taught to communicate through Sign, the language of the non-hearing—another disempowered group.

In order to illustrate the connections between these two groups and extract some conclusions that might help to understand how Sign in *Wish* can be interpreted as a metaphor of human-animal continuity, a brief reference to the history of Sign in relationship with that of two feral boys who became rather popular in the eighteenth century becomes useful.

History is sometimes made of interesting coincidences. Curiously, only two years before the publication of *Gulliver's Travels*, in 1724, a boy of approximately twelve years of age was found by a hunter, Jürgen Meyer, close to the German town of Hameln. He soon became the attraction of the town for he showed signs of not having been raised among humans but among animals in the forest. He caused such an impact on eighteenth-century European society that he was sent to London in 1726 for scientific observation. Peter, for that was the name under which he was christened after his arrival in Britain, was given to Caroline, Princess of Wales, who arranged for Dr. Arbuthnot, Swift's friend, to study his case and see whether he could be taught to talk.

At the time, as psychologist Douglas K. Candland observes, there was a great interest in solving the nature-nurture dilemma: that is, finding which behavior was innate and which was learnt through experience (13). In order to investigate such questions access to Peter's mind became of fundamental importance, hence the need to make him talk. However, after two months under observation by the famous royal physician, Peter, from whom no word was ever heard, was sent to Hertfordshire where he lived until his death in February of 1785. Was he considered to be less than human for this? Probably that was the case, for it was not until well into the eighteenth century, thanks to the development of Sign, that the deaf rose to the status of person.<sup>134</sup>

The Parisian deaf from which Abbé de l'Épée found his inspiration to develop his unique system of communication and the German feral boy shared an animal trait, silence, and this intrigued the minds of both the scientists and philosophers of the Enlightenment triggering in them the curiosity to find what was in the minds of these silent creatures located in a place between humanity and animality.

Some years after the discovery of Peter in Germany, the case of another feral boy stirred the attention of the already established *Institution Nationale des Sourds-Muets de Paris* (National Deaf-Dumb Institute of Paris) in France.<sup>135</sup> A boy was discovered in the Caune Woods (France) in 1799 whose appearance and behavior was assumed to be the result of having been left in the company of animals from a very young age. He was soon known as the Savage of Aveyron<sup>136</sup> and was taken to Paris a year after to be studied by the famous French educator and psychologist Philippe Pinel who “[declared] that his wildness was a fake and that he was an incurable idiot” (qtd. in

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<sup>134</sup> Lennard. J. Davis explains that part of the reason for this lack of status of the deaf originates with Aristotle who defended that the deaf were “senseless and incapable of reason,” no better than the animals of the forests and unteachable (175). An equal impact on the increase of their denigration in Western tradition had Saint Augustine's interpretation of Saint Paul's statement “Faith comes by hearing.” He interpreted these words literally and denied them membership in the Church (Davis 175).

<sup>135</sup> The National Deaf-Dumb Institute of Paris was opened in 1754.

<sup>136</sup> The story of this boy was the object of a film directed by François Truffaut in 1970. It was released with the title *L'Enfant Sauvage (The Wild Boy)*.

Candland 18). Because of Pinel's disinterest in the case, in 1801 he was put under the tutelage of an inexperienced physician, Dr. Jean-Marc-Gaspard Itard, who named the boy Victor. This young doctor committed himself to the education of the child in order to study the development of what was supposed to be a "pure mind." With this aim, Itard developed a very systematic system of education for the boy with the intention to educate his senses, his intellect and his emotional faculties.

Itard wrote two reports on the education of the wild boy, one in 1801 where he basically gives an assessment of the boy prior to his exposure to education, and another in 1806 where he details the results obtained after five years of intense work. Although Itard was disappointed to a certain extent by the results of his work, he at least managed to develop some techniques that he later used in the instruction of deaf people. Through this example it could be argued that, in a very subtle way, the roads of the human, especially the disabled, and that of the animal met. Victor was a human-animal hybrid, the vivid expression of the intersection between natural instincts and adaptation to the environment. Itard placed all his hopes in finding a way to break through the opaque veil of silence that kept the child isolated from the human world. Victor did not really manage to master speech: his vocabulary was primordially reduced to a few words that he did not even seem to associate appropriately. However, he became the inspiration behind the ape language experiments of the twentieth century (Candland 291).

In 1967, more than a century and a half after Victor had been placed under Itard's tutelage, Allen and Beatrix Gardner, two researchers of the University of Nevada, Reno, decided to study the consequences of raising a chimpanzee as a human baby and of teaching her Sign almost from the cradle. Although their experiment was

not exempt of controversy,<sup>137</sup> their example prompted an interest in ape language experiments for at least two decades. Sign language was placed at the very center of these experiments and it became a symbol of the intersection between the human and the animal which illustrated the continuity between the two. Moreover, the use of Sign by nonhuman apes such as the chimpanzees Gua, Washoe and Nim, or the gorilla Koko and many others served also to call attention to the arbitrariness of the attribution of personhood.

As Francione states, we humans suffer from a “moral schizophrenia” when it comes to considering animals (*Animals as Persons* 26). Nevertheless, the same can be argued to be true when it comes to regarding all categories that are tangent to notions of appropriateness generally grounded on the characteristics of a dominant majority. Thus, when it comes to considering the relationship between the status of the disabled and that of the nonhuman animal, it can be argued that this is based on the non-presence of any of the attributions markedly associated with the ruling group. As such, for example, disabled people are defined mainly by an impaired body, a body where the senses or the material construction of it is affected by a lack, an absence, or a whimsical alteration of capacities that results in capricious combinations. These new ways of being in the world disrupt the definition of human. Therefore, they unsettle the boundaries between what is human and what is not, and place the disabled in a space of liminality. It is precisely in this zone where the animal and the disabled meet for they are both defined by a lack with regard to the predominant concept of the human. The deaf, the blind, the mute, the handicapped, the autistic, and so forth, they are all defined against standards of normalcy by what is not present: hearing, sight, speech, movement, or empathy. The list could be endless. By the same token, the broad category of the animal is defined by

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<sup>137</sup> Arden Neisser has written against the use of Sign in language experiments with apes. In *The Other Side of Silence: Sign Language and the Deaf Community in America* (1983) he ridicules such practice as devoid of scientific seriousness and degrading for the deaf community (202-234).

those characteristics that she does not share with the human. But interestingly, when the same animal that is rejected from the category of moral being for its lacks becomes the add-on the disabled person needs for adjusting to standard life among the rest of humans, the animal and the disabled merge in a symbiotic relation that helps them rise above their discriminated categories. Examples of such rights-winning partnerships abound in recent popular culture. In this sense, Susan McHugh shows in her analysis of guide-dog fictions in *Animal Stories: Narrating Across Species Lines* (2011) how these narratives, although not exempt of problematic depictions of both human and animal agency, often “[provide] a way of accounting for how, with the help of service animals, disability identity—rather, people’s enabled-with-dog lives—become heroic, and perhaps even more desirable” (32).

In Goldsworthy’s *Wish* the reader is engaged in a discourse hinging on notions of ability and disability, of normalcy and abnormality, of humanity and animality. In it, Sign, an embodied form of language that mediates between categories, features as the metaphor of the space of intersection between the animal and the human, and becomes the instrument of empowerment of both groups. As Cary Wolfe states when commenting on the case of autistic scholar Temple Grandin, “disability can in fact be a powerful and unique form of abled-ness” (“Learning” 117) because it can open doors into alternative ways of perceiving and responding to reality. In *Wish*’s case, representations of disability in various forms and always linked to the two underdogs of the story, Eliza/Wish and J.J., are present to propose what María Vidal calls, in her interview to Goldsworthy, “new ways of being human” (60). This is why it is so meaningful to look at this book as a text that questions long established notions—human/animal, abled/disabled—by contrasting them in a game of reversals and transformations.

6.2.3. Educating Wish(es) or Aping My Fair Lady

*Would the world ever have been made  
if its maker had been afraid of making trouble?  
Making life means making trouble.  
(Pygmalion 454)*

Peter Goldsworthy's *Wish* can be interpreted as a re-writing of Shaw's canonical text *Pygmalion*. Vidal mentions this relationship in her interview to Peter Goldsworthy (62), but, to the best of my knowledge, it has not been explored yet. Both works depict experiments oriented towards social transformation. In the case of Shaw's work, as Laura Otis contends, "Henry Higgins's experiment promises to subvert class boundaries" and Shaw ridicules with it social distinctions on the basis of speech in early twentieth century Britain (493). In the same line of socially committed narratives, Goldsworthy's novel uncovers Western culture's contradictions when it comes to negotiating the borders between the human and the nonhuman animal and, in doing so, aims at subverting the species boundaries. Both of them can be defined as literacy narratives in the sense that they evolve around the subject of teaching. Teaching becomes, indeed, an engine of transformation for both teacher and student, but surprisingly, in the end, the student will be the one to teach a lesson to her docent. Eliza Dolittle, for instance, shows Henry Higgins that her acquired fineness in speech cannot transform her into a lady if he insists in seeing her as a flower girl and so, she tries to make him understand that, "The difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated" (*Pygmalion* 447). In the case of Eliza/Wish, the gorilla teaches a lesson on humanity to her guardians when she decides to put an end to her life in an act of defiance to those who still see her as an animal and have placed her in a zoo away from her lover. Both works aim, in sum, at dissecting the inequalities of their time and producing an ontological turn. So, if in the case of *Pygmalion*, the stress is put on the social differences and on the need to raise the poor from their object-like

status, in the case of *Wish*, the novel strikes at the foundations of human exceptionalism by radically questioning the exclusiveness of the attribution of personhood to humans. In this sense, although *Wish* seems to have all the attributes of a person, she is not given the chance to choose who she wants to mate with and even less so when this results in an interspecies relationship.

Having this in mind, Goldsworthy's novel will be analyzed as an exercise on reversing categories. It is precisely this exercise in reversals that serves to put into question the artificiality of boundaries such as those built around concepts of humanity and animality, as well as those of ability and disability. This process hinges on the value each of the human characters of the story attribute to the female gorilla Eliza who is later given the very telling Sign name "Wish" by her teacher. In essence, *Wish* becomes the result of the projections made upon her by each and every one of these characters. She will become J.J.'s "star pupil" (*Wish* 177) as well as the object of his desire. Moreover, she is precisely given "an education" thanks to animal activists Clive Kinnear and Stella Todd, so that she can become "a *spokes*-animal," "a prophet for the Animal Rights movement," "an animal Messiah" (*Wish* 272; emphasis in original). However, the more successful these projections are, the further she is situated from the pursuit of her happiness and this will, in the end, drive her to suicide.

In "Monkey in the Mirror: The Science of Professor Higgins and Doctor Moreau," Otis speaks of how turn-of-the-century literacy narratives insisted on "comparing workers to savages or beasts" who could only be distinguished from the animal by speech and cleanliness (499). It is only natural then to expect a reference of this sort in Shaw's *Pygmalion*. Eliza, a Covent Garden flower girl, is definitely part of the underprivileged. And in fact, one of the first measures taken at Professor Higgins's house is to give her a good scrub to make her look more human. Eliza's cleansing

signals the beginning of her humanization and actually, as Otis defends, turns her into a human-animal hybrid (488). This is so because she is compared to the monkey who looks at her face in a shiny pan in the advertising image of the soap “Monkey Brand” Mrs. Pearce uses to wash her (Otis 489). Shaw is certainly playing with the proximity between apes and humans and turning Eliza into a character that apes the middle class and shakes the boundary between human and animal (Otis 489). However, later in the play her full humanization will be possible thanks to her education.

In *Wish*'s case there is also a process of transformation affecting not only the gorilla Eliza, but also her teacher J.J.. This transformation works in opposite but complementary directions, so while Eliza experiences a process of humanization, J.J. progresses in turn towards his animalization. This reversal of categories helps to support the idea of the contingent nature of the species divide. The two main characters occupy a space of liminality whose borders are less and less defined leading them into crossing not only the moral barriers of interspecies sexuality, but also their own definition as members of a species group.

The novel is told from the point of view of J.J., a modern Pygmalion. He is a middle-aged oversized man haunted by a series of life drawbacks. His personal life is in shatters after a failed marriage to a woman with whom he had little in common except for her initial interest in Sign as part of her background research for her dissertation. Jill was too reasonable for him, too logical and trusted “the power of words” too much, according to J.J. (*Wish* 251). Besides she censured every one of J.J.'s appetites—food, sex—and did not make an effort to enter into the culture of the deaf in which J.J. was brought up. His daughter, Rose, also reminds him of his feeling of inadequacy as a family man. She resents her parents' divorce and hides this behind a veil of mature detachment and “amused condescension” that J.J. finds discomforting every time they

are together (*Wish* 70). Furthermore, J.J.'s uneasiness is made even greater by his return to his parents' house as jobless son in search for a place to stay. His parents are both deaf and he has always had the feeling they never completely accepted him as their own kind since he is the hearing son to deaf parents—a sin within the deaf community and another sign of his inadequacy. His mother even invented names for him in Sign such as “Big-Ears” that referred to his *defect*, being “born with a pair of ears that let in noise,” ears that in the world of the deaf just ‘get in the way’” (*Wish* 11). They are referred to as “congenital deformities,” “ornamental flaps” leading to a “family tragedy” (*Wish* 11). As a result, J.J. who is inclined to favor the unpredictability of emotions over the logic of ideas, finds himself longing for the love and acceptance he does not find in his family life. But, since he is a socially inapt person with no resources whatsoever to relate to other people in unstructured social situations, he turns his teaching of Sign at the Institute for the Deaf into the ideal source of the appreciation he does not find anywhere else. And so, at the beginning of the novel, he declares:

I love to teach; I like to think it brings out the best in me. Given the disasters of my family life, perhaps my most satisfying relationships have been with students—with special students, gifted students. The best teacher-student bonds are a kind of love, I think, selfless and pure. And more equal than at first they seem—dependent on a likeness of mind, a journeying together. (*Wish* 7)

It is precisely through teaching that J.J. meets Eliza, the heroine of this story, to whom he is supposed to teach Sign. Her name—identical to that of the Shavian heroine Eliza Doolittle—together with the fact that the novel revolves around her education as a proficient *speaker* of Sign allows for connecting Goldsworthy's novel with Shaw's *Pygmalion*. But to the puzzlement of both readers and J.J. himself, Eliza is no flower girl wanting to become eligible as shop assistant in a fancy flower shop; she is a female gorilla with enhanced intelligence who has been rescued from a medical laboratory by animal activists and placed under the guardianship of zoologist Clive Kinnear and her partner Stella Todd. Besides, Eliza's education into the world of Sign is not Eliza's

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decision, as it is in the case in Shaw's play; however, she seems to find it rather stimulating. On account of her enhanced intelligence, of which J.J. will only be informed in the last stage of her education, Dr. Kinnear has thought she can become the perfect spokesperson for the animals and hence, transform society by fighting back speciesism through the example of an acculturated talking gorilla. But reality will prove otherwise and Eliza will meet a tragic end and become the victim of human ignorance. She commits suicide as the only possible escape from a life of captivity at a zoo where she is denied access to J.J., her teacher and lover. Such a grim end serves also to understand this novel within the tradition of pygmalionesque stories of failure where the transformation of the female character only leads her to fatality or a sense of incompleteness, as Michelle Bloom has contended (qtd. in Porten 83). Moreover, as this story develops in the context of an ape language experiment, it can also be defended that Goldsworthy aims at questioning with it the two main ethical dilemmas derived from such experiments: the attempt at domesticating the wild and thus making it assimilate, and the fact that whatever is asked from the animal never seems to be enough. Regarding this, Eugene Linden has gathered examples of how scientists and activists alike have criticized such studies in *Silent Partners: The Legacy of the Ape Language Experiments* (1986). For, in general, ape language experiments, especially those involving signing apes, have left a sense of dissatisfaction and the idea that no matter what the animal is able to do, it will never be enough for humans to accept them into the moral community of beings. Hence, this novel uncovers the paradox that lies behind the success of some of the ape language experiments abovementioned, for, even though, as Linden accounts for, in some of these, as in the cases of the chimpanzee Washoe and the gorilla Koko, where the level of success was more than satisfactory, still the scientific community showed a relentless refusal to accept the Copernican turn

this would involve in the understanding of the human-animal relations (122-24). It is the insistence on this self-satisfying disenchantment with the animal which perhaps has driven Goldsworthy to write a clever metaphor of the contradictions of humanity when it comes to defining its place among the rest of beings.<sup>138</sup> Hence, aware of the contingent character of the species boundaries, he aims at showing the inconsistencies of even the most committed of activists, Clive and Stella, when it comes to deciding on the future of their “adopted daughter” Eliza, a gorilla in love with her Sign teacher.

This fluidity of the human/animal boundary is made evident in various moments throughout the narration. J.J., for example, seems to be protean in nature, “a creature more at home in the water than on land” (Tiffin “Animal” 50). He acknowledges this proteanism when he refers to himself as someone who is “part-amphibian” (*Wish* 19) because he loves being in the water. Furthermore, the fact that he moves with equal ease in the world of the hearing and that of the non-hearing makes him also the perfect bridge between these two worlds. Indeed, it is through Sign and its treatment of names how the specialness of his personality and that of *Wish* is highlighted.

J.J.’s name is really John James; J.J. is just the sign shorthand, the J-shape repeated. Deaf people find “John James” too long for finger spelling and actually they prefer to give names that mean something. J.J.’s family name is in fact “Sweet Tooth”

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<sup>138</sup> Marta Tafalla’s short story “Al otro lado de la verja” (2011) serves also to illustrate this human contradiction when it comes to acknowledging our own belonging to the *animal* category. In this story, the chimpanzees of a zoo learn Sign language from two deaf female gardeners and start using it to state their preferences and even to insult some of the visitors. At the end of the story, two of the human characters, the veterinarian and the zoo director, realize that by making animals talk the humans run the risk of losing their long-held status at the top of the chain of beings:

-La gente viene al zoo a ver animales salvajes, exóticos, extraños, que les exciten la fantasía. Les gustan porque son misteriosos, porque están fuera del lenguaje y la razón. Pero si los animales hablan, hablarán de lo mismo que hablamos nosotros, y el misterio se habrá acabado.

-Mmmm- murmuró el veterinario dudoso.

-Nuestros visitantes vendrán buscando fantasía, y nosotros les daremos un espejo. Verán que esos animales son como nosotros.

El veterinario se rascó la frente.

-Y aún verán algo peor- añadió Blanca -. Verán que somos como ellos. (Tafalla n.pag.)

which he finds not to suit him anymore (*Wish* 11). He lost the taste for sugar while married to a woman who imposed a sugar-free diet on him and this has not come back. Later in the novel, however, he will find a new identity for him that again will be defined by his relationship with a female, this time with the female gorilla Eliza. He is perceived by Wish as her alpha male, protector, and sexual partner. Terry, the activist who rescued Eliza, calls him “Silverback” (*Wish* 236). This turns to be J.J.’s new identity as Eliza’s chosen male. J.J. feels better invested with this acquired identity that feels empowering, both morally and sexually, a thing he had hardly found in his life with Jill. As he tells himself, “I repressed the deeper implications; there was something in the nickname that I liked, some implication of grey-beard wisdom that appealed to vain parts of me” (*Wish* 237). And in the end, it would be this new acquired identity what will justify his making love to Wish.

Eliza, on the other hand, will be renamed thanks to J.J.’s signing lesson into Wish, for she shows a tendency from the beginning to use the Wish Hand. J.J. describes this signature of her as especially moving, almost poetic, as he declares in the following quote:

Eliza stepped [sic] back and repeated my shape for tomorrow, but with the Wish Hand, I saw, not the Point Hand: the first two fingers crossed in hope. It was a beautiful touch, an improvised variation, another poem which moved me as much as anything else I had seen during that extraordinary morning. (*Wish* 117)

This sign will become a very significant feature of Eliza/Wish as a character that, like J.J., shows the potential to fulfill the expectations placed on them by the others. Names, therefore, as it traditionally happens, acquire a power to change or modify who the characters are, leading them into different and unexpected directions.

Another strategy used by Goldsworthy to signal the porosity of the species boundary is that of animalization of the human and its reverse, humanization, or more specifically, feminization of the animal. With regard to J.J.’s animalization, as it was

abovementioned, at some point in the narration he refers to himself as “part-amphibian” and later on, he is also compared with an ape when Terry calls him “Silverback.” But furthermore, his affair with the gorilla is seen as beastly, inhuman, despicable, separating him from anything human. In Wish’s case, her process is certainly different. She goes from being an aping gorilla to being described in terms that make the reader think of her as a woman. The first time J.J. sees her he thinks her ears “would not have been out of place on a young girl” (*Wish* 96). Later, when he is fully aware of his feelings for Eliza, he refers to her scent as being similar to “the raw smell of heat, a hot universal woman-smell” (*Wish* 239). Besides, throughout the book, he is constantly comparing his relationship with Wish with the one he had with his wife, Jill, always finding the former more satisfying. Moreover, Jill seems to have almost been more of a masculine presence in his world since as Clive, she insisted too much on the power of words. Wish and Stella, on their part, represent all the sensuality he had longed for, and tempt him equally although after a brief experience with Stella, J.J. realizes that it is not only sex what he is in need of but true love. Thus when describing his sexual encounter with Wish, which is not overtly successful, he compares it with his relationship with Stella:

Our encounter had not been over-successful, physically. Yet the realization was growing inside me: there had been more intimacy, more love, in that brief ‘mounting’, than in the numerous prolonged occasions on which Jill and I had made so called love.

A realisation: my deepest need was for tenderness, for intimacy. Stella’s drunken words from the previous night came back to me, powerfully: It’s only sex, J.J.—it’s not as if I want to kiss you. They might have been spoken equally by Jill. (*Wish* 244)

This open acceptance of each other’s love signify that the species boundary has been blurred by each character’s crossing of the threshold that separates the human from the animal. But such a destabilization of boundaries will also provoke the incomprehension of a society not yet prepared to accept what is seen as a grotesque crime: bestiality.

6.2.4. Crossing the Threshold: Loving the Ape

*Do any of us understand what we are doing? If we did, would we ever do it?*  
(*Pygmalion* 392)

*Wish* has been described previously as a failure story because the female character is doomed the moment she is in the hands of her Pygmalion. Her transformation from animal into human leads her to a tragic end—she kills herself—because she is separated from her human lover by a society that is not prepared to consider her as a person. The ways in which this incomprehension impact the lives of her Sign teacher and Wish are best expressed through the inclusion of the topic of bestiality. In this section, it will be argued that Goldsworthy has resorted to this thorny issue in order to call attention to the arbitrariness of the line separating the human from the animal. As was mentioned before, the novel develops a series of reversals in relationship with the main characters, J.J. and Wish. Such reversals acquire, as will be explained, a special potency at the end of Book Two and throughout Book Three for they signal the completion of the process of transformation from animal into human, in Wish's case, and from human into animal, in J.J.'s.

In this respect, J.J.'s and Wish's sexual act at the end of Book Three deserves special attention because it is in its misinterpretation, its manipulation and its condemnation that the reader is most blatantly presented with human contradiction. This is why here it will be sustained that, although bestiality is frequently described as a sexual deviation by psychiatry and sexology and as a form of abuse by feminist and animal activists (Beirne 168), in the case of *Wish*, intercourse between the human and the female gorilla can be read metaphorically as a statement in favor of a new status for the animal where the continuity between the human and the nonhuman is acknowledged. This is grounded on the fact that J.J.'s and Wish's lovemaking is portrayed by the narrator, J.J., as an expression of love and emotional intimacy not as

the abuse of the human on the animal. He cannot help but being mesmerized by the gorilla who he sees not as a beast but as a person who has given him more love, more intimacy, and more tenderness than he ever found in his relationships with women.

In regard to this, at the beginning of the book, J.J. is described as a man who is trying to put his life together after his divorce to a woman who had grown more and more apart from him with time. Jill, his former wife, is described as distant, cold, domineering, and obsessed with controlling J.J.'s appetites. She does not even seem to accept his preference for Sign, his first language, over English nor his large size which she sees as an excuse to avoid socializing. Her rejection and her attempt at remodeling him into a different being are shown in the following quote where both characters are contrasted:

Jill, tiny herself, a compact, no-nonsense shape, preferred small cars. (I seem surrounded by small, compact people.) Big cars, she persuaded me, were wasteful.

Jill collects small objects of every kind. Our life together was spent amid a clutter of tiny ornaments, miniature pot-plants, bonsai trees. Our bed was too narrow; I was often forced out onto a mattress in the spare room. The clothes she bought for my birthday or for Christmas were always several sizes too small. Our meals were frugal. Perhaps it was a sensible economy: eat less, wear less. After Rosie's birth we had three mouths to feed, and half a job between us. I was teaching part-time at the Institute, she was tutoring at the University, there was never any money in the house.

Were those clothes also an expression of hope, or encouragement, that I might shrink to fit them? I shrank to fit the Fiat: a one-person car, a loner's car, little more than an item of tight-fitting clothing itself. When I drive it—when I wear it—I feel I've slipped into something snug, and supportive, a wetsuit of beaten metal. (*Wish* 49)

Later, when J.J. meets Stella Todd, the veterinarian and poet who looks after Eliza, he finds someone who very much differs from his former wife. Stella is described as a creative, playful, sexually attractive woman. J.J. becomes intrigued by animals thanks to Clive Kinnear, her partner, but he starts understanding them and ultimately loving them because of Stella's poems. Through them she tries to enter the minds of the animals to understand them and this fascinates J.J.. In fact, at the beginning of his friendship with the newcomers to his class, he craves for both Stella's animal poems and Kinnear's intellectual wisdom. Stella and Clive represent two ways of knowing the

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animal: poetry and science. By the same token, both Jill and Stella act as foils to Eliza/Wish. They represent two sides of the same coin, of being a woman in general. Jill's coldness and control contrast with Stella's warmth and carefreeness. It is because of this sheer difference between the two that J.J., who is in need of love, is soon attracted to Stella who, on the night they are alone while Clive is away on a business trip, tries to seduce him into going to bed with her. As a consequence, the night turns into a time for disclosures. Stella is too frivolous for J.J. who is in search of true love and who fails to perform sexually when taken by surprise by the lascivious Stella:

'You know what I *really* need, J.J.?'

My heart lurched—pure anxiety now, not a trace of sexual excitement.

'I need relief,' she said. 'All this pelvic congestion. Here—see.'

She took my hand and planted it between her thighs. I felt myself shriveling, growing ever smaller. There is an awkward English verb, to detumesce. The sense is much more economical in Sign, and much more eloquent: a droop of a stiff arm. (*Wish* 205; emphasis in original)

Nevertheless, this helps him to discover the true object of his desire: Wish. The following morning Wish sees them in bed and out of jealousy shaves herself until her body is covered with bleeding wounds. When discovered by J.J., the gorilla, who is in estrus, presents herself to J.J. who rejects her although he cannot help being aroused by her clear intentions and runs away to hide his physical response:

Already balanced on the edge of coming, I pushed instantly over the last threshold. A groan-shout escaped my lips, helplessly, I ejaculated. And the image that filled my mind as I came—as much, still panicking, as I tried to suppress it—was of Wish presenting, her swollen hindparts pressed hard against me, her long arm gripping my buttocks, my face buried into the warm, thick fur of her shoulders. (*Wish* 209)

Sexual desire becomes the equating factor between Wish and J.J.. It is also the force that impels them to transcend their own boundaries and become the *other*. Hence Wish expresses her will to become a woman the moment she brutally shaves her body of the hair she assumes to separate her from being sexually attractive to J.J.. Likewise, once J.J. sees himself as Wish's protector, his silverback, he sees himself entitled with certain responsibilities among which love is included:

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With that name Silverback—that title—went certain duties. I argued with, and against, myself. Wish was, finally, my responsibility. We shared more than language; we also shared the nearest thing to a natural relationship in her life. It was to me that she must finally turn for advice, and leadership.

Not to mention love. (*Wish* 238)

Furthermore, in this part of the novel, the body turns to be the text on which these two characters inscribe their evolution. Wish does it by trying to get rid of her fur to look womanlike, while J.J. strips his body in the moonlight in an act of absolute acceptance of his rotund size. This is the same body that Jill rejected and that he tried to forget every night by floating weightlessly in water, but that he now accepts in its full display of potency and maleness:

She shifted her haunches a little, raised them higher, and a gust of her smell came to me; not her usual asparagus-musk, but the raw smell of heat, a hot universal woman-smell. I began to harden again. Her eyes left mine, moving down to watch this strange growth. This time I didn't turn away. I stood by the bed, facing the curtainless window, clothed only in moonlight, fully aroused. I felt, for once in my life, beautiful: a giant of a man, a human silverback, in full sexual rut. (*Wish* 239)

However, by fully humanizing herself and entering the world of the humans, Wish becomes more vulnerable to human incomprehension. This movement towards incomprehension is expressed through a progression in her willingness and ability to tread more and more openly outdoors. As such, Wish only exists at the beginning of the book as Eliza, Clive's and Stella's adopted daughter who is mute but not deaf, an oddity according to J.J. (*Wish* 31). Eliza/Wish features thus at first as a no-one, an imagination, someone that is told but does not tell. Thus, in J.J.'s first visit to Clive's and Stella's animal haven, Eliza is not even introduced to him. She is said to be asleep in her bedroom. Later, they explain to him that sometimes they have to apply certain restrictions on Eliza because she can become rather restless. Indeed, the locks in the door to her room shock J.J. as inappropriate. They are a symbol of human distrust in her wild nature. This is why they submit her to a strict daily schedule and have her as a captive inside the house. All this will change as her education progresses. Thanks to

J.J., she gains a confidence that will transform her into a more daring “person” willing to go beyond the boundaries of first, her room, second, the house, and finally, the estate surrounding it. But this process of venturing into the world, which is parallel to her acquisition of Sign and her acculturation, is cut short by her sexual involvement with J.J..

Her separation from J.J., after they are discovered together in bed, signals Wish’s return to captivity and therefore to her original status as animal and thus, nonperson. This regression triggers a cascade of dramatic events for her. She is separated from J.J. and put in a zoo where she falls into a depression as J.J. observes when he first goes to see her:

She turned slowly back. All animation had now vanished from her hands; her movements were slow and depressed, monotonous in tone. The Wish Hand, her signature hand, was nowhere in sight; with it had vanished the implicit sense of hope, and possibility, that always colored her signing. I had failed her; I couldn’t help. (*Wish* 277)

J.J. tries in vain to rescue her by breaking into the zoo but he is caught and put in jail for trespassing. Later, already in prison, J.J. learns through the newspaper that Wish has been found hanging from one of the ropes in her zoo enclosure. The headline reads “LOVE APE DIES IN FREAK ACCIDENT” so as not wanting to give the name “suicide” to Wish’s voluntary action (*Wish* 291). Consequently, Wish’s suicide may be interpreted as the last of the reversals of the novel. It can be concluded that her voluntary death subverts this pygmalionesque narrative of failure since not only is there the death of a female, but that of a nonhuman animal and hence an *other*. In this sense, Margaret Higonnet points out that female suicide, especially when the woman belongs to a minority, can be interpreted not as a final victimization of the female, as it has traditionally been analyzed in romantic texts, but as an act of defiance to social norms and of affirmation of identity (232). This implies that, by opting for her own death, Wish manages to reinscribe herself into the category of person. Hence, in again another

twist of events, another reversal, she inverts her victimization as mere object of sexual pleasure and, in so doing, acquires the personhood she is denied. Suicide becomes therefore the ultimate act of personhood, of agency. It also defies the objectification to which Wish was submitted by her guardians, Clive and Stella, and by society represented by the legal system. For Clive, as Stella observes, Wish was just a “*huge vivisection*” (*Wish* 294; emphasis in original), an experiment of which she was her accomplice. Only J.J. truly cared for the gorilla’s happiness and was attached to her. Thus, when he gets out of jail, he goes to the place of her cremation to try to find a trace of her in the smoke emanating from the high chimney. There she ponders about Wish’s last thoughts before dying and hopes death, the last of her transformations, brought her “a fresh start” (*Wish* 298). He already knows his life will not be the same after having known and loved her and just hopes to always remember her:

I lay back on the soft winter grass and tried again to imagine a different language, a truly religious language which might allow more resonant concepts of past and future, life and death. Could I put the future behind me? Could someone who had lived and died in the past always be with me, ahead of me, facing me? It seemed a shallow consolation, another euphemism, but better than none. (*Wish* 298)

## CHAPTER SEVEN. DIALOGUES OF THE BODY: BECOMING ANIMAL

In the following section the body through the practice of xenotransplantation becomes the site of encounter between the human and the nonhuman animal. The body turns into the expression of human-animal continuity and the embodiment of the blurring of boundaries between the poles of the dualisms ecofeminists see as problematizing human relationship with the more-than-human *others*.

While the previous works describe relationships between teacher and student, the following ones transcend the realm of didacticism and place these dialogues of the minds in the sphere of the corporeal. Their significance for this analysis derives from their representation of relationships across bodies where the species boundaries vanish. A similar thing happened at the end of *Wish* thanks to J.J.'s and Wish's lovemaking.

Interestingly, both Ishmael and Wish finish with the death of their animal protagonists leaving the humans who admired or loved them alone but transformed by their experience of having known them. In the following novels, *Animal Heart* and *Eva*, the death of the animal is not an end but a beginning. At the start of each of them a baboon and a chimpanzee respectively are sacrificed to save a human life. However, their deaths do not mean the end of their lives as nonhuman agents. They remain alive, vibrant, in their new state as a transplant organ of an impaired body in *Animal Heart* or as recipient of a young girl's neuron memory in *Eva*.

*Animal Heart* redefines Western science by incorporating an ecofeminist approach to the human/animal, mind/body, and spirit/matter dualisms. This novel is based on real experiments with heart transplants from baboons to humans. The photographer Marshall McGreggor is saved from a sure death thanks to an experimental surgery that replaces his heart with that of a baboon, Sol. The novel revolves around how Sol remains an agentic force in Marshall's new beating heart guiding him in new

directions. It asks from him to save his family from the medical facilities where they still are and promotes in him a new approach to life.

*Eva*, the most clearly ecofeminist novel of the four analyzed in this dissertation, is a science fiction story that deconstructs the dualisms human/animal, mind/body, and culture/nature. It does so by presenting the story of a teenage girl, Eva, who manages to go on living thanks to the body of a female chimpanzee, Kelly, where Eva's neuron memory is transplanted. After a period of adaptation, this new Eva becomes a human-animal hybrid who in the end will enact a radical progression into the posthuman by proposing a world restored to ecological sanity thanks to a new species of chimpanzee of whom she will become its matriarch.

#### 7.1. BRENDA PETERSON'S *ANIMAL HEART* (2004): FINDING THE ANIMAL WITHIN<sup>139</sup>

*Life goes more smoothly without a heart*  
(Atwood "The Woman Makes Peace with Her Faulty Heart" 39)

*Animal Heart* can be qualified as an ambitious work due to the complexity of the issues its author, American biologist and nature writer Brenda Peterson, tackles in a novel that is framed in the guise of a romance and ecothriller. Topics such as the notion of science, the limits of animal experimentation, the different faces of activism, and the ways of coping with coexisting identities are knit together in an attempt at revaluing humans' relationship with nonhuman animals. The story develops around an episode in the life of animal rescuer and wildlife forensic pathologist Isabel Spinner that will confront her with her past. She is an orphan who found refuge as a little girl in her connection with animals. Now in her late thirties, she is aware that her natural talent for empathizing with others, her *heart* that her grandfather called "her gift" (*Animal Heart*

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<sup>139</sup> An abbreviated version of this analysis was published in 2014 in the journal *Forum for World Literature Studies* under the title "A Material Reading of Brenda Peterson's *Animal Heart*."

126), has kept her unaware of her own needs and the possibility of finding someone to love. But this situation is subject to change. Through her brother Andrew, Isabel meets Marshall McGreggor, an aquatic photographer of mixed origins—half Hawaiian, half white—to whom she is immediately drawn to. This relationship, however, will take an unusual path after Marshall's heart attack and subsequent surgery in which he is transplanted a baboon heart that will transform him in unexpected ways. He grows more and more aware of the importance of family and friends, gives in to his feelings for Isabel, and responds to his new heart's demands of giving back to the animal who died for him.

Throughout the novel, Peterson also presents the reader with two main instances of how dispassionate forms of science involving the use of animals lead to the erasure of their ethical significance. One is xenotransplantation—the animal to human transplant—exemplified by Marshall's case; the other is the use of military active sonar and its consequences for marine mammals. Both practices involve the objectification of the animal. Xenotransplantation challenges the limits between the human and the nonhuman and exposes the lengths to which animal experimentation can go on behalf of a type of science that is oblivious to the essential unity of every living being, and sees them as multipart things to be used. A similar consequence results from the Navy testing of an underwater sonar at Kiwanda Beach, Oregon, described in the novel. This testing will affect the well-being of the marine wildlife of the area—mainly seals, dolphins, and whales—instantly killing some of them, injuring their internal body organs, mainly their ears, and leaving them disoriented. Science, cast in this second example in the mold of the military, will not respond to the suffering of these creatures either. It will merely see them as collateral damage to the advancement of humanity's power of destruction.

In light of these examples, in the pages that follow, the objectification of animals by science, performed by medicine and the military, will be highlighted and contrasted throughout Peterson's novel with other modes of looking at them which lead to what Henry Beston refers to as "a more mystical concept of animals" (24). In these alternative approaches, animals are seen not as fragments of a whole that can be decomposed into repair or disposable parts, but as agentic beings with a soul. The aim here is to question the validity of our understanding of animals in today's scientific practice. Within this, xenotransplantation is an especially suitable image of the contingent status of the species boundary and the instrumentalization of bodies typical of a Cartesian mechanistic model. Reading this text through the lens of material ecocriticism, I will argue, inspired by ecofeminist epistemologies, that the borders between the elements of the parallel dualisms mind/body, spirit/matter, and human/animal can be blurred by a paradigm shift emanating from contact with non-Western and non-anthropocentric ways of knowing. As a matter of fact, Peterson's characters detach themselves from the patriarchal and anthropocentric systems of Western society and replace them with practices and approaches to the nonhuman animals that resonate with indigenous lore and ecofeminist spirituality.

Peterson herself has given eloquent proof in her works of her concern for matters having to do with the natural world and with how different forms of spirituality deal with them. Well-known are her collaborations with Chickasaw writer Linda Hogan in *Intimate Nature: The Bond Between Women and Animals* (1999), *Sightings: The Great Whales' Mysterious Journey* (2002), *The Sweet Breathing of Plants: Women Writing on the Green World* (2002), or *Face to Face: Women Writers on Faith, Mysticism, and Awakening* (2004). In all these works nature—represented by either

animals or plants—, women’s sense of the spiritual, and an indigenous worldview play a central role, and so too in this novel.

### 7.1.1. Human Hearts and Animal Souls

The two human protagonists of this novel, Isabel and Marshall, come from similar backgrounds. Their respective cultural traditions attribute a great importance to animals and place. Isabel’s family comes from the Hebrides Islands (Scotland), from a culture of Norse and Celtic influence with strong ties with the sea and its creatures, especially the seal. When Isabel was little, her grandfather, Ronald Spinner, acted as the transmitter of family legends telling both her and her brother Andrew, about their family as descendants of a selkie<sup>140</sup> great-great-grandmother, Finoola, a seal-woman who married their great-great-grandfather Angus. Both Isabel and Andrew keep a very close relationship with the sea, although it is true that while Andrew has become a photographer who spends most of his time away from their native place on the coast of Oregon, Isabel keeps herself anchored to her roots, not touched, like her brother, “with their seafaring Scottish ancestors’ wanderlust” (*Animal Heart* 21). However, Isabel’s relationship with the sea is not exempt of trouble. In her life the sea has been both a giver and a taker of happiness. It took away the lives of her parents who drowned at high sea and it deprived her of her hearing when she was a child trying to dive her way to find her lost parents. But the sea has also granted her great moments of contemplation not only of the magnificence of the sea life which she so loyally tends to, but of her own self who finds near the sea her home:

As children, she and Andrew could name every constellation. Now Andrew knew the pull of Cassiopeia and Orion’s belt from other hemispheres. Sometimes Isabel wished she were not the one who always stayed here, that she also had been touched with their seafaring Scottish ancestors’ wanderlust. But then who would keep their grandfather’s cottage from slipping into even worse disrepair? And since neither Isabel, divorced and in her late thirties, nor Andrew had yet made a family, where would they find home but on this beloved beach? (*Animal Heart* 21)

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<sup>140</sup> In Scottish tradition a selkie is a mythical creature that resembles a seal in the water but assumes human form on land.

Marshall McGregor, for his part, comes from a family where the ancient sea lore of Hawai'i mixes with Western culture. His mother, Lillian, is a native Hawaiian who married a university professor of the mainland who also loved the sea. She claims to come from a family descending of the giant sea turtles. Marshall, like Isabel's brother, has lived far away from his homeland for years, but the heart attack he suffers while diving will make him reconnect with his roots. At the hospital, he is summoned back to life by his mother who invokes the power of the sea animals, his *aumakua* or animal guardians, to awaken him and recalls that the day he was born a great wave washed over his hometown, Hilo, making his sisters want to call him Tsunami (*Animal Heart* 84). Once recovered, Marshall reunites with his family who welcomes him with open arms to a culture that makes no distinctions between human and nonhuman animals. They consider them all as members of the same community.

In the novel, these worldviews that concede spiritual power to animals and place contrast with the disembodied experience of the universe enforced by the Enlightenment and carried forward by modern techno-science. As feminist biologist Lynda Birke explains, the beginnings of laboratory animal production and the rise of pathology in the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century produced “an understanding of the body in fragments – and in turn fragmentable; both shift[ed] the gaze away from the individual, experiencing, contextualized, [*sic*] self and toward definable symptoms” (“Animal Bodies” 170-71). Under the light of this kind of science the animal became a conglomerate of body parts knitted together ready to be used at humans' convenience, not a source of wisdom or healing. Images of fragmented bodies abound in *Animal Heart*. These are present even in the description of Isabel's forensic laboratory where she performs the autopsies of animals who have died as a result of human cruelty. She knows that this place could be mistaken “for a taxidermy shop, with

*Chapter Seven. Dialogues of the Body: Becoming Animal*

its organized clutter of animal parts” (*Animal Heart* 27) but, as it will be later described, she approaches these dead bodies with the outmost respect in order to restore them to their integrity. Parallel to this are the descriptions of the bodies of stranded animals lying on the beach in chapter eight or that of the baboon used for experimentation in the laboratory at Roseland Research in chapter fourteen:

In room 66X, Namib was not caged. Instead, the large baboon lay strapped down on a steel operating table with his great arms and long legs splayed out, cuffed in iron manacles. Attached to the bulging blood vessels in Namib’s neck was a pig’s heart swollen three times its normal size. This borrowed, swollen red organ pumped visibly. Even though manacled, Namib could cradle this pig heart attached to his own neck artery. He held the alien organ as if each thud of the heart hurt him. His manacled hands could touch, but not tear away, the other heart. (*Animal Heart* 243)

Even Marshall’s body, a human one, is treated by medicine, during his operation, more as a composite of parts than as a whole:

In the Portland Memorial Hospital operating room, there was the shocking glare of fluorescent lights. [...] Marshall saw his body as blank and vacant as any dead body. Worse. It looked as if he were being harvested organ-by-organ while still alive. [...]

[...] Marshall’s chest felt raw, split open like a melon, though voices assured him he was meticulously stapled tight. Marshall’s last memory of the transplant surgery was one of a surgical nurse commenting wistfully, “Sometimes I still wish they sewed them up with those delicate stitches, like mending lace.” (*Animal Heart* 83-84)

As was abovementioned, this novel presents the conflict between two opposing worldviews. One is the reductionistic, fragmented, and mechanistic view of Western science represented by male scientists like Dr. Lamb, who performs Marshall’s surgery, and Dr. Sharp, the expert on bioacoustics who works for the Navy on the development of an acoustic weapon. The other is the holistic, integrated, and organic view of the indigenous people and the women of the story. Animals, for them, are kin and spiritual guides with the power to heal. Such an understanding, as James A. Serpell points out, emanates from belief systems, usually referred to as animism, “[involving] the concept that all living creatures, as well as other natural objects and phenomena, are imbued with an invisible soul, spirit or “essence” that animates the conscious body, but that is able to move about and act independently of the body when the bearer is either

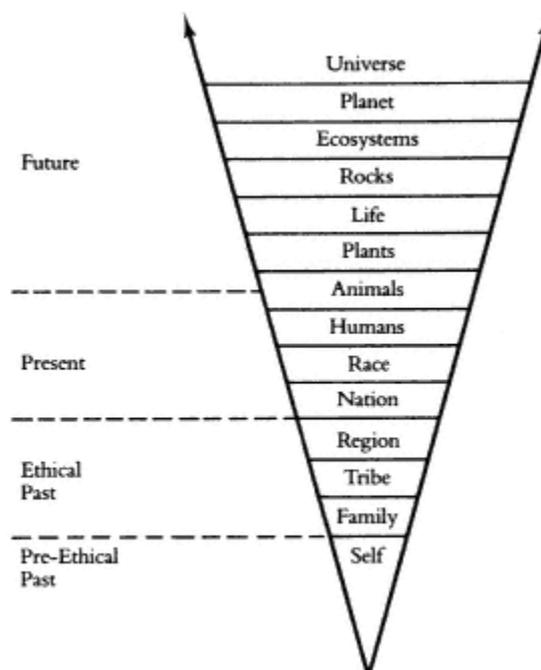
dreaming or otherwise unconscious” (“Animal Companions” 4). This belief is shared by indigenous worldviews as well as by the kind of spirituality endorsed by some strands of ecofeminism. Actually, this connection has been dealt with in texts such as *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism* (1990) edited by Irene Diamond and Gloria F. Orenstein and *Ecofeminism and the Sacred* (1993) edited by Carol J. Adams. In this last book, for example, Orenstein describes how she spent nearly five years studying with Sami Shaman Ellen Maret Gaup-Dunfjeld from Norway, and found that shamanistic practice is indeed ecofeminist because it bridges the distances imposed by Western religious practices between spirit and matter (173). This materialist spirituality,<sup>141</sup> although controversial due to what some identify with essentialism (Warren “Feminist” 119), “recognises that spirit is not a hyper-separated extra ingredient but a certain mode of organisation of a material body, unable to exist separately from it” (Plumwood *Environmental* 223). Through this sensibility the materiality of bodies, human and nonhuman, animate and inanimate, acquires meaning as agentic force much in the manner in which environmental philosopher Freya Mathews refers to matter when defining panpsychism as a metaphysic that reanimates matter making it “actually [matter], morally and spiritually speaking” (29). According to her, understanding the world in panpsychist terms implies “a profound shift” in Western thought for it is compelled to “a shift away from the direction in which it has been drifting since the time of the scientific revolution” (4). It means moving away from the exclusive power of human reason and accepting that matter in its many forms—animate or inanimate—can also be morally significant.<sup>142</sup> As she contends, we must

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<sup>141</sup> I borrow this term from Val Plumwood who uses it in chapter ten of *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (2002) entitled “Towards a materialist spirituality of place” (218-235).

<sup>142</sup> A look at Roderick F. Nash’s pyramid on the evolution of ethics shows that from the perspective of environmental ethics the desirable future implies moral recognition for objects such as rocks that have been usually despised as matter (4-5).

transcend the will to know and thus, dominate the *other*, and substitute it with a desire for the *other*. This is *orexis*,<sup>143</sup> a term normally translated as *appetite* but which really “embraces three functions: desire, spirit, and wish” (Mathews 60). This *orexis* or desire for the *other* makes possible the appropriate form of approach to the nonhuman world once it is reanimated through a panpsychic perspective. Mathew calls it *encounter* and for her, it substitutes knowledge. As a way of illustration, she tells her own personal encounter with a solandra, a flowering plant native to warm latitudes like the Caribbean. Mathews explains how she had grown especially fond of that plant after having had to relocate it in different places of her garden to protect it. But, when Mathews’s neighbor decided one day to lay a concrete trench on his side of the boundary that separated his property from Mathews’s, this story of plant-human affection had a bitter-sweet end.



Roderick F. Nash Pyramid

Furthermore, in Spain jurist and political thinker Miguel Herrero de Miñón has also coined the term *derecho entrañable* to refer to a form of affective attachment that links the individual with a certain landscape or an animal, and has proposed the legal protection of this bond with nature. By the same token, Edward O. Wilson in *Biophilia* (1984) speaks of the natural inclination humans have to form bonds with other living systems.

<sup>143</sup> According to Mathews, the term *orexis* is derived from the Greek *orektos* meaning “longed for” or literally “stretched out for” (61).

This meant the sure death of the solandra since the trench would cut through the plant's root system. Mathews had thought this was not a plant that could bloom so far south, but the unexpected happened when "the morning of the execution" the solandra offered "a single, extraordinary bloom, a huge yellow trumpet flower" that moved her deeply: "I was profoundly moved, and though the plant was indeed killed that day, I felt that it had given me something precious. Few human responses could have moved me more" (81).

A similar story of human-plant encounter is offered by Priscilla Stuckey in her article "Being Known by a Birch Tree: Animist Refigurings of Western Epistemology" where she combines animism and feminist epistemology to propose a different approach to the more-than-human world. Here she explains how she was intrigued by the strength with which the image of a birch tree she knew since childhood appeared suddenly in her mind one day after having lived for many years away from the place where she was raised. This happened only weeks before her brother announced to her that they had to cut the tree down because it had a disease. Stuckey's interpretation was that the tree "had come to say good-bye" to her and that without her realizing such extreme, all the years she had spent living around that tree had created a relationship between them of which she was not aware of:

One evening as I headed downhill on the floor after dinner, an image jumped to mind. It was the birch tree, and in the space of a moment the tree was as present inside my head as the sofa was present before my body. I sank down and closed my eyes. What was happening? I had not thought of the birch tree for years and had no reason to be thinking of it now.

There was no announcement, there were no words. The tree simply rose in my awareness, its tall, graceful image strong in my mind—stronger somehow than a memory. The presence remained vivid for a few moments and then gradually faded. A feeling of quiet gravity, almost sadness, accompanied it.

A few weeks later I received a call from my brother, who still lived in our hometown in Ohio. We talked a few minutes before he said slowly, 'Well, I'm afraid we're going to have to cut down the birch tree. It's got a disease or something'.

I hung up the phone, full of wonder. So the birch tree had come to say good-bye. I knew the birch tree very well from my years of living with it; what I had not realized until then was that the birch tree also knew me. (183)

Stuckey realizes that this event is difficult to explain from a Western point of view

where dualism such as body/spirit, human/nature, and subject/object are primordial. Nonetheless, she gains full comprehension of it by looking at it from the perspective of new animism and the epistemology based on personal knowing proposed by feminist philosopher Lorraine Code *What Can She Know?: Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge* (1991).

Stuckey explains that new animism was defined in the work of anthropologists Graham Harvey and Nurit Bird-David (1988). They both departed from Edward Tylor's definition of animism as "a belief in souls and spirits," but added to this "the prism of relationship for understanding interconnections with beings of all sorts, including human and other than human" (Stuckey 1988). This was done, as Stuckey comments, because Tylor's definition reproduced dualisms typical of the Western worldview and inapplicable to the worldview of many indigenous peoples. This was so simply because Tylor's animism was "focused on the immaterial side of a material-immaterial split," but, actually, such a divide was not part of many of the indigenous worldviews (Stuckey 1988). The determining category was not body or spirit, not materiality or immateriality, but, as A. Irving Hallowell, explained in his work about the Northern Ojibwe of south-central Canada, that of *person*. These persons may be human but many are not, they are "animal, mineral, plant, cloud, dream, or spirit persons" (Stuckey 1988). Of further importance, according to Stuckey, is also the fact that what matters in this kind of worldviews is not the physical presence of these persons, but their ability to interact or engage in relationships. This is why Stuckey also resorts to an epistemology based on personal knowing as the one proposed by feminist philosopher Lorraine Code who like Mathews challenges the objective/subjective dichotomy by considering the knowledge of objects as independent of the knower. In Code's model subjective elements of knowing are always present: "how to be with [the *other*], respond to [the *other*], act

toward [the *other*]” (Code *What Can She* 39; emphasis added). Furthermore, persons are considered as always evolving, continually changing. And ultimately, both partners in this process of knowing must be open to exchange the “subject” and “object” positions: that us both can be “object” and “subject” in the established relationship (Code *What Can She* 53). Ultimately, at the end of her article, Stuckey concludes that her experience with a birch tree challenges Cartesian dualism because the knowledge she has gained of it can be defined as: (1) relational rather than objective; (2) contextual, not abstract; (3) built through inner or intuitive attention as well as outer, empirical methods; and (4) communicated through story rather than abstract theory or principles (Stuckey 191). In this sense, her approach conforms to that of the ecofeminist environmental ethics proposed by Karen J. Warren, already mentioned, where she emphasizes the virtues of first-person narration for approaching the more-than-human world (“The Power” 25-29).

On account of the previous reflections, in the following sections, I will argue that in *Animal Heart* the main characters engage with the animals of the story in experiences of mutual understanding that can be framed within the animist-relational epistemology characteristic of an ecofeminist sensibility and illustrated, among others, by Mathews and Stuckey in their works. This reaches a special significance in the relationship between Marshall and his new heart because this organ comes to stand as an agentic part of the baboon Sol, the animal who is sacrificed to prolong the life of the human. By dealing with the difficult exchanges involved in xenotransplantation from an animist-relational point of view, Marshall will manage to make peace between the human and the animal. Matter in the form of the baboon heart will also become enlivened making science resonate with the need to redefine itself into a more comprehensive and empathic practice.

7.1.2. Xenotransplantation as the Trans-Corporeal<sup>144</sup> Encounter between the Human and the Nonhuman

*Animal Heart* revolves around the issue of xenotransplantation, more specifically around the transplantation of a heart to a human, undersea photographer Marshall McGregor. What could seem part of a science fiction story actually responds to, for many, one of the most promising directions of current medical practice: using animal organs or tissue as spare parts for humans.<sup>145</sup> This technique is rendered as revolutionary by some because it may provide humans with an endless source of organs, although it is true that there are some risks involved such as zoonosis or the transmission to humans of diseases specific to the species of the animal donor.<sup>146</sup> In this respect, for example, in 1999 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe issued Recommendation 1399 (1999) on xenotransplantation, stating that it was in favor of a moratorium on the clinical applications of xenotransplantation given the risks to public health which xenotransplantation could involve. Nevertheless, the media abounds with frequent examples of animal-to-human transplantation where, generally, the risks are “downplayed,” as Marie Fox explains, by the emphasis put in the scientific breakthrough implied in such attempts and the benefits for an aging human population in need of organ replacements (154). Thus, for instance, on September 16, 2012, *The New York Times* published an article on how a veteran of the war conflict in Afghanistan, who lost part of his leg after a roadside bomb blew a section of his thigh,

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<sup>144</sup> I borrow this term from Stacy Alaimo who, in “The Naked Word: The Trans-Corporeal Ethics of the Protesting Body,” defines it as referred to “the imbrication of human bodies not only with each other, but with the non-human creatures and the physical landscapes” (15).

<sup>145</sup> A positive evaluation of xenotransplantation is offered in David C. Cooper and Robert P. Lanza’s *Xeno: The Promise of Transplanting Animal Organs into Humans* (2000).

<sup>146</sup> Given the irony implied in the use of the term “donor” to refer to the nonhuman animal from whom the organs and tissues are removed—they do not freely decide on such donation but are submitted to it by forces that escape their understanding—critical attention has already been paid to the kind of language used in the medical literature on xenotransplantation. Of special interests are Lynda Birke and Mike Michael’s “The Heart of the Matter: Animal Bodies, Ethics, and Species Boundaries” (1998) and Marie Fox’s article “Reconfiguring the Animal/Human Boundary: The Impact of Xeno Technologies” (2005).

was to get the muscle he lost back thanks to the regrowth of the tissue he needed using animal scaffolding. This scaffolding, according to the article, consists of a “thin sheet of material from a pig,” but nothing is said about the possible risk of zoonosis that, nonetheless, is present in any major report on xenotransplantation.<sup>147</sup>

The truth is that the use of animal parts for human regeneration and the prolongation of life is not something new. As David K. C. Cooper, MD and Robert P. Lanza, MD acknowledge in *Xeno: The Promise of Transplanting Animal Organs into Humans* (2000), the earliest attempts at xenotransplantation date back to the seventeenth century. These first attempts took place in 1628 in Padua and later in London, and consisted in transfusions of animal blood to humans. In Russia, almost six decades later a nobleman who had lost part of his skull in battle had it replaced with a piece of bone taken from a dog (Cooper and Lanza 27-8). These exchanges increased dramatically in the twentieth century due to the hopes placed by scientists on this technique as a way to find a limitless source of organs for humans. Indeed, the first successful attempt at organ transplant was made using the heart of a chimpanzee.<sup>148</sup> But xenotransplantation has never been exempt from criticism because it touches on the legal and ethical limits of medical research<sup>149</sup> and goes against the interests of the animals used in this sort of procedure.<sup>150</sup> Xenotransplantation implies, as Fox contends, a blurring of boundaries

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<sup>147</sup> A comprehensive review of national and international responses to xenotransplantation is provided by Sheila McLean and Laura Williamson in chapter five of *Xenotransplantation: Law and Ethics* (2005). These authors emphasize the need to coordinate international responses to the challenges posed by xenotransplantation, especially in order to avoid the transmission of diseases from animal to human.

<sup>148</sup> This first heart transplant happened at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in the spring of 1963 and was performed by Dr. James D. Hardy on a 68 year-old patient, Boyd Rush. Since there was not a heart available for Mr. Rush, as a last chance resort, surgeon James Hardy and his team decided to implant in his chest the heart of a genetically close animal, a chimpanzee. Ultimately, the smaller heart of the animal could not pump the volume of blood required by a human body and Rush died ninety minutes after surgery (McLean and Williamson 49).

<sup>149</sup> An analysis of the legal and ethical questions involved in the practice of xenotransplantation is offered in Marie Fox’s “Reconfiguring the Animal/Human Boundary: The Impact of Xeno Technologies” (2005) and in Sheila McLean’s and Laura Williamson’s *Xenotransplantation: Law and Ethics* (2005).

<sup>150</sup> Especially helpful for an understanding of xenotransplantation from an animal rights point of view are Lynda Birke and Mike Michael’s “The Heart of the Matter: Animal Bodies, Ethics and Species

between the human and the nonhuman (149). It consists, using Stuart A. Newman's expression, in a "commingling of bodies" that shapes hybrids where the boundary between the human and nonhuman categories are erased and hence provokes an uneasiness difficult to escape (192). As Fox further argues, through xenotransplantation fixed categories such as those of human and animal are destabilized and notions of kinship are questioned especially when it comes to the special protection animals considered to be closer to humans—nonhuman primates and companion animals—receive, while others conceptualized as flesh—pigs mainly<sup>151</sup>—and thus commodified are seen as an endless source of organs (156; 160). At the same time, xenotechnologies entail the exercise of violence against human and animals alike. Such violence cannot be totally prevented by medical protocols as the provocative images created by British artist Sue Coe denounce in works such as "Eden Biotechnologies Ltd.," "Resurrected for Science," "Scientists Finds a Cure for Empathy," "Upper and Lower Primates," and "Xenotransplantation."<sup>152</sup>



**Fig. 36: Eden Biotechnologies Ltd.**

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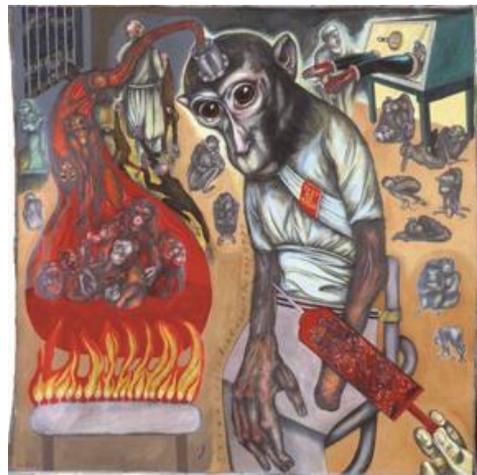
Boundaries" (1998) and Tania Woods's "Have a Heart: Xenotransplantation, Nonhuman Death, Human Distress" (1998).

<sup>151</sup> As Marie Fox explains, the main interest of xenotechnologies is placed today on the pig because it is very similar to humans in physiology and, unlike nonhuman primates, exists in great numbers or at least can be bred easily in captivity (150).

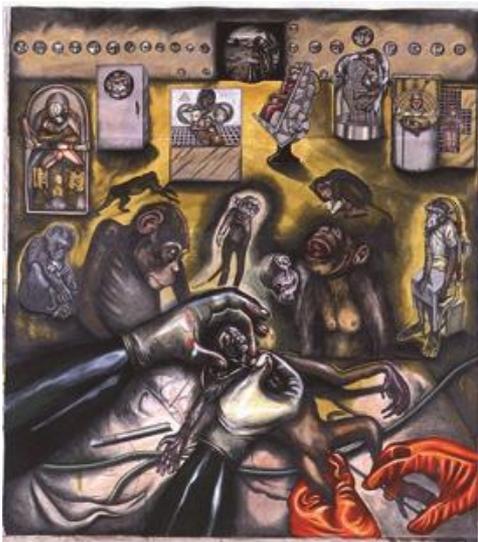
<sup>152</sup> Images of these works can be accessed at <http://graphicwitness.org/coe/coebio.htm>



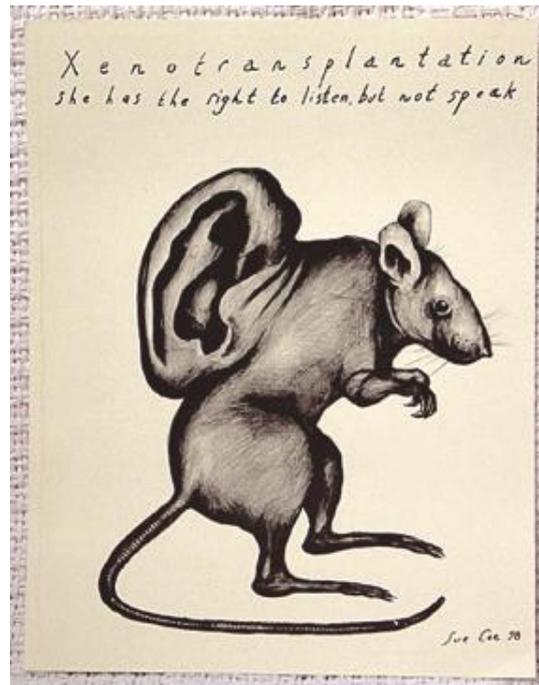
**Fig. 37: Resurrected for Science**



**Fig. 38: Scientists Find a Cure for Empathy**



**Fig. 39: Upper and Lower Primates**



**Fig. 40: Xenotransplantation**

But what is more interesting is that, in the novel under study, xenotransplantation becomes a boundary case, that is, a case of boundary crossing where the dualisms human/animal and spirit/matter are dismantled thanks to the animist-relational perspective that informs the approach the main characters have with regard to their relationship with animals. Such a deconstruction of barriers is especially meaningful seen in light of the body of works emanating from new materialisms. In this respect, material ecocriticism, a new form of ecocritical studies being currently developed by Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann among others, seems especially apt for such endeavor. Material ecocriticism emerges as a response to the “innovative ways of considering matter and material relations” by the new materialisms which have led to “the re-definitions of concepts like matter, agency, discursivity, and intentionality” and thus have affected ecocritical studies (Iovino and Oppermann “Material Ecocriticism” 75). Through material ecocriticism, Iovino and Oppermann propose to focus “on the way matter’s (or nature’s) nonhuman agentic capacities are

described and represented in narrative texts” (“Material Ecocriticism” 79). In their seminal article, “Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency, and Models of Narrativity” they pay attention to various examples of “the representations of nature’s agentic powers” in different literary traditions. Some of them refer to nature’s manifestations such as the power of electricity in Henry Roth’s *Call It Sleep* (1934) or in Carlo Emilio Gadda’s novel *Acquainted with Grief* (*La cognizione del dolore*, 1963) which, according to them, manage to “[capture] the power of electricity as material agency that invites, [using] Jane Bennett’s words, ‘imaginative attention toward a material vitality’” (qtd. in Iovino and Oppermann “Material Ecocriticism” 80). They also consider the description of landscapes such as Egdon Heath in Thomas Hardy’s *The Return of the Native* (1878), the role of the River Congo in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1902), and narratives of the sea such as those of Turkish writer Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı or of the Italian poet Eugenio Montale where, as they explain, the landscape, the river and the sea can be seen as “examples of ecological nonhuman agents projecting themselves as “textual forms” of matter and telling their stories through the material imagination of their human counterparts” (Iovino and Oppermann “Material Ecocriticism” 82). Such a statement brings to mind Mathews’s striking encounter with the dying solandra she had protected for years and Stuckey’s experience with a birch tree as relational agent communicating with her through the common story both shared without her being aware of it. If such approach is applied to the novel under analysis, especially to the way in which the baboon Sol, the donor, communicates with Marshall through his transplanted heart, it can be argued that the heart of the animal *matters* in this novel as communicative agent. This allows for an interpretation of xenotransplantation as a bodily text where not only the frontier between the human and the animal is crossed over, but the distinctions between matter and spirit are also erased.

As Newman explains in “Carnal Boundaries: The Commingling of Flesh in Theory and Practice,” the Christian world has often had an ambiguous relationship with the notions of flesh and matter. In general in pre-Enlightenment Europe the Church sustained “the Aristotelian notion that during the conception and development of all living beings matter is provided by the female but remains inert without the animating principle supplied by the male” (Newman 198). Such a vision was later emphasized by Manichaeism which identified spirit with Good and the male principle, and matter with Evil and the female principle. It is easy to see that this understanding of polarities coincides with the traditional identification among woman-nature-animal already mentioned in a preceding section. Later, in the seventeenth century, Descartes saw the body as a machine, that in the case of humans was inhabited by an immortal soul which redeemed the materiality in which it was contained. The body of the animal, however, was devoid of a soul, and therefore, of a consciousness. Such approach led to the development of practices such as vivisection where animals were dissected alive. With time the comparative study of species to which Darwin’s publication of *On the Origins of the Species* (1859) led, the development of fields such as cognitive ethology as well as concepts such as the embodied mind,<sup>153</sup> among other things, have made possible to envision matter and all its associated terms (body, animal, nature, woman...) as alive. This material turn makes it possible to say that there is not such a thing as the spirit/matter divide but that matter is spiritual in the sense that it interacts with other agents. Seen from this perspective, it is possible to contend that alternative epistemologies like Mathews’s panpsychism and Stuckey’s animist-relationality as well as those traditionally held by indigenous people are verging in the same direction. This is happening thanks to a broadening of perspectives that allows for a deconstruction of

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<sup>153</sup> The embodied mind theory sustains that human cognition is largely determined by the way in which the human body works.

dualisms and a more holistic understanding of the forces at play in the world where opposites are substituted by a continuum of intra-actions.<sup>154</sup>

In *Animal Heart* matter, to which nonhuman animals and nature have been traditionally associated, manifests itself through the transplanted heart of the dead. The violated bodies of the human transplant and the animal donor become texts in which modern biotechnological practices are inscribed to the effect of showing the contradictions inherent to science and its understanding of bodies. Since one of the ways in which material ecocriticism proposes to interpret the agency of matter is by focusing “on the way matter’s (or nature’s) nonhuman agentic capacities are described and represented in narrative texts” (Iovino and Opperman 79), I intend here to analyze the bodies of humans and animals as texts where xenotransplantation opens a space of reflection on the blurring of the human/animal and the spirit/matter boundaries. Through this experience notions of kinship are redefined, and most of all, models of fragmentation characteristic of Western science are substituted by alternative models of integration inspired by indigenous and ecofeminist spiritualities.

### 7.1.3. Open Minds, Open Hearts: Redefining Science

*The heart of science is feminine. [...] The science I have come to know and love is unifying, spontaneous, intuitive, caring—a process more akin to surrender than domination.*  
(Pert 314)

*The point is not to explain the world, but to sing it.*  
(Mathews 87-8)

In the West, due to the dominance of the Cartesian epistemological model, science tends to look at the body from a mechanistic point of view. As a consequence,

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<sup>154</sup> As part of her explanation of agential realism in her article “Posthuman Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,” feminist theorist Karen Barad develops the concept of intra-action in contrast with that of interactions which “presumes the prior existence of independent entities/relata” (Loc. 2405). In contrast intra-action means a process through which “the boundaries and properties of the “components” of phenomena become determinate and (...) particular embodied concepts become meaningful” (Loc. 2405-2427). This implies that the traditional Cartesian divide between subject and object does not exist prior to the establishment of these relations or intra-actions since both are part of the same material continuum which is organized through these intra-actions.

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the body is seen as a construct of parts that can be repaired or substituted without paying much attention to the consequences of going too far. The result of this Frankensteinian illusion is often that the more advanced scientific techniques are, the more dangerous their outcomes result for human and nonhuman animals. This potential of science for incrementing risk in today's world has already been denounced by Ulrich Beck in his seminal work *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (1992). In this book, he studies the role the rapid development of science plays in the creation of risk and how its promise of liberating humans from the burden of their bodily nature is not exempt of the possibility of creating further dangers:

...[sciences] are targeted not only as a source of solutions to problems, but also as a *cause of problems*. In practice and in the public sphere, the sciences increasingly face not just the balance of their defeats, but also that of their victories, that is to say, the reflection of their unkept promises. The reasons for this are varied. As success grows it seems that when put into practice, solutions and promises of liberation have emphatically revealed their negative sides as well, and these have in turn become the objects of scientific analysis. (Beck 156; emphasis in original)

In *Animal Heart*, the body of the human Marshall and of the nonhuman animals used in experimentation become sites where science writes its manifesto. They are literally fragmented by a kind of science that commodifies its subjects in its pretense of progress. Both the human and the nonhuman animals dissolve in the maneuverings of a science that sees no limits to its goals. Marshall is given a heart he did not ask for. When he asks Dr. Lamb, the doctor who operated him, why they did the transplant, his answer reveals the scientist's arrogance as the representative of a profession that sometimes forgets it is dealing not only with *the heart* but also with *the soul* of the patient:

“But why did you do it?” Marshall demanded. “And why me?”  
“We do it,” Dr. Lamb said simply as he walked toward the door, “because we can. And why you?” Dr. Lamb shrugged. “Because frankly, you were dead on the operating table, anyway.” (*Animal Heart* 88)

This exchange unveils what André Collard describes as a “might makes right” attitude which is prevalent in Western notions of science (qtd. in Slicer 118). In a similar

manner, the bodies of the animals at Roseland Research laboratory, from where Marshall with Isabel's help eventually rescues the family of his donor, are exploited to create new possibilities for science. These experiments imply the creation of grotesque hybrids which resonate with images Peterson herself recalls in the acknowledgements of her book. She actually thanks Dan Lyons of England's Uncaged Campaigns for his "courageous activism on primate labs" and for his "groundbreaking Website 'Xeno Diaries'."<sup>155</sup> In this site, Lyons, an Honorary Research Fellow in the Department of Politics at the University of Sheffield and renowned animal protection lobbyist, makes public information contained in leaked documents received by Uncaged Campaigns in May 2000 about the xenotransplantation research done by the biotechnology company Imutran Ltd., a subsidiary of the multinational drug firm Novartis Pharma AG, between 1994 and 2000, in Huntingdon Life Sciences laboratories (Cambridgeshire, UK). These experiments involved the transplant of the hearts and kidneys of genetically engineered piglets into the necks, abdomens and chests of hundreds of monkeys captured from the wild. The idea behind such experiments was to find an unlimited supply of pig organs that could be safely transplanted into sick humans in the future. The release to the public of this information in the form of what Lyons entitled the "Diaries of Despair" were proof of the suffering of the primates involved in the experiments and led to a legal battle where the Home Office attempted to whitewash Imutran's activities. The novel offers an image of similarly terrifying proportions in a quote previously cited in which a baboon is described strapped at a table with a pig heart beating at his throat (*Animal Heart* 243).

All this violence renders bodies as desacralized sites for scientific experimentation. However, throughout the novel, the heart as flesh-matter imbued with

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<sup>155</sup> [www.xenodiaries.org](http://www.xenodiaries.org)

*Chapter Seven. Dialogues of the Body: Becoming Animal*

the soul of the baboon and manifesting itself in the life of Marshall, as well as Isabel's compassionate model of science, will serve to counteract the effects of mainstream Western science. In Marshall's case the heart transplant involves serious implications for him. He is troubled by a surgery that has left him feeling used and disempowered, "not only part baboon," but "also a guinea pig" (*Animal Heart* 87). Likewise, as time goes by, he also becomes aware of changes in his personality that make him feel uncertain about his true identity: he evolves from being a pretty detached and independent man to becoming closer to his family as well as a better friend. Interestingly, the women who are close to him and who have a special sensitivity to animals—Isabel, his mother Lillian, and his sister Nohelani—notice right away that something has been altered in him. Isabel and his mother sense as if a terrified animal had been placed inside him:

Andrew was right about [Isabel's] uneasiness over Marshall's new heart. But her brother didn't know that Isabel's deepest dismay was not only philosophical; it was personal. Yet inexplicable. Even as Andrew first told her about the unexpected animal-to-human transplant, Isabel had sensed something was terribly changed in Marshall. The moment she placed her hand on Marshall's arm as he lay in the ICU, Isabel had felt her own chest constrict. Dizziness and that familiar dread she usually sensed only when an animal was in danger.

Isabel heard an odd heartbeat—*whoosh-whoosh, whoosh-whoosh*—in waves through her body. Maybe it was just her bad hearing or the stress of seeing this unconscious man—to whom she had found herself strangely drawn—so depressed after his surgery. She shook her head to clear her hearing, but the phantom sound, an audible pulse, echoed inside her. It was as if she were listening through an esophageal stethoscope to an animal's heartbeat. A frantic animal.

As Isabel had stepped back from Marshall's bedside, she realized she must somehow be hearing the new heart beating inside this man. But how could that be? She told no one, not even Marian, about the unsettling experience. But Marshall's mother had perhaps also intuited something troubling about her son. As they shopped for the aquarium equipment that Lillian hoped would cheer Marshall, she said, "My boy is not happy to be here. Maybe it's not right what they did, putting a wild animal inside him." (*Animal Heart* 90-1)

His sister Nohelani feels it too but believes his brother Marshall still retains his soul:

Now Nohelani met Marshall's smile with a grave expression, as if considering whether he were still her true brother, now that he had another's heart. She laid a delicate hand lightly on Marshall's chest. The long scar underneath his silk shirt did not interest Nohelani as it would everyone else. She listened, eyes lowered, until at last she was satisfied that Marshall was the same soul she had loved all her short life. (*Animal Heart* 98-9)

As a matter of fact, Marshall's transformation started on the operating table. At that moment, he is described as floating above the body of a man he does not recognize as himself at first. The only thing he sees is "emptiness" as if a body without a heart were just a dead piece of flesh. Furthermore, by having his body manipulated by science, he is estranged from it. There is no feeling for the man lying on the table who is described as an inert cadaver that is "being harvested organ-by-organ" (*Animal Heart* 83). He has been "split open like a melon" to be later "meticulously stapled tight" just like a *thing* that needs to be fixed (*Animal Heart* 84). After the surgery Marshall notices that he has changed. He now "[longs] for daily society and family", as if he were feeling more with "the heart of another primate" rather than with his own (*Animal Heart* 102). He is also haunted by visions of someone else's life, the baboon who was killed to give him his heart. This happens mainly in his sleep or when he loses consciousness as a result of his dose of immunodepressants. The heart reveals itself to him then. It tries to tell him something in a similar manner to that of the solandra's farewell to Mathews or the birch tree that startled Stuckey by appearing vividly in her consciousness to say goodbye before dying. In Marshall's case the animal heart pleads with him to reestablish a balance lost with the killing of the baboon. This becomes especially clear at a time when Marshall is diving to take some shots of a giant Pacific octopus, Ursula. After a while she dares to hold him with one of her tentacles. This "strange undersea embrace" provokes in him a kind of trance where the boundaries between the baboon and the human vanish and it is difficult to discern between the two:

He felt suction and pressure along his legs and torso as Ursula's arms now gracefully wrapped around him—and then the rectangular pupil floated inches from his mask. His chest expanded, yellow blotches floating before his eyes. But this time Marshall did not lose consciousness. No blackout. No dream. This time, Marshall clearly remembered:

[...]

*Then bright lights overhead. His heart is beating strongly again. But he is not the same. He is not on a surgical table or in a tiny steel cage, yet he is alive, conscious. He is somehow inside another's body. Man-animal. He cannot get out. Over time he finds that he can get out when the man dreams or is floating and forgets himself. Like now. Here is another animal. Another kind of mask. He can see everything now. But it is liquid.*

## Chapter Seven. Dialogues of the Body: Becoming Animal

*How can he get away from the prison of this man's body to find Hara? If he can only make this man see what he sees, and feel what he feels, he might find his family again. They have stolen his body, but not his heart. Not his memory.*

Fathoms deep, Marshall remembered the intelligent face, a long primate body stretched out on a steel table. *Hara*, he signed her name. Marshall closed his eyes. Cold deep in his bones. Heat in his heart. The words he once rejected when others spoke them now wafted through Marshall's mind and he shuddered: *I am a transplant. I acknowledge the sacrifice of the dead.* (*Animal Heart* 229; emphasis in original)

Thus, the baboon heart, the animal heart, becomes an agentic material force in the story complying in this way with Iovino's and Oppermann's analysis of matter as agentic and as having "'narrative' power itself," a power that makes it become a text:

...material ecocriticism shed [*sic*] lights not only on the way agentic matter is narrated and represented in literary texts, but on matter's "narrative" power itself. Matter, in all its forms, in this regard, becomes a *site of narrativity*, a storied matter, embodying its own narratives in the minds of human agents and in the very structure of its own self-constructive forces. Interpreted in this material-ecocritical light, matter itself becomes a text. ("Material Ecocriticism" 83; emphasis in original)

This agency of the baboon heart leads Marshall in the end to a personal transformation and a commitment to liberate Sol's family from the laboratory where they are captive.

Remarkable is also the fact that Marshall's post-transplant confusion is in accordance with the description of some of the real psychological problems transplant patients find after surgery. In fact, approaches to transplantation from the social sciences are bountiful with descriptions of the uneasiness the reception of a foreign organ causes in the patient (Birke and Michael 259-60; Sharp 365-66; Woods 52, 54). In the novel a clinical justification is given to Marshall's recurrent hallucinations. Irene, the young woman Marshall befriends in group therapy, explains to him that this may be due to "cellular memory" meaning that "every cell remembers who it belongs to" (*Animal Heart* 117). This explanation is plausible according to studies conducted with heart transplant recipients in various hospitals of the United States. Paul Pearsall, Gary E. R. Schwartz, and Linda G. S. Russek, for example, showed in 1999 that some patients had dreams related to the lives of the donors but not their own, and that some even experienced changes in food, music, art or even career preferences that were not

explicable by contact with the donor or her family prior to the transplant. Independently of what the explanation might be, what is interesting is how matter, in this case a heart, manifests itself in a meaningful interaction with the fictional protagonist as it seems to happen with some transplant patients. Irene's reflection in this respect sounds especially meaningful:

"I've had them, too," Irene said, pushing on. "And bad feelings. Premonitions, like. I've read that DNA has memory—that every cell remembers who it belongs to. Listen, I've read that when researchers put one throbbing heart cell next to another in a separate petri dish, they beat independently, solitarily. But when scientists put several heart cells together in the same dish—even if the cells are not in physical contact, and without a brain to tell them what to do—those heart cells fall into the same rhythm. So, you and I have animal parts living inside us, Marshall. Doesn't that make you wonder about things—for us? Maybe even for them?" (*Animal Heart* 117)

Certainly the heart is a powerful cultural symbol as well as an organ that has traditionally intrigued scientists by and large. From a cultural perspective, according to Juan E. Cirlot's *A Dictionary of Symbols*, in the vertical scheme of human organs the heart is the central point and as a consequence it also evokes the meanings of the other two important organs: the brain and the sexual organs (141). The brain, in traditional ways of thought was actually considered as "being mainly instrumental" while the heart was seen as "the true seat of intelligence" (Cirlot 142). This centrality of the heart implies that "[all] representations of the "Centre" have been related to the heart, either through correspondences or through substitution" (Cirlot 142). This also made possible the connection, in the mystic doctrine of unity, between the heart-symbolism and the love-symbolism "for to love is only to experience a force which urges the lover towards a given centre" (Cirlot 142). Furthermore, according to Jack Tresidder in *The Watkins Dictionary of Symbols*, the heart is also considered as "[t]he symbolic source of affections – love, compassion, charity, joy or sorrow – but also of spiritual illumination, truth and intelligence" (n. pag.). As a consequence, as this author explains, it is often equated with the soul. Such identification lies behind the fact that many ancient traditions did not make a sharp distinction between feelings and thought, and considered

that a person who “let the heart rule the head” was acting in a rather sensible manner (Tressider n. pag.).

From a scientific perspective, although one that connects the cultural meaning of the heart with recent scientific discoveries, psychiatrist and professor Mohamed Omar Salem reports on the connections between the heart and the brain. He explains that the heart determines, to a certain extent, the functioning of the latter. According to him, some studies show how the heart communicates with the brain in ways that influence “information processing, emotions and health” (1). He speaks of how John A. Armour in 1994 introduced the concept of the “heart brain” based on the heart’s complex intrinsic nervous system, very similar to that of the brain proper, which “enables it to act independently of the cranial brain—to learn, remember, and even feel and sense” (Salem 2). This is what makes it possible to describe the heart as a “little brain” affecting perception, decision making and even creativity (Salem 3). Furthermore, Salem insists that there are other attributes that make the heart quite a distinct organ. It works as an endocrine gland able to produce hormones like oxytocin, commonly known as the “love” or bonding hormone, that can be found in the heart in higher concentrations than in the brain. It also “generates the body’s most powerful and most extensive rhythmic electromagnetic field,” five hundred times stronger than the brain’s magnetic field (Salem 2). This, according to McCraty, Bradley and Tomasino, makes the heart act as a carrier wave for information that provides a global synchronizing signal for the entire body and affects “the ‘magnetic’ attractions or repulsions that occur between individuals” (qtd. in Salem 2). Furthermore, it participates also in “the processing and decoding of intuitive information” which the brain also receives but often after getting first to the heart. Finally, as Salem concludes, the heart is as determinant of conscious awareness as the brain since increasingly studies show that the

brain and the body act together, so the heart is not just another organ but a part of a whole where all its parts are interrelated in what it seems an almost cosmic connection (4).

Salem's study is in line with the field of the so-called bodymind<sup>156</sup> medicine according to which bodies are endowed with a bodymind intelligence that seeks wellness (Pert 18). According to neuroscientist and pharmacologist Candace B. Pert, one of the expressions of this form of intelligence are the neuropeptide molecules that she creatively calls molecules of emotion. These chemicals and their receptors determine "our emotions, beliefs, and expectations" (Pert 47). They are an instance of how there is not such a thing as the body and the mind working separately since the neuropeptides and their receptors that for a while were thought to be found exclusively in the brain are also found in other parts of the body as well (Pert 187). So as it can be concluded, it is not only that the heart functions as a brain, as Salem explains, but that the whole body, as Pert sustains, functions as a mind: "the *mind* is in the body, in the same sense that the mind is in the brain" (Pert 187; emphasis in original). These sort of scientific findings that highlight the body-mind continuity further support the role as agentic matter played by the baboon heart in Peterson's novel.

Moreover, throughout the novel the heart also has an important function because it works on different levels of meaning which highlight the polysemic nature of this word, something the previous revision of its symbolism has already attested to. On a superficial level, the heart in the book can be taken at face value, literally meaning the "hollow muscular organ that pumps blood through the circulatory system by rhythmic contraction and dilation" (*Oxford English Dictionary* 801). By revealing that both Isabel's and Marshall's fathers died as a consequence of a heart attack, the reader is

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<sup>156</sup> The term bodymind was first proposed by acupuncture expert Dianne Connelly "[to reflect] the understanding, derived from Chinese medicine, that the body is inseparable from the mind" (Pert 187).

reminded of its essential function for the sustaining of life. Marshall's massive heart attack will only emphasize such role and become pivotal for the development of the story.

On a deeper level, the heart also symbolizes love, caring, and affection. These feelings are described as central to the lives of both the humans and animals of the story, but are mainly associated with Isabel who is "haunted" by questions of the human heart she is not able to solve through science (*Animal Heart* 182). Isabel has a profoundly nurturing way of being, especially with regard to animals. Her job as forensic pathologist is aimed at investigating crimes against animals and she is also a volunteer in a wildlife organization for which she often looks after rescued sea animals. But deep inside of her is a fear of being personally involved that is born out of the loss of her parents at a very young age. This makes her keep a comfortable distance, especially after her failed marriage, from independent men like Marshall to whom she might be attracted. At the same time, she has found in science, as her brother Andrew guesses, a kind of protection that allows her to "[run] away from life" and escape "messy stuff" like love (*Animal Heart* 16). She is easily inclined to love and affection, but knows the possible suffering and uneasiness derived from giving free rein to those feelings. That is why her practice of science as forensic pathologist as well as her activism, which is intrinsically linked to the former, are not devoid of conflict. Both confront her with the tension between following the strict protocols of science and of the rules of her volunteer work with animals, and being guided by the dictates of her heart. Such tension accompanies her throughout the book, but is progressively dissolved by the need to respond to the practical conflicts the novel describes. In this sense the heart is opposed to the mind, emotion is contrasted with reason. The result of this is a redefinition of both science and activism in light of more integrative and holistic

practices which can also derive in a more integrated understanding of the self. This is best seen in Isabel's treatment of dead bodies.

Chapter eight describes the consequences for the sea mammals of the area affected by Navy sonar testing. Many whales and dolphins are stranded and some of them die on Kiwanda Beach. Besides rescuing two calves that Isabel with Marshall's help take to the Newport Aquarium pool, Isabel and her colleague Marian find that there is not much else they can do for the animals except trying to investigate the cause of their death. Thus, without waiting to have official authorization to conduct such procedure and therefore leaving aside the rules that govern their work, they take the body of a Pacific white-sided dolphin, that died stranded, to the pathology laboratory and prepare to perform an autopsy. In a very powerful scene, when doing the autopsy, they conduct themselves as if this were the occasion of a sacred ritual they were about to celebrate: "With a slight bow of her head, Isabel rested both gloved hands on the body of the female Pacific white-sided dolphin and said very softly, "I am so sorry for the violence of your death." Her words were formal, almost an incantation" (*Animal Heart* 184). Both Isabel and Marian manipulate the dead body of the animal as if this were a sacred object that deserves all their respect. This is partly derived from Marian's indigenous culture in which animals are understood as persons but also emerges out of Isabel's understanding of her profession.

As the reader learns, before becoming a veterinarian and pathologist, Isabel went first to medical school. There she learned anatomy from Dr. Grayson Elliot who defined this work as a "dying art" and advised his students that, when working with a body, they had to "*Be gentle*" because "*Every body once belonged to somebody*" (*Animal Heart* 184; emphasis in original). This spiritual practice of science contrasts with the kind of science practiced by other characters in the book. Both Dr. Lamb, in charge of

Marshall's transplant, and Dr. Sharp, the Navy's expert on bioacoustics, go as far as science allows them without harboring in any moral concerns. In contrast, Isabel's and Marian's model of science is more in line with alternative models of science like the one ethologist Marc Bekoff refers to as "deep science" ("Redecorating" 635). Such a term, as he explains, is inspired by the ideas behind the "deep ecology" movement which calls attention to the inherent value of each living being without consideration of their utilitarian value. With this in mind, Bekoff calls for a new practice of science where the fragmented and reductionistic framework typical of modern science is substituted by a "holistic and heart-driven science," a "deep science that is impregnated with spirit and compassion" ("Redecorating" 635). This "holistic, heartfelt science," according to him, "reinforces a sense of togetherness in which the seer and seen are one," while at the same time "[it] fosters the development of deep and reciprocal relationships among humans, other animals, and other nature, softening our tendencies to control and manage almost everything in sight" ("Redecorating" 635). As a consequence of these ideas, Bekoff proposes a kind of science led by principles that bring to mind Stuckey's description of an epistemological model that needs to be relational, contextual, built through intuitive attention as well as empirical methods, and communicated through story (191). Bekoff thus suggests:

... (1) taking the animals' points of view; (2) putting respect, compassion, and admiration for other animals first and foremost; (3) erring on the animals' side when uncertain about their feeling pain or suffering; (4) recognizing that almost all of the methods that are used to study animals, even in the field, are intrusions on their lives—much research is fundamentally exploitive; (5) recognizing how misguided are speciesistic views concerning vague notions such as intelligence and cognitive or mental complexity for informing assessments of well-being; (6) focusing on the importance of individuals; (7) appreciating individual variation and the diversity of the lives of different individuals in the worlds within which they live; (8) using broadly based rules of fidelity and nonintervention as guiding principles; and (9) appealing to what some call questionable practices that have no place in the conduct of science, such as the use of common sense and empathy. ("Deep Ethology" 2-3)

In this new form of science, using Karen Barad's words, "matter comes to matter" because the *other* is taken into account (Loc. 2563). Likewise, as Peterson's

novel shows, literature also contributes to such a vivification of matter. This vivification or reanimation in panpsychic terms means “a culture of encounter,” “a culture of poetry and song” where by singing the world up is possible “to attune ourselves to the inexhaustible layers of its own unconscious-but-simultaneously-all conscious song” (Mathews 88).

In his seminal article “Literature and Ecology,” William Rueckert proved, by applying ecology to the study of literature, that “science and poetry, can be persuaded to lie down together and be generative after all” (107). As he put it, a poem or any kind of literature is stored energy and reading is the act of energy transfer from the poem “into the language centers and creative imaginations of the readers” (110). In a similar fashion, in classical times poetry was understood as a kind of sacred ritual through which the true nature of things was conveyed to the audience. These ideas make possible to argue that knowledge of what is outside of ourselves (animals, plants, rocks,...) can be mediated not only through rationalistic modes but also through opening our hearts to the stories matter-body-animal tells us. Such narratives, as Iovino and Oppermann contend:

...are *de facto* part of a project of liberation—a cultural, ecological, ontological, and material liberation. Every vision intended to bridge the discursive and the material, the *logos* and the *physis*, mind and body, restoring new forms of awareness and conceptualization of our material out-side, is an enterprise of liberation. It is liberation from dualisms, from ideal subjugations, from the perceptual limits that prevent our moral imagination from appreciating the vibrant multiplicity of the world. (“Material Ecocriticism” 87; emphasis in original)

7.2. PETER DICKINSON'S *EVA* (1988)<sup>157</sup> OR THE DISMANTLING OF  
"CONCEPTUAL STRAITJACKETS"<sup>158</sup>

*The mask has no voice. The voice comes from behind it, saying whatever needs to be said and heard. But the mask still speaks. No matter what its style is – fantastic, realistic, crude, exquisite – it cannot fulfil its function unless it speaks a single word. The word is imagine.*  
(Dickinson "Masks" 170)

*Eva* (1988), by British author Peter Dickinson, is a science fiction novel that fits into the category of eutopian fiction described by Patrick D. Murphy as proposing not an ideal and finalized utopian construct, but one that reveals its internal contradictions in the process of achieving a better and alternative world (*Literature* 149). It describes a dystopic world where overpopulation has led to the near depletion of the Earth's resources. Besides the scarcity of arable land, the planet's biodiversity has been reduced to a handful of species. Some birds, mostly kestrels, still resist, nesting on the buildings and preying on other smaller animals such as sparrows and rats, but there are no big animals anymore. The great mammals such as the elephant, the giraffe, the gorilla, the orangutan, the whale and the dolphin have succumbed to the pressure of a human-invaded world. Not even zoos, which for a while hosted the remnants of these species, have prevailed. A human invention, the "shaper," has become their substitute. This device generates holograms, "shapings," of anything a human can think of: from long lost animals to thickly forested areas. Nonetheless, there is one species in particular that has been carefully preserved: the chimpanzee. This has become the object of interest of both science and the corporate world. Its phylogenetic closeness to humans has turned it into the perfect subject for experimentation, even more so now that so few nonhuman animals survive. Likewise, chimpanzees feature in some of the most popular commercials on the shaper, such as those for a soft drink called Honeybear that use

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<sup>157</sup> An abbreviated version of this analysis has been published as part of the volume *New International Voices in Ecocriticism* (2014).

<sup>158</sup> This expression (Abram 9) as well as others used in the titles of the analysis of Dickinson's *Eva* are borrowed from David Abram's *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology* (2010) due to their expressiveness.

chimpanzees dressed up as people. As a way to keep their population secure, every city has branches of the International Chimp Pool. Eva's father, Dr. Daniel Adamson, works as Director of Primate Zoology at the main section of this institution. He has always been so passionate about his job that he even used his daughter Eva, the novel's protagonist, as subject of study observing how she interacted with the chimpanzees of the reserve from a very early age.<sup>159</sup> Eva has therefore lived among chimpanzees all her life "making chimp chatter before she said her first human word," learning to "joke with their jokes" and "feel with their feelings," learning to solve some problems the way a chimp will do and getting along with them both as playmates and family (*Eva* 19-20). A serious car accident, however, will make her become closer to them than anyone could ever imagine, making her one herself.

The novel begins at a hospital with Eva lying in bed trying to wake up and not being able to move. Although her mother is by her side, things do not feel right. The reader learns that after the accident her body was so severely injured that Eva's parents had to make a very difficult choice: continuing her life using a surrogate body, a chimpanzee's body. Thanks to a state-of-the-art procedure, based on a phenomenon described as "neuron memory," Eva's self has been transferred to the body of a young female chimpanzee, Kelly. Dickinson's book describes the coming of age of this "girl-chimp" beginning with her awakening at the hospital, dealing later with all the conflicts her hybrid self—both human and animal—raise, and ending with Eva transformed into

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<sup>159</sup> As Suzanne Rahn argues in her article on the sources of *Eva*, works of science fiction like this one need to "be firmly grounded in reality if the genre is to maintain its integrity" (182). However, Peter Dickinson has not so far clearly acknowledged his sources in writing *Eva*, and Rahn does not pay attention to some of the most well-known experiments conducted by psychologists where human babies were brought up until a certain age together with at least one chimpanzee. This is the case, for example, of Donald Kellogg, son to a pair of psychologists, Winthrop Niles Kellogg and Luella Dorothy Kellogg, who was raised together with the chimpanzee Gua during nine months. This as well as other experiments oriented towards the humanization of the ape and not the animalization of the human, as it is the case in *Eva*, are extensively explained by Douglas K. Candland in *Feral Children and Clever Animals: Reflections on Human Nature* (267-319).

the mother of a new “race” of chimpanzees who will become the only hope for the salvation of the planet.

In an article published in the *Horn Book Magazine* in 1993 Peter Dickinson explains how the writing of *Eva* originated in his attempt to retell the biblical story of the Mother of humanity. He explains that he felt caught by what he saw as “a single resonant myth” with the potential for “survival and rebirth (...) in everchanging forms” (Dickinson “Masks” 164). Later in this article, he confesses that while beginning to work on his plan he also learned of research on female mitochondria,<sup>160</sup> genetic material inherited directly through the female line that, if analyzed, can show the genetic relation between individual women or groups of women and a common female ancestor (Dickinson “Masks” 164). According to the author, such a discovery led the media to coin the term “mitochondrial Eve” to refer to the woman from whom all humans descend (Dickinson “Masks” 165). He found such an image compelling and thought of making *Eva* the metaphor of a future dying humanity whose genes were doomed to death and could only “be saved by being given a new set of genetic material coming from a chimpanzee” (Dickinson “Masks” 165). This would mean that her children would be chimps and that “[a]ll she would be able to pass on to them would be exactly what Eve in Genesis gave us, when she ate the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge” (Dickinson “Masks” 165). However, the difficulty of developing the genetic theory into the novel’s plot led Dickinson to creating a story where the body of *Eva*, a twelve year old girl, is destroyed in a car accident and her “neuron memory” is transferred into the body of a chimpanzee to make her survive, becoming in the end the savior of the only possible life form on Earth: a hybrid race made of the genetic pool of chimpanzees and the surviving skills of humans.

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<sup>160</sup> Although Dickinson does not specify his source, he probably became aware of research on female mitochondria through Cann, Stoneking, and Wilson’s seminal article “Mitochondrial DNA and Human Evolution” published in *Nature* in 1987.

In hindsight, Dickinson insists he never thought of having animal rights or the future of the planet at the center of his work (Cameron 298; Dickinson “A Letter” n. pag.; Dickinson “The Money” n. pag.), and that he was more interested in representing the struggle at play in adolescence between childhood and adulthood as well as the gaining of psychological independence from one’s parents (Dickinson “Masks” 163). However, several critics have shown how the question of the animal features prominently in his novel (Wilson 1546; Cameron 298; Lenz 181; Rahn 184; Graham “Exodus” 81-2; Pinset 48-9; Yampell 208) and have pointed at the fact that Dickinson uses British primatologist Jane Goodall, to whom the novel is dedicated, as a source of inspiration for his descriptions of chimpanzee behavior (Rahn 183; Graham “Exodus” 81). Likewise, some of them (Cameron 294-95; Lenz 179; Graham “Exodus” 84-5; Pinset 50-3; Yampell 217-18) have also recognized in the novel’s end, where Eva saves a group of chimpanzees by establishing a colony in a remote island, an environmental reflection about the future of humans and animals on Earth. Writer and critic Eleanor Cameron, for example, who kept a personal correspondence with Dickinson on the interpretation of *Eva*, disagrees with the author and finds the ending where the animals learn how to survive in the decaying world both satisfying and instructing for future generations (294). Cat Yampell goes a step further and sees in Eva’s triumph an assertion of the animal on top of the speciesist practices the novel denounces (208). Inspired by these interpretations, in the pages that follow, I would like to go beyond the writer’s original plan and interpretation and analyze *Eva* from the point of view of recent scholarship on animal studies nourished by ecofeminism and tangent theories.

The axis of my argument is that in Dickinson’s novel Eva’s “becoming animal” turns into the only successful answer to anthropocentric practices—overpopulation,

species extinction, consumerism, and sado-dispassionate<sup>161</sup> experimentation—that ruin life on Earth. Such “becoming” is performed through the dismantling of three dichotomous pairs in which anthropocentric assumptions of domination are based. These respond to the human/animal, the mind/spirit, and the culture/nature binaries. By performing these border crossings it can be argued that Eva becomes the metaphor of the kind of transformations humans, according to turn of the century philosophers, must undergo if they want to continue living on Earth.

In line with this last statement, several philosophers have already indicated the need to operate a change of paradigm with regard to humans’ relationship with the planet. Donna Haraway, for example, in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women* (1991) speaks of how human relations with nature need to be “social and actively relational” so that people become “multiply heterogenous, inhomogenous, accountable, and connected human agents” (3). In a similar vein, Patrick D. Murphy in *Literature, Nature and the Other* (1995) defends the substitution of hierarchical relationships with nature by the heterarchical model proposed by theorist Hazel Henderson in her article “The Wrap and the Weft: The Coming Synthesis of Eco-Philosophy and Eco-Feminism” (51). This means substituting verticality by horizontality, submission by reciprocity. Finally, philosopher Ashok Gangadean, Founder-Director of the Global Dialogue Institute that seeks to promote the dialogical powers of global reason in cultural life, speaks in his online article “The Dialogical Revolution in Global Culture” (2010) of the need to move forward if the planet is to be preserved. This implies turning from “an egocentric culture to a dialogical form of life” where “communication, compassion, mutual nurturing and care for the others and for the ecology are enhanced” (n. pag.). Thus I will contend that, in Dickinson’s novel, Eva comes to embody the ideal dialogical being proposed by

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<sup>161</sup> I borrowed this term from Val Plumwood’s use of it in *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (2002). Plumwood refers with it to a kind of science that aims at “disengagement and neutrality” (*Environmental* 41).

ecofeminism where the opposite poles—human/animal, mind/spirit, and culture/nature—are integrated. Dickinson, in sum, creates a novel that can be read as a wake-up call for humans to open up their senses to their animality. Only by doing so can we expect to continue living on Earth.

### 7.2.1. Corporeal Encounters between Humans and Animals

*Eva's* story spans for a lengthy period of time, from *Eva's* cut-short human adolescence until her death at an old age as respected matriarch of the chimpanzees known as the "Inheritors." After the accident that disables her body, a new *Eva* is engineered that comes to epitomize first and foremost the balanced integration of the human and the nonhuman animal, and later on, will embody other boundary crossings that will lead her to her full realization. From the start, the reader finds that both *Eva* and her animal recipient, *Kelly*, occupy similar positions of disempowerment. Both of them are dependent on authority figures: her parents, in *Eva's* case, and the managers of the reserve, in *Kelly's*. Both are young and female, which means they also occupy a space in the margins of society. But above all, their status as subject has been blurred the moment they have become the site of scientific experimentation, which in the case of *Eva* turns out to be especially problematic. Throughout the novel, science's dominant role will be contested not only by its actual failure to produce new "Evas"—the *Stefan/Caesar* and the *Sasha/Angel* experiments do not work—but also by its contrast with more respectful ways of looking at nonhuman animals such as those derived from female primatology and animal activism. In the novel, these new visions are represented by *Eva* and her friend *Grog* respectively, and will also prepare the ground for the blurring of boundaries previously mentioned.

One of the main topics in *Eva* is animal experimentation. The ethical consideration of using nonhuman animals in science, especially when involving

“exchanges” between human and nonhuman primates, serves to expose the contradictions inherent to science’s negotiation of the species boundary. As Yampell observes such contradictions are based on two “anxieties that maintain practices of dominion and commodification: the concern that the distinction between human-animals and animals is not as broad as human-animals would like (and need) to believe, and the fear that humanity shares more similarities and kinship with animals than differences” (216). Biotechnology has already attested the genetic closeness between humans and nonhuman primates that in the case of the chimpanzee ranges between 95 and 99.4 per cent similarity, depending on the study followed.<sup>162</sup> This discovery has only served to underline what we already knew by observation: that chimpanzees as well as other great apes serve as mirrors or, in sociologist John Sorenson’s words, “models of human behavior” (127). In general, these and other testimonies underline the difficulty of drawing a line between the ape and the human. This is a question that is at the root of the schism between those who defend human-animal continuity and those who deny it.<sup>163</sup>

In *Eva*, the species boundary, the frontier between what is considered to be human and nonhuman, is questioned. Its critique of science and its methods reveals science’s double discourse when it comes to animal use. In a kind of schizophrenic acrobatics of reason, science hesitates between the use it makes of nonhuman animals’ similarity to humans and the lower status it accords to them in the chain of beings.

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<sup>162</sup> According to Sorenson, geneticists Bailey, Balcombe and Knight argued in 2007 that human closeness with bonobos and chimpanzees was over 98 per cent. This conclusion was contested by Roy Britten who reduced it to 95 per cent on the basis of his measurement of indels (insertions or deletions of DNA sections). In another study, Morris Goodman concluded that humans and chimpanzees were 99.4 per cent identical in functionally important DNA and even insisted that they should be classified in the genus *Homo* (Sorenson 12-3).

<sup>163</sup> Very useful testimonies about the issue of science’s contradictions regarding its use of primates for research and experimentation can be found in the following proceedings: “Poor Model Man: Experimenting on Chimpanzees.” *Proceedings of the First PACE (People Against Chimpanzee Experiments) Conference on the Use of Chimpanzees in Biomedical Research. ATLA: Alternatives to Laboratory Animals* (1995).

Chimpanzees, in Eva's world, are one of the few surviving species on Earth. This is so thanks to their likeness to humans, which places them also in a very dangerous position. They are too close to humans not to preserve them, but they are also too "animal" not to use them. This approach exposes what Helen Tiffin already denounced in 2001, that the species boundary is a contingent one which shifts across what is considered as "human" and "animal" for each society in each period of its history ("Unjust" 35). Furthermore, the contrast between the successful integration of the Eva/Kelly pair against the traumatic attempts at reproducing the experiment with other human and chimpanzee subjects expose also the way in which science objectifies both the girl and the chimpanzee to achieve its purpose: mastery over nature.

Joan Pradesh, the woman doctor who operates Eva, is science's main representative in the novel. This character reproduces the archetype of the mad scientist unable to see all the wrong she is doing. She is described as an ambitious woman who is obsessed with pursuing her experiments to the last consequences. She does not seem to empathize with Eva or her family because she is more worried about the development of her discovery. She clearly exemplifies the myth of the detached scientist who has a mechanistic idea of science where any bonding would interfere with her illusion of objectivity. After Eva's promising awakening, Pradesh insists in prolonging human lives by transferring her patients' neuron memory to the bodies of chimpanzees. Her successive failures demonstrate she is wrong. Success is not assured by following the strict protocols of experimentation. Pradesh playing God only provokes a spiral of pain and the distortion of nature. She does not understand what is going on inside of her patients: those like Stefan and Sasha who cannot reach their animal recipients, or Caesar and Angel, who lie in bed like empty vessels unable to return to life. Eva, Pradesh's only successful case, is asked to find out what went wrong and becomes first-hand

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witness to the horrors of science. Such witnessing overcomes her with a profound grief for the four lives lost in the struggle to control nature:

Totally exhausted, Eva knuckled out into the control room and put on her overalls. She was very shivery. While she had been in the bedroom she had been too busy, too absorbed in trying to make contact, to understand quite what she had seen and felt. Now the horror of it gathered inside her and exploded into a howling hoot. She rocked herself to and fro in her misery. (*Eva* 133)

Eva's stark experience of science's maneuvers also uncovers the greediness of the corporations that have funded her operation. These are mainly shaper advertisers like World Fruit, the owner of Honeybear, who are under the rule of SMI a large corporation that controls the shaper, a "post-television device" (Wilson "Focus" 1946) that produces a sort of "virtual reality" (Lenz 175) that keeps people far away from the crude images of an overpopulated world where almost all species are already extinct. They are the first ones knocking at Eva's door to sign a contract that will protect her from the attention of the press. At first, Eva signs this contract in the belief that this will give her some peace and will contribute to the support of the chimpanzees at the reserve. However, she will soon learn that she is no more than a piece of corporation property devoid of personhood, and that the animals she cares for are no more than repair parts for the humans who can no longer use their own bodies. As a matter of fact, she experiences an erasure of the self the moment she becomes a piece of property in the hands of the forces of consumerist society and instrumental science. This legal episode where she is faced with being treated as a property issue alienates her even more than her surgery because while her operation, the neuron transfer, meant a physical loss, her contract with the SMI leads her to a loss of subjectivity that she will have to recuperate through the integration of her human-animal identity, gaining independence from her parents and the corporation, and becoming the leader of her chimpanzee family.

Interestingly enough, only in Eva's case is the experiment with "neuron memory" successful. In the rest of cases the mutual rejection between animal and

human is so intense that it becomes impossible for them to coexist in the same body. Eva's transformation is successful because her childhood among the chimpanzees of the reserve has acted on a subconscious level making her recognize the animals as kin. This allows her to embrace difference and cross the gap between the human and the nonhuman becoming thus a bridge between the two. However, in the case of the rest of patients, Stefan and Sasha, this will turn out to be extremely difficult due to their deep refusal to accept the animal self. Indeed, these images of rejection and acceptance become a meaningful metaphor of the conflicting relationship humans have with their animality. Thus while Eva is described in terms that suggest an absolute theriophilic<sup>164</sup> sense or intelligence, the rest of the characters in general except for Grog, her animal activist friend, are portrayed as being driven by the feeling Barry Lopez has called "theriophobia" or the loath of the animal, at the heart of which, according to him, "is the fear of one's own nature" (140).<sup>165</sup>

In this sense, the first character for whom acceptance of the new Eva is difficult is Eva's mother. She is by Eva's bedside when she awakes from her long sleep. Her presence is meaningful in the context of Eva's awakening because, as literary critic Millicent Lenz contends, this awakening can be interpreted as a rebirth (174) so her image adds to this symbol of a new beginning for the girl. But Eva can sense in her mother's voice that things are not right. There is something that troubles her mother. Eva thinks at first that her mother is simply worried for her who is lying in bed unable

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<sup>164</sup> The adjective theriophilic comes from the noun *theriophilia* which is the result of combining the Greek words *therion* (beast; wild or feral animal) with *philos* (loving; dear). According to Rod Preece, this is a term that was coined by George Boas in the first half of the twentieth century to describe "the notion that the life of a nonhuman animal is in some manner preferable to, more fulfilling than, that of a human being" (3).

<sup>165</sup> Lopez is not the only author who has dealt with the feeling of uneasiness at the animal. Raymond Corbey in his chapter entitled "The Monstrous Within" refers to the fear the beast-in-man stereotype inspired through the nineteenth and twentieth century thanks especially to its use by psychoanalysis (75-87). Likewise, Sorenson in the section "Thinking about Apes" acknowledges the feelings of both rejection and appreciation that nonhuman primates' similarity has evoked since their discovery by the Western world in the sixteenth century (34-69).

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to move after her coma, but once she is given a mirror and can see what she looks like she understands the cause of her mother's discomfort. As Eva reasons, her change into a chimpanzee forces her mother to regard as daughter a creature she cannot naturally recognize as such:

Poor Mom. It was much harder for her. When you're born you get imprinted with your mother's face, and she with yours. It happens with a lot of animals, some more strongly than others. With humans it's about middling, but the bond is still there, deep inside of you, hard to alter. Eva still had the same Mom she'd always known, but Mom had this new thing, this stranger, this changeling. She couldn't help yearning in her depths for her own daughter, the one with the long black hair and blue eyes and the scar on her left earlobe where a chimp had bitten her when she was three. However much she taught herself to think of this new Eva as that daughter, it wasn't the same as feeling she was. (*Eva* 44)

Eva's father, on the contrary, is not that much troubled by Eva's transformation. He is a scientist and manages to detach himself from his feelings, and see the benefits in Eva's operation. It is not only the fact of prolonging his daughter's life but also the triumph of science imposing itself to the laws of nature, as well as setting foot in the world of the chimpanzees through Eva's first-hand experience of it. He even seems to enjoy whom Eva has become, but he is a primatologist and his scientific mind enjoys being able to play with categories, changing one into the other, turning *human* into *animal*, having control. Actually, Eva herself at some point recalls that "she'd been one of Dad's research projects" when at a young age he decided to bring her up among the chimpanzees of the Pool and used her, before she was three, "to help him understand how the chimps' minds were working" (*Eva* 19). Eva's change becomes almost an advantage for him in his career, that of having an insider in the group of chimpanzees.

Regarding the response of the people in general to Eva, that of adults seems to be governed by two opposing views, attraction and rejection, which responds to a kind of morbid fascination for whom is perceived as a freak of nature. Such a contradictory inclination coincides with Yi Fu Tuan's analysis in *Dominance and Affection: The Making of Pets* (1984) where he speaks of the human fascination for "everything abnormal" such as people with any physical or mental disability, people of a different

ethnic group or exotic animals (78-9; 133-34; 75-6). Eva becomes the object of everyone's curiosity. Journalists cram her doorway and she is obliged to sign a contract with the SMI to ensure her safety. She becomes a shaper celebrity featuring in commercials and interviews. Once she even ends up kissing, chimp style, the famous shaper presenter Dirk Ellan in an act of defiance that causes the man's repulsion for the daring "girl chimp," as can be seen in the following lines:

Deliberately she reached out, gripped the immaculate collar and hauled him toward her. He yelled. She heard a shout of "Eva!" from Dad, but by then she was giving Mr. Ellan a kiss, not a proper open-mouthed chimp kiss but using her big lips to produce a real smacker, maximum vacuum. He was still trying to push her clear when she let go. He backed off while she sat laughing in the nook of the frame. He managed a sort of laugh too, but she could see the fright and fury in his eyes, just as she could feel the various reactions from the dimness beyond the camera lights, pleasure and alarm and excitement all mixed together. (*Eva* 52)

Children, however, offer a very different response to Eva. On the first day at school after her operation "the smaller ones [are] into a craze for imitating her voice, fluttering their fingers across imaginary keyboards on their chests and then speaking" (*Eva* 75). Eva realizes that "kids [are] more sensible about fame than adults" (*Eva* 75). They accept her with naturalness and this vanishes Eva's fear to be a stranger.

Finally, another case worth mentioning is that of her human friend Grog, Giorgio Kennedy, who seems to regard Eva with total naturalness from the start, something Eva gleefully notices as "nothing in anything he said, in tone or glance or gesture, that suggested that he didn't find it perfectly normal to be talking to her" (*Eva* 103). Grog is the son of a shaper celebrity, Mimi Venturi, and knows the corporate world from within. He has the knowledge and the social and economic status to afford being a rebel. He thinks the world is doomed to end if animals are left to die and that is why he belongs to a group of animal activists. This situates him outside the theriophobic context abovementioned. Exposure to animal rights theory has made him aware of the connections between the lives humans lead and the state of the planet. He is a living example of how contact and exposure to animal related issues can have long-

lasting changes in the way one lives. Perhaps, as a consequence of this, Grog is the one character that becomes fundamental in Eva's life as the facilitator of her own conversion and final detachment from her family to become the leader of the chimpanzees of the reserve.

Eva, on her part, seems to be better equipped for accepting the animal within and outside herself than the rest of the characters. She is able to cross the human/animal boundary thanks to several factors. The first one is that from a very early age she has learned to see the chimpanzees as family. This probably erased any trace of theriophobia in her and, as Cameron argues, makes Dickinson's premise feasible by making possible for the reader to believe in Eva's transformation (292). The second element is her young age which makes it easier for her to feel close to animals. In fact, children's closeness to animals is a traditional topic in both children's and young adult literature. From a cultural perspective, psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim and literary critic David L. Russell, for example, in their respective studies of fairy tales, acknowledge that children have a natural affinity for animals (Bettelheim Loc 5998; Russell 223). While Gene Myers, working from a psychological standpoint, deals with the implications of this relationship and finds it is key for the development of the self in his study *Children and Animals: Social Development and Our Connections to Other Species* (1998). And lastly, the third factor has to do with Eva being highly empathic and compassionate to others. As Yampell explains, she "is one of the few human-animals in the novel to understand that life is sacred regardless of species" (209). She thinks that every life deserves respect and she is capable of suffering with the *other* because she identifies herself not only with the chimpanzees of the reserve with whom she was brought up, but also with the animal or human who is lying in a hospital after science has used her body. She knows what being used feels like. She is hurting because

of being forced to choose and she manages to overcome this conflict by making peace with her two bodily images.

In order to express such integration, Dickinson provides the reader with two revealing literary motifs in the first part of the book: the girl chimpanzee's dreams and the presence of what she calls "the ghost." Eva's dreams featured in Dickinson's original plotline as a device that would allow his character to move through time. As he declares, he needed "[s]ome kind of coma. A girl in a coma, some time in the future, dipping in and out of consciousness – she would be somehow at the end of human time, but in touch with its beginnings" (Dickinson "Masks" 163). In the final version of the novel, Eva's dreams serves not so much to move through time, but to show a progression where the unconscious activity of Kelly's mind is little by little intertwined with that of Eva. Hence, the more "Eva" this new human-animal becomes, the less the reader finds descriptions of the trees the chimpanzee Kelly longed for. Eva's intellectual mind is aware of this process:

But the dream itself was changing. It was Eva's fault. Sometimes even in the middle of the dream she was aware of herself as a human mind, an alien in the forest. She had thought about the dream, knowing everything the human Eva knew, so now as she reached and clambered and rested she carried the human knowledge with her.

The simplest change was that sometimes the dreams had stories. [...] The one she called Kelly's dream hadn't been like that. It had been simple, until Eva had brought her knowledge into it. She would never have it like that again. (*Eva* 30)

This process reveals the unconscious workings of her mind trying to adjust to her divided self. On the same level, although separated from her oneiric activity, is her realization of a third self that accompanies both the new Eva—a composite of Eva and Kelly—and the old one. This is Dickinson's second motif. It responds to what Eva refers to as the "ghost," "the one who'd come in between" the old and the new Eva after the accident. She describes it as "a sort of nothing person, a sleeping mind in a smashed body" (*Eva* 32). This sort of ghostly Eva is the one that retains a memory of the girl Eva used to be. The "ghost" lives in Eva's unconscious mind where lies an inborn rejection

to the animal shared by all humans. It is in this “unconscious level” abovementioned where “the danger lies” and as her father explains:

It is the danger zone for two reasons—first, as I say, because you can’t persuade it by rational means not to reject your new body, and second, because it is itself the main interface with that body. When you think, you think with a human mind. When you blink, you blink with a chimpanzee’s involuntary reaction. Your own unconscious mind lies along that border. It is not, of course, as simple as that, but that will have to do. (*Eva* 27)

### 7.2.2. “[Opening Her] Senses to the Sensuous”:<sup>166</sup> Reflections on Mind and Body

The last quote presents the difficulties inherent in the dichotomy traditionally established between mind and body which run parallel to those of the human/animal pair. In his novel Dickinson questions a form of rationality that creates a fracture within the self between mind and body, and also, in the sphere of technoscience, promotes models of knowledge that, in Val Plumwood’s words, hyper-separate “the subject of knowledge from its object” (*Environmental* 45). However, Eva also manages to deconstruct this opposition through her progressive awareness of her new body. Traditionally, the body has been viewed as a slave to the dictating mind, the brain, where the rational activity resides, being the center at which decisions are taken and these affecting the way in which the body machine reacts. Such Cartesian approach to the issue of the mind and body divide has been questioned lately by an epistemological turn taking place in several disciplines. Some strands of neuroscience, psychology and philosophy use now the very suggestive concept of the “embodied mind.” Therefore, although Cartesian ontology defines humans as a mind or reason encapsulated within a body—matter—which does not count as anything more than a container or recipient, phenomenologists and cognitive scientists defend that *we are our bodies*. Our perception of any given situation is mediated by the body and therefore so is our reaction to it. As philosopher Mark L. Johnson puts it:

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<sup>166</sup> Abram 3.

Human beings are creatures of the flesh. What we can experience and how we make sense of what we experience depend on the kinds of bodies we have and on the ways we interact with the various environments we inhabit. It is through our embodied interactions that we inhabit a world, and it is through our bodies that we are able to understand and act within this world with varying degrees of success. (81)

Likewise, linguist George Lakoff and Johnson himself argue in *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999) that, “What is important is not just that we have bodies and that thought is somehow embodied. What is important is that the peculiar nature of our bodies shapes our very possibilities for conceptualization and categorization” (19). Thus, it can be said that there is more to the body than meets the eye. The mind is profoundly connected to the body, so much so that any organic alteration affects the subject’s behavior and perception, as neuropsychiatrist Oliver W. Sacks observes in works such as *The Man Who Mistook Her Wife for a Hat* (1985) or *An Anthropologist on Mars* (1995). But, actually, what is more fascinating is that by displacing the focus of attention from the mind to the body, the concept of human-animal continuity acquires a stronger validity.

Customarily, the nonhuman animal has been identified with the body and its myriad of urges, and although human-animal continuity is generally defended on the bases of physiological similarities as well as a certain degree of sentience, the fact that now there is a wide acknowledgement of how our conduct is determined by our corporeality places both, mind and body, not in space of opposition or confrontation, but in a zone of cooperation and dependence where an intricate network weaves them together. Eva’s character therefore acquires another dimension when looked through the lens of the concept of the embodied mind, since it can be argued that by transcending this new frontier of the mind with the experience of her body, Eva becomes in a literal sense animal.

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In this respect, the expression “becoming animal” is charged with potential. It is usually associated with philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s use of it in chapter ten of *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980), which they entitled “Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible,” but as philosophy professor Alain Beaulieu remarks (73), it had already been introduced in chapter four of their book on Kafka where they explain it as follows:

To become animal is to participate in movement, to stake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves, to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialized flux, of non-signifying signs. ... There is no longer anything but movements, vibrations, thresholds in a deserted matter: animals, mice, dogs, apes, cockroach are distinguished only by this or that threshold, this or that vibration, by the particular underground tunnel of the rhizome...these tunnels are underground intensities. (Deleuze and Guattari *Kafka* 13)

Later on they will develop the theme of “becoming-animal” in *A Thousand Plateaus* as part of their project to overcome dualisms. In this sense they insist in making clear that becoming-animal does not consist in an imitation or an identification with the animal, nor is it a dream or a phantasy. What matters is “the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes” (*Thousand Plateaus* 238). Thus, they insist in the process itself and not so much in the final result and by doing so, they develop a theory where, as philosophy professor James Urpeth argues, there is an “insistence on the priority of becoming over being, of the kinetic and verbal over the static and nominal” (102). This emphasis on process strikes a chord with the novel under analysis especially when dealing with the transcendence of the mind/body boundary since in *Eva* mind and body become one but double, and this is accomplished through the creation of what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as a *zone de voisinage* or zone of proximity where the human—*Eva*—cannot be distinguished from the animal—*Kelly*—and vice versa. Such a zone is accomplished through an erasure of boundaries between mind and body and is made possible through *Eva*’s new awareness of her body.

In this respect, inspired by the ideas developed by the European philosophers, American thinker David Abram develops his own version of “becoming animal” in his work *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology* (2010). In his book, he writes of “becoming animal” as “a way of thinking enacted as much by the body as by the mind” thanks to which it is possible to “[become] more deeply human by acknowledging, affirming, and growing into our animality” (10). Abram’s approach to the *other* consists in a bodily response to its presence which ultimately leads to a spiritual experience of the sensuous and thus to an epiphany of oneness. As he explains:

The empathic propensity of our body is in large part a consequence of the differentiation and divergence of our several senses. For it’s only by turning our bodily attention toward *another* that we experience the convergence and reassembly of our separate senses into a dynamic unity. Only by entering into relation with other do we effect our integration and coherence. Such others might be people, or they might be wetlands, or works of art, or snakes slithering through the stubbled grass. Each thing, attentively pondered, gathers our senses together in a unique way. This juncture, this conjoining of divergent senses *over there*, in the other, leads us to experience that other as a center of experience in its own right, and hence as another subject, another source of powers. (254; emphasis in original)

Abram’s interest in animality derives from his scholarly position as a phenomenologist concerned with conscious perception, but his conclusions are not unique to his field in particular. Other scholars not necessarily ascribed to phenomenology have come to similar interpretations in their dealings with animals. In these cases, the body has always acted as the threshold to the mindful experience of animality Abram describes. This is so, for example, in the case of psychologist Kenneth Shapiro who proposes a three-pronged strategy for capturing the perspective of the animals. This strategy is based on firstly, assessing the experience of other animals by sensing or empathizing with the bodily movement or intentions of the animal, what he calls “kinesthetic empathy”; secondly, adding to this the “social constructions,” that is, “the cultural meanings of the animal”; and thirdly, considering the “history” or biography of the specific animal as understood by the human investigator (“Understanding” 42). Shapiro applies this model to his interaction with his dog Sabaka whom he adopted at a very

young age from an animal shelter. He describes how, while they play, the establishment of a “kinesthetic empathy” is made possible thanks to a state where his rational mind is tuned off in favor of connecting with the “bodily moves” of Sabaka. This, according to him, implies “a leave-take of the self” meaning not only “putting oneself in the place of the other” but for a moment, “if only focally, [forgetting oneself] and directly [sensing] what [the *other* is] experiencing” (“Understanding” 43). As we can see, the corporeal in Shapiro’s model takes precedence over the mental. Only by bodily connecting with the *self* and with the *other* will the investigator be able to make his exploration of the cultural and historical meaning of the animal fruitful. As Shapiro argues, at the end of his article, voicing the ideas of American psychotherapist and philosopher Eugene T. Gendlin<sup>167</sup> and exposing the traditional dialectic between the human and nonhuman animal way of knowing:

nonhuman animals live more exclusively in a prelinguistic region where meaning is and remains implicit, embodied, and more consistently enacted directly. Whereas signification for us more typically involves a complex dialectic between signifiers and the signified, we also live in and have access to a prelinguistic bodily region and, in fact, arguably must do so to experience meaning (“Understanding” 45).

A further enlightening experience of bodily tuning towards empathy and final attunement between mind and body is described by primatologist Barbara Smuts in “Encounters with Animal Minds” (2005). Smuts spent two years studying a group of baboons in a rocky outcropping known as Eburru Cliffs located in the Great Rift Valley near Lake Naivasha (Kenya). In her article, she talks of her experiences with the baboon “troop” she studied and how these led her to develop a sense of being one with the group, as well as new insights on her relationship with the nonhuman animal world that she incorporated to her everyday life with her dog Safi, a German shepherd-Belgian sheepdog mix. She argues that close experiences with animals, wild or domestic, can

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<sup>167</sup> Eugene T. Gendlin is an American psychologist and philosopher famous for the development of the so-called “philosophy of the implicit” and his contributions to the field of experiential psychotherapy.

change the human's sense of self erasing the species boundary and crystallizing into a spiritual awakening to the *other*. This process is activated through imitation of the bodily responses of the *other*, and through such mimicking, similar to the one described when dealing with Shapiro's use of "kinesthetic empathy," a merging with the animal *other* is reached. As a matter of fact, Smuts explains how this mimicking had the virtue of producing an internal change in her which allowed her to finely tune with the group of baboons so that, at times, she would know what needed to be done without further warning:

I sensed the mood of the troop as soon as I arrived in the morning. I could usually tell whether we were going to travel short or long distances that day. Often I anticipated exactly where we would go, without knowing how I did it. Even though no one had yet changed direction, I knew when we were about to head for the sleeping cliffs. (300)

This revealing experience led Smuts to approach her life at home with her dog Safi in a very different way. A way where the life of the mind is enriched by that of the body merging in one and with it opening possibilities of synchronization with other beings. As such she describes her morning rituals with Safi as a series of "synchronous movements expressing [their] emotional alignment" (304). Smuts also asserts that empathy is also required for connecting with the individual animal, not only with the pack. For this, one must try to understand the *other's* needs and desires.

In a more systematic way, Smuts also concludes that, in the relationship between *self* and *other*, she has experienced a "natural hierarchy," which she divides in seven levels, where this merging between human and animal, body and mind, occurs. This hierarchy moves from a mere instinctual response to the presence of the *other*, as when a deer startled by our presence in the wild runs away, to more complex exchanges taking place between species. Thus, Smuts describes level seven of this hierarchy as a state where individuals experience a merging into "a single being or a single awareness" (307). This relinquishing of the *self* to be one with the *other* is very similar to the

experiences described by Abram and Shapiro. They can similarly be understood in line with Deleuze and Guattari's statement in *A Thousand Plateaus* with regard to the body and its affects:<sup>168</sup>

We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what it 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. (257)

In Eva's case, her new body means both challenges and possibilities. Verbal communication is only possible through her use of a speaking device, a keyboard or "voice box,"<sup>169</sup> designed by her father to allow her speak with her former human voice. As a result of this, Dr. Adamson can be interpreted as a symbol for human language, for the word as well as for science. He comes to represent the rule of the logos over the body. However, separating herself from language and logos, her daughter Eva finds a kind of exhilaration in her new body that she had never experienced before. Through it she discovers "the sheer pleasure of movement, the feeling of naturalness" as well as its "rightness," "its beauty and energy":

It was glorious to be moving like this, reaching, grasping, swinging across. She knew she was still only about half strong, despite the exercises—when she was fully fit a grown man would have trouble holding her—but now what mattered was the sheer pleasure of movement, the feeling of naturalness. This was what these arms, these fingers, were for. It mattered because it allowed her to understand the rightness of this new body, to feel its beauty and energy... (Eva 48)

However, this chimpanzee body also carries within itself old perceptions of things that impose new patterns of behavior in the young girl. After the surgery, she complains, for instance, of having several "sudden surges of annoyance" a day, something she never

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<sup>168</sup> The term "affect" originated in Baruch Spinoza's work *Ethics* (1677) and was later used by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari who were inspired by Henri Bergson's use of it. Tracing back to its origins, Patricia T. Clough in the introduction to *The Affective Turn* (2007) defines affects as "bodily capacities to affect and be affected or the augmentation or diminution of a body's capacity to act, to engage, to connect" (2).

<sup>169</sup> By including this device in his novel Dickinson hints at some of the ape language experiments of the 1960s and 1970s. Actually, according to Adrian Desmond, a voice box was created in 1966 by David Premack and Arthur Schwartz. This was designed as "a mechanical voice-box controlled by a joystick that the ape could operate manually," which would eventually "be miniaturized into an electronic device strapped to its waist or wrist" (qtd. in Armstrong 207).

experienced before (*Eva* 14). Also when faced with the kind of situations that would be suffered as stressful by a chimpanzee, she reacts like one: her pelt bristles and her mouth opens in a grin of anxiety. Such is her reaction, for example, when she finds a crowd of journalists that are waiting outside her door to interview her:

She didn't come down at once. She felt safer crouched up there away from the floor. The voices from beyond the door made her pelt prickle, and her throat and lips worked involuntarily, wanting to shout back. Though she couldn't hear any words, the voices still had a meaning—they were hunting cries, the calls of a pack baying outside the lair of its prey. Of course, if they'd been let in the people out there wouldn't have hurt her, only asked stupid questions. That was what her mind told her. But her body told her they were enemy. It was an effort to climb down and go back into the living room. (*Eva* 64)

But, interestingly, it is precisely Eva's transfer to a chimpanzee body what sets in motion her coming of age. Eva undergoes a progressive transformation from the pretty human girl she once was to the girl-chimpanzee hybrid that eventually will bloom into the mature, integrated matriarch of a new race, the "inheritors." This metamorphosis starts in the body and from the space of corporality ends up inundating Eva's self in ways similar to the experiences described by the previous authors. In fact, I believe it can be argued that Eva's transformation happens in accordance with a three-stage process that begins in her body and ultimately takes hold of her whole psyche. The first phase involves a revalorization of physicality. The body thus becomes an instrument of communication with the chimpanzees at the Pool. This is very clearly exemplified in Eva's first encounter with them after her operation. The first thing Eva notices is, that looked through chimp eyes, the Reserve Section of the Pool looks weird (*Eva* 87). Then, the sounds of the chimpanzees awake in her Kelly's urge to call for help from which she refrains not wanting to single herself out as a reckless female who the pack may identify with trouble. Eva needs to call the group's attention but not like that. She decides to take advantage of the chimpanzees' curiosity and play some tricks on one of the youngest in the group, Abel. She ties some knots to a plastic soda bottle that she pulls in and out in front of him. She realizes then that her body does not exactly

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respond to the demands of her human mind: “The knots were surprisingly difficult, not just because the chimp thumb is so short and awkward but because her fingers didn’t seem to understand what was expected of them. It was like tying knots in a dream” (*Eva* 91). By getting Abel’s attention, Eva also manages to attract the attention of the leader of the group, Beth, Kelly’s sister. That is when Eva starts using what she knows about chimpanzee language, a combination of “grimace and gesture and touch” (*Eva* 92). She greets Beth submissively by crouching low and giving a series of brief pants and although the real chimpanzee seems to notice she is somehow different, they end up grooming each other, a clear sign of acceptance that is described as a pleasurable experience: “Sitting in the sun, being properly groomed by a real chimp who did it because she wanted to and not just because she was supposed to, was the most glorious sensation. Eva had never felt closer to anyone” (*Eva* 94). Eva’s chimpanzee body enables her to enter into a communicative world of gesturing and touching which is as significant to her, if not more, than the human world of words in which her father has managed to reintroduce her thanks to her “voice box.” Actually, the latter seems to her soon devoid of the subtleties of chimpanzee language. In fact, Eva often comes to the conclusion that no matter how hard she tries humans just do not understand, they are somehow deaf to the more-than-human world, blind to its signals.

But, over time Eva enters into a new stage in her relationship with the chimpanzees. This second phase can be explained as a stage of empathy which begins with her own acceptance of Kelly’s body demands on her, progresses towards tuning into the needs of the individuals that make up the group at the Pool, and culminates in a sort of mystical connection with the more-than-human world. It is true that, thanks to her early life as a human among chimpanzees, Eva had developed a feeling of empathy towards animals in general. But after her surgery, she has to cope with a more difficult

challenge: accepting what remains of Kelly in the chimpanzee's former body that has now become Eva's surrogate body. She is aware of the fact that only by embracing the animal, she will be able to survive:

Eva gazed at the people, full of sense of not belonging. She was as different from all of them as if she'd come from another planet, especially so today. Her outburst in the morning had left her both alarmed and exhilarated, which was so strange but she thought she knew why. [...] Now there was Kelly too—not the old Kelly either. She was gone, with all her memories, all her sense of belonging and being herself in a particular time and place. She would never come back. But still she had left part of herself behind, her nature, her instincts, still rooted deep into the body into which the human Eva had been grafted. That was the Kelly Eva herself had invited back across the shadowy border between mind and brain. She couldn't do that and then say okay, but I don't want all of her. I'll have the lightening reactions but not the tantrums, the warmth and fun but not the sullen hours, the sympathy but not the mischief. They were Eva too now. She couldn't bottle them away... (*Eva* 79)

Furthermore, later, while in the Reserve, she is confronted with the need to negotiate her status in the group. This is not exempt of consequences as when she tries to help the group subdue a male, Tatters, and ends up being punished by the alpha female, Beth, for having acted on her own:

Eva sat trembling with shock, but she knew she shouldn't have been surprised. Beth must have seen the attack on Tatters and known what had happened; and though she had joined in driving Tatters up the tree, she still couldn't approve of a junior female acting with that kind of initiative. So as soon as she'd recovered from her shakes, Eva went and found Beth and gave her a very formal submissive bow and pant, just to keep things straight. Beth, of course, pretended not to notice but was clearly pleased. This was something Eva could see and feel, but the researchers in the observation posts couldn't, though they'd have most of the other details of the fight recorded. (*Eva* 124)

But the time and experiences shared with the chimpanzees serve to heighten Eva's sense of empathy for the members of her new family, and even create closer ties with some of them. This happens with Sniff, a male chimpanzee who willingly cooperates with her at key moments in the story and with whom Eva will decide to mate after their escape to the island of St. Hilaire.

Eva is also fascinated by the clear-cut rules governing the group. There are no misunderstandings among chimpanzees if one knows how to behave; however, humans seem to complicate things and do not respect each other or other species. Eva now prefers the predictability of the communication among chimpanzees, and this realization

helps her to feel even closer to the group and to make up her mind to follow Grog's plan to create a free colony of chimpanzees led by herself in a remote island. Likewise, this awareness motivates in her a stronger sense of unity with them.

This merging with the group constitutes the third and last phase of Eva's progression into becoming animal. Corporeality leads to the development of empathy and from there there is only one step to merging with the animal group. No words are then required, only opening oneself to communion with the group. This is clearly facilitated by their successful return to nature. In what remains of the wild, more than anywhere else, Eva manages to transcend all boundaries and become one with the group sharing the realization of their dream, the one Kelly had passed on to Eva:

Eva sat at the edge of the group and watched them. Deliberately she lived in the moment, refusing to think about what lay ahead. She could not imagine that she would ever be so happy again, so filled with tingling, sparkling peace. Of course it was too hot for scampering around, though the spray from the stream helped, but she could feel that there was more to the stillness of the chimps than that. It was something shared, like a song, the wonder, the amazement, the deep content, the sense of having come home. She did not have to guess but knew, because she could feel the awareness going to and fro among them, shared and real, that they understood what had happened. The part that mattered, anyway. All of them, wide awake, were remembering and recognizing the dream. If nothing else happened, or if everything she and Grog had planned went wrong, this hour, this noon, would have been worthwhile. (*Eva* 165)

### 7.2.3. Rewriting Creation: From Man the Hunter to Woman the Tree Planter

The last boundary crossed by Eva is that separating culture and nature. This transgression starts at home, moves to the shaper society, enters the reserve and finishes by creating a space—the island of St. Hilaire where Eva founds her colony—where the erasure of boundaries permits the regeneration of the planet. This means the salvation not of humans but of the chimpanzees, the species to which the new Eva, the integrated Eva/Kelly pair, transmits her knowledge of survival skills, and manages with it to fuse culture and nature in a new race.

At the beginning of her life outside the hospital Eva lives at home with her parents. Although their initial plan is to go back to their former lives as soon as

possible, the revelation of Eva's existence ignites a craze that will turn the girl's world upside down. As Lenz sustains, Dickinson's novel responds to the conventions of any novel of initiation where there is a protagonist who as a child must set herself outside society in order to define her identity; as a consequence, she goes on a journey that can be identified with the experience of the underworld, and later comes back turned into the redeeming force of the society she left behind (174). With this framework in mind, I think it is possible to argue that Eva defines her personality precisely by fighting against the impositions coming from outside and that such a struggle is especially meaningful when dealing with the deconstruction of the culture/nature binary because it uncovers the sources of such constructions. These obstacles spring mainly from her parents, science in the guise of neuroscience and primatology, and the corporation SMI. Each and every one of these institutions constructs her in ways that disempower her, but she will prevail in the end achieving her own independent identity.

Her parents see the new Eva as the substitute of their daughter, but find difficult to recognize in her the girl with pretty looks they could boast of. Her father, Dr. Adamson, a primatologist, also regards her as a living project that may help sustain the loss-making animal reserve where he works, and SMI, the company that owns the rights on Eva, deals with her as it would with any commodity. Nevertheless, Eva, in order to become whole, will fight back the constraints forced on her by these forces. In doing so, she will also test the borders between culture and nature within her family and in a capitalist culture where the subject is easily turned into object.

It is clear that Eva's accident and following operation challenge the limits of acceptance any parent or adult will possibly be willing to endure. As a matter of fact, two critics, Eleanor Cameron (1994) and Betty Carter (2001), have paid attention to the reception of the book by both adults and children and notice how while an adult

readership, mainly a female one, easily come to sympathize with the feelings of discomfort of Eva's mother, children tend to enjoy the story mostly as an adventure and to agree with Eva's resolution to break away from her family and society at the end of the novel. When it comes to the actual characters of the novel, her mother, Lil, finds it difficult to relate to a "furry creature" in whom, at first sight, she can hardly find any trace of her daughter (*Eva* 7). That is why, as an attempt to recuperate old Eva she embraces the role of acculturating force in Eva's life, as can be inferred from her insistence on dressing her—she even makes her a pair of overalls, later branded "Evaralls"—, her dislike for Eva's ever so often visits to the Pool, or her abhorrence to the possibility of Eva mating with a chimpanzee. Eva, on her part, will end up dismissing her mother's wishes and following her own call to live with her chimpanzee family.

Dr. Adamson while also longing for his daughter displays a more practical, down-to-earth reaction to the new Eva. He epitomizes the forces of culture as expressed in the practice of primatology, a field known for the diversity of disciplines at play in it. In contrast with his wife, he does not seem to be troubled by the girl chimpanzee once accepted her daughter in its human form is not meant to return. He has worked with apes all his life and as a scientist is intrigued by the many possibilities opened up by Pradesh's experiment. It is true that he misses her daughter of whose looks he was so proud that he used to "keep snapshots of her in his wallet, and portrait photos in his office" (*Eva* 26), but now he regards Eva in what seems an utilitarian way as he did when she was a child and decided to raise her among the chimpanzees of the Pool. In Eva, Dr. Adamson sees the opportunity to have the perfect field researcher, someone with the ideal camouflage to be taken for a chimpanzee and the means to report on her findings thanks to the keyboard he has designed for her. The only problem is that Eva's

loyalties will veer towards the pack and her mission to save them from human foolishness.

It just seems that a human family is not enough for the new Eva. In general, Eva's parents conform to the stereotypes typically associated with their gender. Her mother is warm, nurturing, understanding and always places her family first in her list of priorities. Her father is more distant, self-centered and is questionable whether it is his family or his career what comes first in his life. However, they are both dumbfounded by the consequences of Eva's accident, especially by the fact that they now have to get used to the idea of raising a chimpanzee-looking daughter. Both parents indeed long for Eva's good looks that are not to return, but they try to forget about their "natural" reaction of abhorrence of the girl-chimpanzee by focusing on her acculturation. In this sense, it can be argued that both parents, clearly on the side of "culture," override their "natural" feelings as parents and by doing so oppose nature. So while Eva's mother tries to prevent her from the realization of her new self by clearly rejecting the possibility of crossbreeding, her father humanizes her, and so separates her from nature, by returning her human voice, stored in the "voice box," to her. This facilitates, in principle, Eva's reintroduction to the world of culture, of logos, from which her construction as nonhuman animal excludes her. However, in the end, Eva, distressed by the commodification imposed on her through family, research, and economic interests, will opt for the chimpanzees who store the potential to a better living on Earth. This will drive her to enact her friend Grog's plan of regeneration for the planet.

Although, it is true that, for a time, Eva resents her hybridness, being neither fully human nor animal, she finally manages to find a balance at home, at school and in her life as shaper celebrity. This balance, however, is altered by two factors: the impact

of her relationship with animal activist Grog Kennedy and her frustration with humans. Grog meets Eva in a TV studio and his easiness at dealing with her uniqueness causes a very positive impression on her. From then on, they become soul mates. Grog is the person that will, in a very committed way, raise Eva's awareness of the grim future that awaits the chimpanzees if in human hands. In his opinion, humans are a lost cause and have doomed the planet by selfishly conquering every space and consuming all its resources. This self-centeredness leads to humanity's downfall. People have become passive pessimists who have given up on remedying the course of things. Curiously, their neglect of their home, Earth, is backfiring on them in ways that resonate with Lovelock's last theory of the revenge of Gaia (2006) which implies that in an effort to sustain life, planetary conditions might lead to human extinction. Grog explains the situation to Eva like this:

The trouble with us humans is we keep forgetting we're animals. You know what happens when an animal population expands beyond what the set up will bear? Nature finds ways of cutting them back. Usually it's plain starvation, but even when there's food to go around something gets triggered inside them. They stop breeding or they eat their own babies or peck one another to death—there's all sort of ways. Us too. It's in us. We can't escape it. A lot of it's been going on already for years without anyone noticing, a sort of retreat, a backing out, nine-tenths of the world's population holed up in their apartments twenty four-hours a day watching the shaper. But it's starting to move. I can feel it. There's a real crash coming, and us being humans, whatever it is, we're going to overdo it. You know what that means for your chimps? (Eva 114)

Fortunately, Grog has a plan in which Eva plays a very significant role as the leader of the group of chimpanzees he aims to reintroduce to nature. Grog knows that one of the advantages of Eva's situation of betweenness<sup>170</sup> is her ability to interpret the chimpanzees as well as mediate between them and the humans. As such, for example, when one of the chimpanzees performing in one of Eva's commercials for Honeybear gets out of control, she manages to mediate among the chimpanzees and make sense of the situation:

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<sup>170</sup> Cathy Smith in "Between-Ness: Theory and Practice within the Margins of Excess" defines betweenness as "that which is neither one state nor the other but a zone of blurring in-between" (131).

By the time the five minutes were up they were a group, understanding one another and fitting comfortably together. Bobo was the official boss and got the little signs of respect and submission, but he knew and so did the others that the sensible thing was to follow Eva's lead. She was the one who'd settled things, calmed Bobo down by giving him what he wanted but didn't know how to get, calmed the humans down too, and stopped their screeching, made the mad world sensible for a moment, and known the signal to send the dominant human back down the ladder. (*Eva* 101)

This role evolves with time thanks to Grog's support, and turns her into the voice of the animals. Eva's function as "ape spokesperson for the nonhuman world" or "animal ambassador" can also be found in other contemporary works of fiction which have apes as protagonists as Philip Armstrong has already noticed (213). But most significantly Eva also comes to represent, as Lenz contends, an "Earth Mother figure" in a novel she describes as a "twenty-first century version of the pastoral" (177). This is the reason why I think it can also be argued that by becoming the caregiver for the chimpanzee group—*nature*—and bringing back to them the survival skills—*culture*—they were deprived of in captivity, Eva can also be interpreted as a character where culture and nature merge.

At the beginning of the book, Eva's potential as the site of the culture-nature fusion is acknowledged indirectly by her father who theorizes about the consequences for chimpanzees of having "a chimp mother with human intelligence living in the wild" with them (*Eva* 83). She would be able to teach the chimpanzees survival skills that they do not possess—how to make fire, how to tie knots—and with time this would mean breeding "dexterity and intelligence" into the chimp gene, which Eva's father defines as "a gift from humanity" (*Eva* 83). Dickinson himself signals in this same direction when he comments on his intention to rewrite Eva's myth by using a human girl turned chimpanzee who cannot pass on her genes but only her "knowledge," the culture of her parents ("Masks" 164). His intention, according to Cameron, is to give an answer to the question "Where do we go from here?" (298).

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That is why Dickinson turns Grog into a sort of philosophical character who thinks that humanity is on the verge of catastrophe, and that the entire planet is doomed. It needs a new beginning based on reintroducing the last remaining chimpanzees into nature. They are the only chance of survival of animal life on Earth given the fact that the human animal has proved to be detrimental to the rest of life forms. For this reason Grog forcefully addresses Eva to convince her to accept the task at hand:

Yeah. What are you *for*, Eva? What's your purpose? Are you just a freak? Are you just here so Professor Pradesh can prove things about neuron memory? 'Course, that's why the old girl chimped you, but do you reckon it's enough? Are you happy with just that? Being a scientific curiosity and selling drinks on the shaper! Listen. Your dad and the people who helped chimp you did it for their own reasons, and your mom said yes to save your life. They didn't know the real reason. The real reason was that you and Stefan and the others are the ones who are going to show the chimps how to survive. Nature doesn't like letting species go. She's going to save the chimps if she can, and that's why she let you happen. (*Eva* 115-16; emphasis in original)

Although initially hesitant, Eva will finally take a step forward and speak for the animals. This happens at a press conference organized by Grog and his animal activist friends where Pradesh's work is put into question. Unnerved by Pradesh's utilitarian use of chimpanzees in her experiments, Eva climbs up the desk, symbolically renounces to her humanity by ripping her "evaralls," and thus initiates her breaking away from any connection with the scientist, with the SMI, and with her family:

The chimp jumped to her feet and barked. The sound was like an explosion, ringing out and then echoing off the cliffs of the arena. The cameras closed in till she filled the zone, staring at the crowd. Her rage, her misery, were solid things, as tangible and visible as the table beneath her. She paused and then, with a single firm movement, gripped the bib of her overalls in both hands, lifted the hem to her mouth, bit, and tore. The rasp of the rending cloth filled the night. The bright butterfly fell in two. With her black pelt shining under the lights as if electric with animal energies, the chimp knuckled along the table, blotting out the two humans as she passed them, and was gone.

The cheering rose, the roar of the human wave. There was a new note in it now, more than the challenge to the fat-cat companies that had been trying to suppress the tape, a sense of excitement, of something special and extraordinary having happened. Eva could feel it too, with her human mind. A message had been passed, an immense gap bridged. The movements of the chimp on the table had expressed what Eva had felt at the conference-she'd known that at the time-but she now saw that they said much more. They spoke for Kelly and the other chimps and all the children of earth, the oranges and giraffes and whales and moths and eagles, which over the past few centuries had turned their backs on humankind and crawled or glided or sunk away into the dark. (*Eva* 153-54)

This scene signals the climax of the tension between culture and nature that builds up in the book until Eva's decision to stand for the animals. Such a tension will be resolved thanks to Grog's idea. Since no hope remains in humans because they have given up and seem to be driven by a suicidal impulse, Grog and his group opt for humans' closest relatives to reinhabit the Earth. This choice symbolizes not a backward evolution or devolution. It means the need to dethrone humans as the hegemonic species in order to promote a new beginning once human civilization has driven itself to its own extinction. Although this theme, ecocide, and the need for the regeneration of the planet after humanity's downfall was not Dickinson's main objective in writing *Eva*, it is evident that his novel resonates with a theme that has become recurrent in a certain strand in both fiction and nonfiction. Within the fictional kind, one of the most remarkable pieces is Pierre Boulle's *La planète des singes* (1963) based on which a series of popular films, the most recent in 2011, have been produced so far.<sup>171</sup> Among the nonfictional works, American scientist Jared Diamond has lately devoted some attention to how human civilization can be responsible for its own end in *The Third Chimpanzee* (1991) and *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (2005). Interpreted in this key, *Eva*, like Daniel Quinn's *Ishmael*, becomes a story of regeneration as well as the daring proposal of a new creation story for Earth that makes us think about our responsibility with regard to the continuation of life on the planet. In fact, references to the Judeo-Christian myth of Adam and Eve abound in the novel. Not only Eva is named after the first woman, but her last name, Adamson, also evokes the name of the first man, Adam. Besides, still in hospital, she is described entertaining

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<sup>171</sup> Based on Boulle's novel, Franklin J. Schaffner directed in 1968 *Planet of the Apes* to which five sequels followed. In 2001 Tim Burton directed a second version of Schaffner's film. On August 2011, *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*, directed by Rupert Wyatt, was released almost coinciding with the screening of *Project Nim*, directed by James Marsh, a documentary on the experiment of bringing up a chimpanzee as a human carried out in the 1970s at Columbia University. The film's critical approach to animal experimentation and its overlapping in time with the abovementioned documentary may have served to raise more awareness about the debate of the status of great apes.

herself with an old cartoon, entitled *Adam and Eve*, she used to watch when she was younger. In this cartoon, Adam, whose main flaws are “arrogance and impulsiveness,” is always rescued by Eva from the traps set by the Great Snake (*Eva* 13). By choosing a female, Eva, who is not fully human but a human-animal hybrid, Dickinson rewrites the story of Adam and Eve.<sup>172</sup> He turns it into a warning of what can happen to humans if they continue going beyond Earth’s possibilities and not acknowledging that they are also animals. In order to do so, he provocatively rescues the archetypal Eva from her negative biblical role and reinvents her as Earth savior.<sup>173</sup> Eva becomes, as such, the mother of a new race of chimpanzees, the “inheritors.” In them lies the hope of regeneration not only for the planet but also for humans because, thanks to Eva’s teachings, humans will ultimately make peace with the nonhuman animal represented by the chimpanzees via giving them back an enriched version of the “knowledge” or skills they need to live in the wild.<sup>174</sup> The chimpanzees will ultimately carry within themselves in this way a trace of humanity that will get passed on from generation to generation: “Not one human gene would be there. Only, faintly, but in all of them, changed by them and changing them, the threads of human knowledge” (*Eva* 219). In a symbolic level, the chimpanzee genes represent nature while the knowledge transmitted by Eva stand for culture, and the two merge in this new race.

Ultimately, Eva can also be interpreted as a symbol for the dismantling of androcentric theories of evolution such as those based on the idea that the evolution of

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<sup>172</sup> Dickinson is not the only English-speaking author to have offered a revised version of Eve’s myth. In 1985 Ursula K. Le Guin published in *The New Yorker* a rewriting of the Adam and Eve creation story entitled “She Unnames Them” where Eve is presented in alliance with nonhuman animals and wanting, like Dickinson’s Eva, to detach herself from the world of words ruled by the male Adam.

<sup>173</sup> Carolyn Merchant in *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* (1980) analyzes three archetypes that traditionally have served to identify women with nature: Gaia, Isis and Eve. In the chapter on Eve, she comments on the negative connotations associated with the first woman in the Christian tradition and links it to the story of domination on women and nature.

<sup>174</sup> As Rahn shows, Dickinson must have been inspired by the experiences accounted by Stella M. Brewer in her book *The Chimps of Mt. Asserik* (1978) (182). This primatologist created a reserve in Gambia to introduce to nature human-raised and captive chimpanzees.

*man* was driven by hunting. This hunting theory, which was mainly dominant in the 1960s thanks to anthropologist Sherwood Washburn, gave way to the image of Man the Hunter (Haraway *Primate* 211-17). This means that hunting was the activity which made possible the development of bipedalism, tool-using and group bonding. But, as Haraway contends, this formulation was contested a decade later by works dealing with the role of women beyond that of motherhood (*Primate* 299).<sup>175</sup> Although it is true that in *Eva* reproduction is described as key for the erasing of the species boundary, a second topic features also as propeller of this crossing. This is expressed in *Eva* as knowledge transmitter. *Eva*'s legacy is not only her family—Hruffa, Graa, Arrwa, Urff among others—but also the skills she passes on to them to help them prosper in the wild. Among these, tree planting seems to be an especially meaningful activity. It is so because the lack of trees is precisely one of the characteristics of the overpopulated Earth. Even in the far away island in which they have found refuge there “[u]sed to be solid forest till it was felled a couple of hundred years ago” (*Eva* 156). And besides, trees are a recurrent image featuring in Kelly's dreams, part of the chimpanzees' folk memory which Pat Pinset describes as recreation of the natural life in the trees which the young chimp could never have known (47), and which *Eva*, as their new mother figure, will also give back to them. So this planting and growing of trees work as a hopeful metaphor for regeneration and helps turn the history of evolution from Man the Hunter to Woman the Tree Planter. Through such an image charged with ecological overtones, the ecofeminist project of dismantling boundaries and creating narratives of relationship renders itself possible by means of a fictional account that promotes

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<sup>175</sup> Ursula K. Le Guin has also vindicated the role of women in the development of civilization in “The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction.” Here she contrasts the emphasis traditionally put on the male side of humanity armed with pointing objects like spears with the female equipped with containers to hold something else, mostly food: the nourishment of civilization.

*Chapter Seven. Dialogues of the Body: Becoming Animal*

alternative visions of the relationship between the human and the more-than-human world:

Eva was proud of the trees. She'd planted most of them herself, in the gaps of the old cocoa grove, using seed the trust had gathered and sent, food trees and shade trees. Most of them had failed or been smashed by a passing chimp in a temper, but enough had come through. Trees grew fast in this climate. More important still, there were saplings growing that Hruffa had planted, and Whahhu, and some of the others. Not all of them, but a few, because they had watched Eva doing it when they were small. It was something you did. Eva treasured the day when Hawa had taken her to show her a stem that had burst from the ground overnight, splaying its cotyledon leaves apart. Hawa must have planted that seed herself and remembered doing so and had made the connection. Yes, the trees were worth it, and so was everything else. (*Eva* 213)



**CONCLUSION. BODIES THAT MATTER: REDEFINING THE HUMANITIES**

*I sing the body electric,  
The armies of those I love engirth me and I engirth them,  
They will not let me off till I go with them, respond to  
them,  
And discurrup them, and charge them full with the  
charge of the soul.*  
(Whitman "I Sing the Body Electric" 250)

*To thinking, cogitation, I oppose fullness, embodiedness, the sensation of  
being—not a consciousness of yourself as a kind of ghostly reasoning machine thinking  
thoughts, but on the contrary the sensation—a heavily affective sensation—of being a  
body with limbs that have extension in space, of being alive to the world. This fullness  
contrasts starkly with Descartes's key state, which has an empty feel to it:  
the feel of a pea rattling around in a shell.*  
(Coetzee *The Lives of Animals* 33)

The analysis of examples of primate literature that shapes Part II nourished by the background information on animal studies, primate literature, animal ecofeminism and feminist ecocriticism that constitute Part I contributes to the fulfillment of the primary aim of this dissertation: to prove that the literary imagination makes possible the creation of more sustainable relationships with the nonhuman animal and the more-than-human world. As has been shown, the four novels under discussion demonstrate that literature by means of the sympathetic imagination turns into a kind of forest filled with the silenced voices of animals that are finally heard. The two preceding quotes serve to reflect on this unique power of literature and in what I see as the main contribution of recent animal literature to the humanities, as proved by the evolution described in Part II from the fabled animal in *Ishmael* to the liberating human-animal hybrid in *Eva*: the valorization of matter and the body as realities that dissolve human and animal difference destabilizing borders and making humans reflect on their animality in terms of vulnerability and the benefits derived from encounters with the *other*. Such contribution relocates, at least in the interspace between reader and text, human and nonhuman animals within nonhierarchical and nonbinary patterns of relationship.

The first excerpt speaks of the body as tied to the soul. As David S. Reynolds explains in his excellent biography of the American bard, Walt Whitman did not set a frontier between the physical and the spiritual but mixed the two realms (235). Reynolds explains that actually his earliest notebook poem contained the lines “I am the poet of the body / I am the poet of the soul” (235). His democratic ideals led Whitman to be open to new ideas coming from the continent among which animal magnetism or mesmerism featured prominently (Reynolds 236). This theory had been developed by the Viennese physician Franz Anton Mesmer in the late eighteenth century. He argued that a magnetic, electrical ether or fluid, called later by his followers the odic force, linked all physical and spiritual phenomena. According to Mesmer, certain people, the operators, had the ability to use this odic force to magnetize, or place in a trance, other people, who became “subjects” or “mediums” (Reynolds 259). Whitman who was at first skeptical about animal magnetism finally declared in August 1842 in the New York *Sunday Times* his belief in this new science saying that “it reveals at once the existence of a whole new world of truth, grand, fearful, profound, relating to that great mystery, in the shadow of which we live and move and have our being” (qtd. in Reynolds 260). He probably came to know later of the leading theorist of mesmerism in antebellum America, John Bovee Dods. Dods, a travelling mesmerist, explained all physical and spiritual things according to his electrical theory. In his exhibitions he often put people into a trance and made their identity shift: from a white person to a person of color, from a man to a woman, and so forth. According to Reynolds, the “shape-shifting, sometimes sex-changing persona of Whitman’s verse, which (...) owed something to the poet’s observations of theater, was also reflective of the identity changes caused by the mesmerists” which fascinated the poet (260). Equally interesting is Whitman’s use of the vocabulary of animal magnetism and electricity (Reynolds 261). This is shown in

the opening poem of this section where the body is described as “electric” and the poet declares his power to charge those with whom he is in a mutual relationship of love with “the charge of the soul.” The poet seems to be enmeshed in a spiral of energy that he communicates to his fellow beings through his poetry, the space where this exchange takes place.

Apropos such view, in his seminal essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism”<sup>176</sup> first published in 1978, William Rueckert describes a poem as “stored energy, a formal turbulence, a living thing, a swirl in the flow” (108). He argues that reading, teaching, and critical discourse “release the energy and power stored in poetry so that it may flow through the human community” (Rueckert 109). The source of this energy stored in the poem is the creative imagination upon which the life of the human community depends (Rueckert 109). This means that humans need literature and art in general to sustain their lives in the same manner they also need the energy of the sun that animates the human biosphere (Rueckert 109). That is why, Rueckert concludes, “We need to make connections between literature and the sun, between teaching literature and the health of the biosphere” (Rueckert 109). I would like to complete Rueckert’s vision and contend that, as defended above, the use of the creative or literary imagination, as the analysis of animal literature in this dissertation shows, can also serve to redefine humans’ relationships with nonhuman animals through the acknowledgement of our bodily nature and the reanimation of matter.

The second opening quote is pronounced by Elizabeth Costello in the very much acclaimed and debated novel by South-African author J. M. Coetzee *The Lives of Animals* (1999) where his female alter ego reflects upon the unfairness of the treatment animals receive from humans. By using an aged woman who is aware of her proximity

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<sup>176</sup> William Rueckert was the first scholar to use the term “ecocriticism” (Glotfelty xxviii).

to death as spokesperson for the animals, Coetzee draws attention to the fragility of bodies. Following the steps of French philosopher Jacques Derrida, Coetzee constructs a discourse on vulnerability as a fundamental defining characteristic that connects human and nonhuman animals. This acknowledgement of our bodily nature reveals itself as a humbling process and it helps blur the separations between human and animal, mind and body, and reason and matter. American biologist and philosopher Donna Haraway has actually commented ironically on how appalling is the realization that “human genomes can be found in only about 10 percent of all the cells” that constitute the human body, the rest belong to the nonhuman:

I love the fact that human genomes can be found in only about 10 percent of all the cells that occupy the mundane space I call my body; the other 90 percent of the cells are filled with the genomes of bacteria, fungi, protists, and such, some of which play in a symphony necessary to my being alive at all, and some of which are hitching a ride and doing the rest of me, of us, no harm. I am vastly outnumbered by my tiny companions; better put, I become an adult human being in company with these tiny messmates. To be one is always to *become with* many. (Haraway *When Species Meet* 3-4; emphasis in original)

Thus we are more animal than we have ever wanted to recognize. Such a realization leads to the relocation of humans within the order of all living creatures as well as to the flourishing of an interest in the study of animals and animality, as proved by the overview I offer of the rise of the animal in the first and second chapter of this dissertation. Such a rise has affected philosophical positions, political activism, the legal profession and the humanities. Within the latter, animal studies and its literary branch, literary animal studies, have made possible to rediscover the animal as a serious subject of exploration. The literary animal has evolved from the strictures of anthropomorphism to becoming an agentic subject as is shown by the revision of ape literature (Chapter Two and Three) and the analysis of literary works at the center of this project (Chapter Six and Seven). Furthermore, by dealing with the always blurry frontier between the human and the nonhuman animal, this dissertation also demonstrates how primate

*Conclusion. Bodies that Matter: Redefining the Humanities*

literature is meant to become a site where the erasure of this divide is enacted and new forms of human-animal relationships are formulated. To this effect, the reader is reminded of the contribution feminist theory in general and feminist animal theory or animal ecofeminism in particular have had on the debate on the body as site of oppression. Such contribution occupies the development of the fourth and fifth chapter of this study where the woman-animal identification, animal ecofeminism's contribution to animal studies, and feminist ecocriticism have been explored as fundamental, although for a time forgotten, instruments of analysis of the animal question. This discussion of the body and materiality has been later influenced by the development of science in the fields of physics and biotechnology leading to new visions of matter and the corporeal which have crystallized into the emergence of what Oppermann refers to as "corporeal theories" among which she cites material feminisms, queer ecologies, trans-corporeality and feminist ecocriticism ("Feminist Ecocriticism: A Posthumanist" 23). This same author aptly describes how the latter of these theories "considers matter and corporeality, discourse and language to be intricately interlaced" so that it aims at "[achieving] an integrative approach working the notion of discourse and materiality through one another" (Oppermann "Feminist Ecocriticism: A Posthumanist" 30). This is the reason why, as a way of concluding this dissertation, I would like to reflect briefly on how the revalorization of the body exemplified by the analysis of works presented here has resulted in a movement from language to matter that has led to a new form of understanding the humanities.

The four novels analyzed in Part II coincide in presenting intimate and meaningful relationships between human and nonhuman primates. They display a sort of translation into literary terms of the type of significant relationships that female primatologists such as Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey and Biruté Galdikas, who have been

brought to consideration in Chapter Five, kept with nonhuman primates in their field research. They connect also with the way in which the modern configuration of the humanities is qualified as posthuman and how its genesis can be located in the opening to questions involving animals and its correlative terms of comparison, body and matter. That is why, as a way of conclusion, I want to argue with this reflection that the literary works that have been analyzed here exemplify this transition from the critical importance of language—shown in the interpretation of *Ishmael* and *Wish*—to the materiality of bodies—as proved in the exploration of *Animal Heart* and *Eva*. This involves as well new perspectives on human-animal relationships inspired by new ethical paradigms such as the ethics of care and the ethics of attention that are at the heart of the ecofeminist interpretation underlying the reading of primate literature as a narrative of relationship.

In her explanation of what has led to the rising of the animal question in literary and critical theory, American scholar Kari Weil describes a linguistic turn, a counterlinguistic or affective turn, and an ethical turn (“A Report” 4). The first turn revolves around the importance attributed to language as the organizing tool of human comprehension of the world. This emphasis on the power of language implies that knowledge can only come through linguistic representation (Weil “A Report” 12). Such model limits the possibilities of consideration for nonhuman animals in the manner that other oppressed groups—women, people of color, the poor, etc— have found a voice in political, social, and cultural circles since the 1960s. Animals do not speak nor do they write, so how can they defend themselves? Working against this exclusion from language the counterlinguistic or affective turn valorizes unmediated experience. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s project in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987), where they coin the expression “becoming animal,” serves to

liberate humans and nonhuman animals from the chains of language, but in doing so it risks forgetting about the actual life of the flesh, of materiality, by focusing too much on the sublime experience of becoming (Weil “A Report” 12-3). On the contrary, the ethical turn consists precisely in paying attention to the real animal. This means acknowledging his or her alterity and respecting it to the best of our abilities. It means making the effort to consider animals and their needs by observing and stepping back to positions of deep respect for the *other*. Weil is aware of the limits that hinder ethical human-animal relationships for we cannot always know what is best. She actually refers to several ways in which critics have tried to deal with the space in between both humans and nonhuman animals, but does not mention what can be seen as a plausible solution coming from yet another turn, the material one. This solution can be found in the concept of performativity<sup>177</sup> as presented by material feminist theorist Karen Barad and used in animal studies by biologist Lynda Birke and feminist cultural studies scholars Mette Bryld and Nina Lykke.

Barad develops the idea of performativity in her article “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter” (2003). Being critical of the excessive power attributed to words to define reality, she opposes performativity with its focus on practices/doings/actions to representationalism and its emphasis in the correspondences between descriptions and reality (Barad Loc. 2195). She proposes a posthumanist notion of performativity where the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman are called into question and the important thing is to analyze the practices through which the species boundary is stabilized and destabilized (Barad Loc. 2283-2309). As part of her theory of agential realism, Barad explains these

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<sup>177</sup> Barad explains that although the notion of performativity was initially used by British philosopher John L. Austin and French philosopher Jacques Derrida, it was Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993) who used it to establish a link between gender performativity and the materialization of sexed bodies (Barad fn. 8 Loc. 2717).

practices with the term “intra-actions,” “specific causal material enactments that may or may not involve ‘humans’” and through which “the differential boundaries between ‘humans’ and ‘nonhumans,’ ‘culture’ and ‘nature,’ the ‘social’ and the ‘scientific’ are constituted” (Loc. 2451). The universe is agential intra-activity in its becoming, Barad explains. Hence it is necessary to pay attention to phenomena for they constitute reality. “The world,” according to Barad, “is an ongoing open process of mattering through which ‘mattering’ itself acquires meaning and form in the realization of different agential possibilities” (Loc. 2451-74). This perspective when applied to human-animal relationships can shed some light on the human-animal encounters described in the novels under analysis.

In order to see this contention more clearly, Birke, Bryld and Lykke’s approach might be also useful. They apply Barad’s notion of performativity to clarify how human-animal relationships are co-constructed generating a “choreography” of meaning (Birke, Bryld and Lykke 170). What the animal does determines the behavior of the human and vice versa. Nothing is predetermined but it is created the moment the human and the nonhuman initiate the process of intra-action. Consequently, it could be said that the literature that deals with animals is partially their creation since from the moment of its inception they, with their material being, affect the lives of the writer who literally types the story the animal cannot put on paper. In Chapter Three, a section on the role primates play in the literary imagination, it was explained how nonhuman primates have featured prominently in Western narratives. Through Barad’s lens the real animals behind those stories become co-creators in the literary process of imagining, they enact a transition from the creature written upon to the writing creature. Ishmael stands for the captive gorilla who interrogates from his cage the passing onlooker. Wish can be interpreted as a biologically engineered version of the famous signing gorilla Koko who

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was trained by psychologist Francine Peterson and lived her entire life as her surrogate daughter. Sol can be identified with many of the laboratory baboons still used for experimentation. Eva although not a chimpanzee *stricto sensu* but a human-animal hybrid makes us realize our fascination with chimpanzees, our closest nonhuman animal relative.

This recognition of the role animals play connecting our creative minds with issues that affect both our lives and theirs situate the humanities in the direction of the posthuman. Interestingly, such is the orientation, according to Rosi Braidotti, the humanities must take if they want to survive “their present crises” (1).<sup>178</sup> German ecocritic Ursula Heise, in her essay on the posthuman turn in American literature, speaks of three stages that have defined the posthuman movement since the 1950s (“The Posthuman” 455). The first one revolves around the figure of the alien who as an outside being, an *other* in biological and technological ways, features in many of the science fiction stories from the 1950s to the 1970s. The second has the image of the cyborg at its core. The cyborg is the human being whose physical or intellectual abilities are extended by means of technological advancements. Through these, he or she becomes the *other* with whom from the 1980s to the early 1990s the idea of the human is contrasted making possible the belief that in science and technology resides the key to a better future. This image, however, also involves the risk of believing that the answer to every problem lies in human ingenuity. Finally, from the late 1990s to the early 2000s, the animal has acquired a central role in American literature. According to Heise, an increased interest in biotechnologies has led to a shift in the focus of attention of posthumanism from differences between the machine and the human to differences

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<sup>178</sup> Braidotti traces a genealogy of the death of Man that Michel Foucault announced in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1970). This questioning of the knowing subject as it has been traditionally known—“Man as a rational animal endowed with language”—produces necessarily a reformulation of the humanities.

between the human and the animal from the mid-1990s onwards (“The Posthuman” 462).<sup>179</sup> Three of the novels analyzed here, *Wish*, *Animal Heart*, and *Eva* deal with the consequences of biotechnology while the first one, *Ishmael*, is an extended reflection on the negative consequences of human hubris against the continuation of life on Earth.

The humanities, due to the impact technoscience is having in the understanding of human-animal relationships and in the pressing concern for the ecological crisis, need to take a leap forward to respond to the challenge of the world of material becomings feminist theorists have uncovered through their interest in body/nature/animal/matter since the beginnings of ecofeminism. These becomings have today an exemplar instrument of analysis in material ecocriticism, an extension of ecocriticism overlapping in many ways with feminist ecocriticism,<sup>180</sup> that looks “at issues of embodiment and corporeality, and the agency of the nonhuman (animals, machines, environments)—and perhaps most importantly, to posthumanist concerns of things outside of human control and language, like other organisms, such as viruses and bacteria, that co-constitute our existence” (Iovino and Oppermann “Theorizing” 469). Material ecocriticism epitomizes

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<sup>179</sup> Indian scholar Pramod Nayar in his article “Species Cosmopolitanism: Animals, Crossover Identities and the New Humanities” also speaks of the rise of vampire literature as a result of increasing interest in animals and animality (13-7). Vampires, werewolves, and shapeshifters feature prominently in recent young adult literature where the debate on human/animal difference is epitomized by fantastic creatures that move between human and animal identities.

<sup>180</sup> I have to thank here both Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann who, when asked about the differences and similarities between material ecocriticism and feminist ecocriticism, kindly shared their knowledge with me via email. In her message, Iovino clarified to me that although it is true that both forms of ecocriticism have a lot in common, especially in relationship with their aim at liberating “oppressed voices coming from all the angles of ‘creation’,” material ecocriticism “is not only about liberating the voices of matter; it is also (for example) about seeing these voices in subjects which are not necessarily individual (call them “collectives,” “assemblages” or “compound individuals,” as Serpil [Oppermann] does). And most of all, it is about how we—as interpreters—interfere with these voices, how our interpretations produce ‘patterns of diffraction’” (Iovino “Question” n.pag.). Oppermann further explained that while feminist ecocriticism emphasizes how the environmental crises affect “sexed and gendered bodies,” material ecocriticism is “more concerned with toxic bodies, human and nonhuman without focusing only on the gendered human body.” Likewise, Oppermann contends that “feminist ecocriticism puts more concerted emphasis on the political, social, cultural aspects of environmental problems from feminist perspectives [...] while material ecocriticism is decidedly concerned with the material-discursive emergences, hybrid formations, material expressions which we call narrative agency of matter, and the ways in which the world articulates itself” (Oppermann “Question” n.pag.).

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the transition from the world of representation to that where the expression of matter, even textual matter, entails a call for the realization of a change in our attitudes not only with regard to nonhuman *others* but also with regard to the need to care for the planet that sustains us. Perhaps, because of this, the path towards the posthuman humanities is also the path towards a more sustainable model of human-animal and culture-nature relationships where ecofeminism's promotion of models of cooperation and the reconceptualization of dualisms as free flowing continua in a two-way direction of fruitful exchange are the answer.



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**SUMMARY IN SPANISH / RESUMEN EN ESPAÑOL**

*El pez nada en el ancho mar:  
vive bien.  
El zorro en su covacha, huele  
a selva: no está mal.  
El pájaro, qué casa grande y  
limpia habita!  
El mamífero grande: le  
sobra espacio.  
La culebra: vive lindo  
sobre hierba y rocío!  
Solo el hombre es miserable  
sobre la tierra que le pertenece:  
le falta espacio, agua, cielo, luz,  
techo, intimidad, felicidad (...)*

*(Pablo Neruda)*

En esta tesis doctoral se condensa el trabajo de muchos años, a la vez que las inquietudes de una persona interesada por los animales no humanos y sus relaciones con los humanos desde hace tiempo. Los humanos tenemos dos maneras de existir: con y sin ellos. Esto quiere decir que podemos decidir tomar conciencia de que somos meros cohabitantes de este mundo, con todo lo que ello implica, o no. Yo hace tiempo que descubrí que dejar entrar a los animales en nuestras vidas enriquece la perspectiva que tenemos de las cosas, aunque también nos acaba colocando, en ocasiones, en situaciones de elevado compromiso moral en donde hay que saber encontrar el justo medio entre la cordura y la sensibilidad.

Literal y figuradamente los animales no humanos, en cualquiera de sus formas, han servido de inspiración al esfuerzo de escribir este trabajo de investigación. Les agradezco su virtud de emocionarme, pero también de intrigarme con preguntas sobre su naturaleza y la nuestra, lo que nos separa y lo que nos une.

De pequeña los animales eran los protagonistas de mis juegos infantiles. Con el paso del tiempo se convirtieron en tema de contemplación y en compañeros en los que confiar, a los que cuidar y proteger, y por los que luchar. Mi otra gran afición era y es la

literatura, pero nunca había pensado que pudiera unirlos a los dos, literatura y animales, hasta que el destino permitió que en el Máster de Estudios Norteamericanos de la Universidad de Alcalá descubriera al eco-poeta y ensayista estadounidense Gary Snyder. Ver reflejado su pensamiento en obras como *Earth House Hold* (1957), *Regarding Wave* (1967), *Turtle Island* (1969), *The Practice of the Wild* (1990) y *A Place in Space* (1995) me enseñó que la literatura puede ser un instrumento potente para despertar a los lectores a maneras alternativas de estar en el mundo. Escribí sobre este autor mi Memoria Fin de Máster titulada *Gary Snyder's Ecology of Family*. Su obra me llevó curiosamente a la producción literaria de otra gran poeta, aunque menos conocida, Allison Hawthorne Deming, tataranieta del insigne escritor norteamericano Nathaniel Hawthorne, sobre la que redacté mi Trabajo de Investigación Tutelado, *Contemporary American Women's Nature Writing as a New Form of Women's Autobiography: Alison H. Deming*, un estudio sobre el carácter autobiográfico de algunas de sus obras en prosa—*Temporary Homelands* (1994), *The Edges of the Civilized World* (1998) y *Writing the Sacred into the Real* (2001)—en las que la naturaleza adquiere un papel fundamental. Tanto en un caso como en otro fue la Dra. Carmen Flys Junquera quien actuó como guía de mis esfuerzos y, junto a ella, descubrí el por entonces novedoso campo de la ecocrítica, o lo que de una manera excesivamente simplista quizá puede definirse como el estudio de las relaciones entre la literatura y el medio ambiente.

Entonces éramos pocos en España los que desde el campo de la crítica literaria nos habíamos parado a repensar nuestra relación con el medio natural y las criaturas que lo pueblan. La ecocrítica sonaba a un movimiento tremendamente novedoso asociado al movimiento ecologista norteamericano y al padre del *nature writing*<sup>181</sup> en Estados Unidos, Henry David Thoreau. Para introducirlo en nuestro país se debía primero

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<sup>181</sup> El *nature writing* es un género típicamente norteamericano que suele adoptar la forma de ensayo o reflexión personal del escritor sobre la naturaleza en cualquiera de sus variados aspectos.

conocerlo desde sus orígenes a finales de los años ochenta como forma de aproximación a los textos que pretendía unir la teoría literaria con el activismo ecologista. Solo así sería poder formular nuestra propia aproximación a una materia que, además de por su interdisciplinariedad, ha destacado por su rápida expansión por las universidades de todo el mundo. El nacimiento del Grupo de Investigación en Ecocrítica, GIECO, adscrito hoy en día al Instituto Franklin, supuso una apuesta valiente por la ecocrítica en España que ha dado ya frutos muy notables. Allá por el año 2008 GIECO celebró, en el parque nacional de Monfragüe, su primer seminario de investigación en ecocrítica al que asistieron sus miembros fundadores procedentes de universidades de distintas zonas de España (Cáceres, Granada, La Laguna, La Palma, y León) además de la Universidad de Alcalá. Este encuentro sirvió para plantar la semilla de la que brotarían en años sucesivos otros encuentros con invitados destacados como los ecocríticos Patrick D. Murphy y Scott Slovic. De igual forma sirvió para trazar una suerte de hoja de ruta de lo que posteriormente sería la ecocrítica española hoy reconocida a nivel europeo desde EASLCE, la Asociación Europea para el Estudio de la Literatura, la Cultura y el Medio Ambiente. Tres miembros de GIECO, la Dra. Carmen Flys Junquera, el Dr. José Manuel Marrero Henríquez y la Dra. Julia Barella, editaron en 2010 el volumen *Ecocríticas. Literatura y Medio Ambiente*, la primera monografía sobre este tema publicada en español. Más tarde nació también a partir de este grupo la colección CLYMA con el número inaugural dedicado a la montaña y posteriores dedicados al sentido del lugar o del arraigo y al mar respectivamente. Además cabe destacar que uno de los editores de *Ecocríticas*, la Dra. Flys Junquera, coordinadora de GIECO, llegó a ser elegida presidenta de EASLCE e impulsó la creación de la revista *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment* desde GIECO y apoyada por el Instituto Franklin. Cabe destacar que ésta es con toda probabilidad una de las revistas

de más impacto en Europa sobre el tema y se ha consolidado ya como una referente a nivel mundial.

El tiempo pasa, las perspectivas maduran y se hacen más precisas. La ecocrítica nació, según explica una de sus pioneras, la profesora estadounidense Cheryll Glotfelty, en su conocida introducción a *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996), de la necesidad de dar una respuesta a la crisis medioambiental desde las humanidades. De ahí que pivote entre el estudio de dos intereses fundamentales: la relación del ser humano con el lugar que habita, o *sense of place*, y sus relaciones tanto con su propia animalidad como con el resto de animales no humanos. Por eso mi primitiva inclinación hacia el estudio de la literatura, en concreto de la literatura norteamericana y la naturaleza, fue poco a poco tornándose en interés por este último aspecto de la ecocrítica. Gracias a Ana Recarte Vicente-Arche, que a principios de los años dos mil comenzó a dirigir desde el Instituto Franklin, entonces Instituto Universitario de Investigación en Estudios Norteamericanos (IUEN), el programa de Friends of Thoreau para la difusión de la cultura medioambiental norteamericana en España, supe del Proyecto Gran Simio, liderado por los filósofos Paola Cavalieri y Peter Singer, y del movimiento de liberación animal en el mundo anglosajón. El reto era conectar este interés con mi investigación. De ahí que decidiera centrar esta tesis en un conjunto de obras que giran entorno a las relaciones entre humanos y animales, más concretamente entre primates humanos y no humanos.

Dar este paso suponía avanzar un poco más en mis conocimientos sobre ecocrítica para poder conectarlos con el tema de mi investigación y ello me llevo a una primera estancia en la Universidad de Nevada, Reno, bajo la dirección del profesor Scott Slovic que me permitió aprovechar los recursos humanos y materiales de su universidad durante tres meses. En Reno tuve la oportunidad de entrevistarme con Cheryll Glotfelty quien tiempo atrás había ofertado un curso titulado *Representing the*

*Other - Animals in Literature.* También tuve la ocasión de conocer allí a la ecocrítica italiana Serenella Iovino que me animó a continuar en mi denodado esfuerzo por poner por escrito lo que por entonces ya descubría en la literatura de animales que leía: una manera diferente de tratarlos, no ya como humanos vestidos con un disfraz de animal sino como verdaderos animales no humanos con agencia, con voz, aunque ésta naciera de la pluma de escritores de ficción que veían en su situación de explotación y de marginación la necesidad de denunciar su opresión.

Curiosamente este interés por liberar de sus cadenas a los animales no humanos era algo sobre lo que había leído en la obra de una de las filósofas ecofeministas más admiradas de los últimos tiempos, la australiana Val Plumwood, a la que pude conocer brevemente en una de las primeras conferencias de ASLE-UK<sup>182</sup> celebrada en la Universidad de Leeds (Reino Unido). Esta filósofa me sorprendió muy pronto por su carisma y por su claridad de ideas al respecto de lo que ella refiere en su obra *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993) como *master mentality* o mentalidad de amo. Según ella la opresión de la que numerosos seres son objeto procede de una serie de construcciones binarias del tipo hombre/mujer, cultura/naturaleza, humano/animal, mente/cuerpo. Éstas confieren a unos el rango de amo o señor y a otros los coloca del lado opuesto sometiénolos a una situación de subordinación. El hecho de que en una obra posterior, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (2002), Plumwood hable específicamente de la subordinación de los animales no humanos me hizo pensar en el ecofeminismo como un posible planteamiento liberador de los animales, dado que este movimiento filosófico propone el desbaratamiento de los dualismos sobre los que se asienta la subordinación de los animales así como de otros seres: mujeres, personas de color, pobres, ancianos, gais, y discapacitados entre otros.

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<sup>182</sup> ASLE-UK es la rama británica de la Asociación Norteamericana para el Estudio de la Literatura y el Medio Ambiente, ASLE-US.

De manera que contaba ya con un tema, la literatura contemporánea de primates en lengua inglesa; un enfoque para el estudio literario de las obras, la ecocrítica; y un movimiento filosófico, el ecofeminismo, a través del cual podía analizar la opresión animal y el potencial liberador de la literatura. A partir de aquí el proceso de escritura de la tesis se tornó en un descubrimiento fascinante del que acabaría siendo mi objetivo principal: reivindicar el poder de la imaginación literaria para hacernos ver el mundo a través de los ojos del *otro*, en concreto del *otro* animal no humano, y con ello descubrir formas más integradoras y sostenibles de relacionarnos con él o ella. Dicho objetivo terminó por organizarse en una serie de objetivos específicos:

- 1) Probar que el nacimiento y desarrollo de los estudios de animales son el resultado de cómo ha afectado a las humanidades la relevancia cultural y socio-política que la cuestión de los animales ha adquirido a lo largo del siglo veinte. Este campo se caracteriza por orientarse en dos direcciones fundamentales: el estudio de los animales y nuestras relaciones con ellos desde el activismo y el estudio de la animalidad o la condición de animal del humano desde una perspectiva teórica. Además los estudios de animales son un campo caracterizado por su interdisciplinariedad lo cual les otorga una mayor vigencia en un mundo sumido en una crisis medioambiental que necesita potenciar la conexión entre distintas disciplinas de cara a poder encontrar una manera de vivir más sostenible en el planeta Tierra.
- 2) Probar que el animal literario ha experimentado una progresión en la literatura desde su condición de símbolo, y con frecuencia criatura antropomorfizada, a sujeto actante. De hecho, cuando se analizan a la luz de la primatología hecha por mujeres y de la epistemología feminista ejemplos de literatura de primates, un género que recibe parte de su energía

precisamente de su paradoja intrínseca, la dificultad de separar el primate humano del no humano, se descubre la referida transición de *criatura sobre la que se escribe a criatura que escribe*. Además el énfasis que estos enfoques ponen sobre la importancia de las relaciones de atención y respeto mutuo entre animales humanos y no humanos permite hablar de la literatura de primates como de una *narrativa de relación*.

- 3) Probar el papel que la literatura de primates juega como un tipo de literatura que desde los años ochenta se ha convertido en una expresión de cómo se han difuminado las fronteras entre lo humano y lo no humano gracias a las conclusiones derivadas del desarrollo de campos como la ética animal y la etología cognitiva. La literatura de primates sirve también, como se ha explicado más arriba, para ilustrar modelos alternativos de interacción humano-animal promovidos por el desarrollo de epistemologías feministas de la ciencia, ejemplificados en este caso por la primatología femenina, y caracterizados por paradigmas de intercambio no jerárquicos y no binarios entre lo humano y lo no humano.
- 4) Reivindicar la contribución de la teoría ecofeminista al análisis de la cuestión del animal en los estudios ecocríticos. De cara a hacer esto, he pretendido en primer lugar destacar el hecho de que tradicionalmente la asociación mujer-animal, con frecuencia denostada por algunas ramas del pensamiento feminista, está viva todavía y subyace tras la opresión de mujeres y animales. En relación con esto, en esta tesis se da una panorámica de los elementos que, según la ecofeminista y ecocrítica estadounidense Greta Gaard, determinaron de manera más importante el comienzo del ecofeminismo animalista o lo que es lo mismo, el ecofeminismo centrado en

analizar la conexión entre la opresión de mujeres y de animales no humanos.

Se ofrece así una base filosófica para realizar el análisis de la literatura de primates.

- 5) Probar que el proyecto ecofeminista a través de su vertiente literaria, la ecocrítica feminista, permite repensar el animal real desde el imaginado. Su empresa de liberación supone el desarrollo de nuevos paradigmas éticos—la ética del cuidado, la ética de la atención—disuelve los sistemas binarios, y reivindica el poder de la ficción como puerta de acceso a otras formas de existir. A través de la lectura de la literatura de primates vista como una narrativa de relación, la literatura se revela a sí misma como una manera de conocer y tener en cuenta al *otro*. A través de la palabra escrita se le da voz al *otro* silencioso poniendo por lo tanto en cuestión las asunciones del antropocentrismo.
- 6) Probar que la literatura de animales no es más que un primer paso en la evolución de las humanidades hacia un nuevo paradigma que puede ser descrito como humanidades posthumanas auspiciado por un giro del lenguaje a la materia, de la palabra al cuerpo. Las humanidades posthumanas son en definitiva una manera sostenible, no antropocéntrica, y éticamente comprometida de adoptar como objeto de estudio la multiplicidad de formas de vida de la Tierra.

De cara a poder trabajar en la consecución de estos objetivos me vi inspirada por la aproximación que utiliza la filósofa feminista Lorraine Code en su artículo “‘They Treated Him Well’: Fact, Fiction, and the Politics of Knowledge” (2011). Esta autora aplica lo que denomina *scavenger methodology* o metodología de carroñero al hablar de cómo la epistemología feminista, con su preferencia por la personalización a través del

uso de historias o narrativas personales, consigue adentrarse en el punto de vista del *otro*. En su caso ella habla de la obra de la escritora sudafricana Nadine Gordimer *July's People* (1981) que describe el esfuerzo de adaptación al *otro* de una familia de blancos represaliados por un sector de la población de color que debe buscar refugio entre los miembros de la familia del que fuera otrora su criado negro, July. Con el término metodología de carroñero también implico la posibilidad de análisis interdisciplinar que tanto el ecofeminismo como los estudios de animales posibilitan y empleo a la vez una imagen de gran impacto que hace pensar sobre la presencia, aunque sea simbólica, del carroñero dispuesto a aprovechar todo lo que encuentra a su alcance.

En cuanto a su estructura, esta tesis doctoral está dividida en dos partes, una de corte más teórico, THINKING THE ANIMAL, y otra de carácter más práctico, HUMAN-ANIMAL DIALOGUES. La primera, tal y como indica su título, pretende realizar un repaso a lo que hoy en día, en el mundo anglosajón, recibe el nombre de *animal studies* o estudios de animales. Primeramente se ofrece una panorámica de los mismos y más tarde se profundiza en su desarrollo dentro del campo de los estudios literarios. De manera que esta primera parte establece el marco teórico desde el que llevar a cabo el posterior análisis de obras literarias que recoge la segunda parte. Por ello, de cara a dejar bien asentadas las bases del nacimiento y posterior formación de los estudios de animales como disciplina académica, parto de un breve estudio del impacto que ha tenido la cuestión de los animales desde los años setenta en el mundo anglosajón, Reino Unido y Estados Unidos primordialmente. En la sección introductoria se hace mención a cómo la cuestión del animal ha sido objeto de atención de algunos filósofos europeos de la segunda mitad del siglo veinte, entre ellos Jacques Derrida, Giorgio Agamben, Emmanuel Levinas, y Martin Heidegger. Tras hacer un pequeño repaso de la importancia crucial que ha tenido Derrida como puente entre las

preocupaciones de corte más ontológico sobre los animales en la filosofía europea y las de tipo ético en el caso de la filosofía anglosajona, en el capítulo primero se avanza desde la preocupación por el bienestar de los animales, de la que parte Peter Singer en su libro *Animal Rights*, a la defensa de su proclamación como sujetos de derecho por parte de Tom Regan, y finalmente a los planteamientos abolicionistas de Gary L. Francione, quien defiende la necesidad de dejar de ver a los animales como objeto de explotación sujetos al capricho de los humanos y de sus necesidades. De la filosofía animalista formulada como ética animal se pasa a abordar cómo dichos planteamientos han calado en la sociedad de países como los Estados Unidos produciendo un activismo social y político sin parangón desde la mitad de los años setenta hasta principios de los noventa. Ésta es la llamada época dorada de los derechos de los animales, según el pensador y activista estadounidense Norm Phelps, de la cual han derivado políticas como las regulaciones sobre bienestar animal existentes o la legislación que protege a los animales del maltrato entre otras cosas. Igualmente relevante para el tema de esta tesis es que esta mayor concienciación sobre la necesidad de respetar al *otro* animal ha venido acompañada de una serie de hitos en el campo de la ciencia que han llevado a una mayor certeza de lo contingente que resultan los límites entre lo humano y lo no humano. En este sentido a lo largo de la tesis se hace referencia especial al ejemplo de las primatólogas Jane Goodall, Diane Fossey y Biruté Galdikas que en los años sesenta comenzaron a mirar a los primates no humanos que estudiaban (chimpancés, gorilas y orangutanes) desde una óptica diferente que les permitió borrar la distancia que siglos de antropocentrismo había construido entre ellos y nosotros. Su óptica se basaba en un intento de comprensión del *otro* animal desde su particularidad como individuo y como especie. Para ello, según observaba su mentor, el famoso antropólogo británico Louis S. B. Leaky, ayudaba el hecho de que las mujeres, dotadas de un mayor número de

neuronas espejo, suelen tener una mayor capacidad de observación de los detalles a la vez que se sienten más inclinadas a empatizar, conectar e identificarse con ese *otro*, ya sea éste animal humano o no humano.

Igualmente, aunque ya en la segunda parte dedicada al análisis de obras literarias, recibe especial atención el desarrollo de la ingeniería biomédica en relación a los xenotrasplantes, los trasplantes entre animales humanos y no humanos. Imágenes de criaturas híbridas pueblan la literatura. Un caso ilustrativo es el de *The Island of Dr. Moreau* de H.G. Wells en el que un científico obsesionado con jugar a ser Dios intenta producir criaturas nuevas a partir de especies ya existentes creando así un catálogo de especies monstruosas que nos interrogan sobre la distancia real entre lo humano y lo no humano. Más recientemente está el caso de la novela de la autora canadiense Margaret Atwood *Oryx and Crake* (2003), una denuncia de los extremos a los que llega la ciencia que se sirve a sí misma y no a los demás. En este sentido la obra *Eva* (1988) de Peter Dickinson, que se analiza en la segunda parte, sirve para reflexionar sobre un tema íntimamente ligado a la cuestión del animal: las distintas formulaciones existentes sobre el cuerpo y la materia. Por este motivo, contar con la ecocrítica material derivada de los nuevos materialismos, en especial de los feminismos materiales, aporta una visión innovadora y sugerente con respecto a nuestras relaciones con los animales y con nuestra propia animalidad. Como se ve en esta tesis, Eva, la protagonista de la novela vive a través de un cuerpo que no es el suyo, pero conecta con él y se hace un único ser gracias a prestar atención a la voz que alberga el cuerpo de la chimpancé Kelly en el que ella habita. *Eva* se convierte pues en un buen ejemplo del concepto *mente encarnada* o *embodied mind* tal y como lo describen George Lakoff y Mark Johnson en *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999).

La importancia de la cuestión animal en la filosofía y su posterior impacto en la sociedad y en el marco legislativo, así como el desarrollo de visiones alternativas en el campo de la ciencia se han traducido a su vez en un verdadero interés académico por establecer cómo conecta esta cuestión con algunas de las principales disciplinas no solo científicas, tradicional territorio del animal, sino también de las humanidades donde desde los años ochenta la geografía, la historia, y los estudios literarios se han hecho eco del papel que tienen los animales como seres que interactúan con los humanos, lo cual ha determinado nuestra identidad como especie a causa de nuestra dependencia de ellos. De ahí que, una vez realizado un repaso al papel de los animales dentro de la sociedad y la cultura contemporánea anglosajona principalmente, paso a considerar los llamados *literary animal studies* (LAS) o estudios literarios de animales también denominados zocrítica, según la denominación dada por Helen Tiffin y Graham Huggan, para de esa manera comprender mejor el enfoque utilizado.

Los estudios de animales, llamados así en español siguiendo otras denominaciones traducidas del inglés como son los estudios culturales y los estudios de género, pueden adoptar diversas orientaciones dependiendo del objetivo que los guíe. Así, por ejemplo, los estudios animalistas tienen una clara vocación de activismo en defensa de los animales en base a los postulados que los principales filósofos del movimiento de liberación animal han formulado: bienestarismo, si se centran en la consecución de mayores niveles de bienestar animal, y liberacionismo, si lo que pretenden es liberar progresivamente a los animales de la explotación a la que son sometidos por los humanos, e incluso llegar a poder reconocerles ciertos derechos. Dentro de ellos, si se adoptan postulados acordes con esta última posición, también conocida como abolicionismo, se estaría hablando de los estudios críticos animalistas a la cabeza de los cuales se sitúan Steve Best y Anthony J. Nocella II. El abolicionismo,

desarrollado por el abogado estadounidense Gary L. Francione, defiende que los humanos deberían abstenerse de usar a los animales porque cualquier uso implica de un modo u otro explotación. De igual modo, si el objeto de estudio son las múltiples formas que adopta la relación entre animales humanos y no humanos se hablaría de los estudios humano-animales o de la antrozoología a cuyo desarrollo se han dedicado desde el Animals and Society Institute el psicólogo Kenneth Shapiro y la socióloga Margo De Mello. Y si, por último, lo que interesa es el análisis de la condición de animal, la animalidad, compartida por animales humanos y no humanos entonces hablaríamos de estudios de animalidad cuyo principal teórico en la actualidad es el crítico estadounidense Michael Lundblad. De todos modos, estas posiciones beben unas de otras no habiendo divisiones tan claras a veces entre ellas. Así, por ejemplo, al estudiar cualquiera de las novelas que se analizan en esta tesis el tema de la muerte y por tanto de la vulnerabilidad, como hecho insoslayable que condiciona tanto a animales humanos como a no humanos, está presente y admite ser estudiado desde una óptica que tiene en cuenta tanto animalidad, por el hecho común que nos une, como el animalismo, por todo lo que hay que decir sobre las crueles formas en que los humanos han decidido poner fin a la vida de otros animales.

Los estudios literarios de animales o la zoocrítica son el resultado de la intersección entre los estudios de animales y los estudios literarios de animales. Esto ha sido posible gracias a la apertura de estos últimos al *otro*, identificado por la ecocrítica como naturaleza en sus múltiples dimensiones: entre ellas se pueden mencionar las montañas, los ríos, los océanos, o los animales salvajes. La aparición de este campo, según la zoocrítica estadounidense Kari Weil, es el resultado del llamado *giro animal* que ha tenido lugar a continuación del giro lingüístico, el giro contralingüístico o afectivo, y el giro ético. El giro lingüístico supone considerar el lenguaje como

herramienta organizadora de primer nivel del ser humano a través de la cual lleva a cabo su construcción y organización del mundo. Dicha forma de construir el conocimiento, dicho énfasis en el enfoque logocéntrico, limita por supuesto el papel de los animales no humanos carentes de voz. El giro contralingüístico o afectivo pone el acento sobre la valorización de la experiencia no mediada. En este sentido la expresión “convertirse en animal” que acuñaron los filósofos Gilles Deleuze y Félix Guattari en *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980) sirve para describir un movimiento de liberación del imperio del lenguaje y prestar atención a otras formas de conocer, ser, e interactuar con lo que nos rodea. A partir de esta experiencia del exterior se produce un paso más con el llamado giro ético que anima a responder al *otro*. Para ello es necesario tomar conciencia del *otro* a través de la atención. Esta práctica puede llevarnos a formas de encuentro y de comunicación que no han de ser necesariamente de tipo verbal. De ahí que dicho giro posibilite también un paso más, el giro material que hoy en día permite conectar la zocrítica con la ecocrítica material. Esta vinculación emana de un proceso de asociaciones derivado de la tradicional identificación entre animal-cuerpo-materia. La ecocrítica material precisamente vuelve la mirada a la materia en todas sus formas. Lo animal ha sido precisamente una de sus primeras inquietudes como se refleja en la obra de la autora estadounidense Stacy Alaimo quien, en *Bodily Natures* (2010), hace alusión a esos *otros* que pueblan nuestros cuerpos en forma de microbios o al fascinante mundo de los seres que habitan en las profundidades oceánicas en espacios prácticamente vetados al ser humano. Todo esto y más (la fuerza del rayo, el poder de la luz, la expresividad de las olas...) constituyen lo que Jane Bennett denominan la materia vibrante en *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010). Tal giro epistemológico nos permite ver el mundo como una experiencia de vida radical, algo muy alejado del mundo como objeto de estudio al que conocer y someter. De ahí que se

derive un cambio de paradigma importante (algo que defienden las obras que analizo) hacia otras formas de estar en el mundo de manera que, a través de reconocer la *vibracidad* de todo cuanto nos rodea, nos volvamos más conscientes de la necesidad de respetarlo. Se trata de llegar a una relación uno a uno desarrollada en un plano de horizontalidad, no de verticalidad.

Dicho cambio de paradigma apunta hacia relaciones de tipo dialógico como las defendidas por Val Plumwood al hablar de la necesidad de crear un tipo de ética dialógica interespecífica que guíe nuestros contactos con los animales no humanos (*Environmental* 167-95). Del mismo modo, el ecocrítico estadounidense Patrick D. Murphy en *Literature, Nature and the Other: Ecofeminist Critiques* (1995), al hablar de la ficción como generadora de espacios alternativos, defiende que la literatura puede lograr proponer también modelos de relación diferente entre animales humanos y no humanos. Él se refiere a obras que se separan de la tradición del *nature writing* escritas en prosa y que hallan en la ficción de corte fantástico y/o especulativo su manera de hacernos pensar sobre una manera mejor, más equitativa de relacionarnos con ellos. Algo parecido sugiere el zoocrítico estadounidense Randy Malamud en su libro *Poetic Animals and Animal Souls* (2003). En él habla de cómo la imaginación empática se ve activada en el ejercicio de la lectura y nos permite acercarnos a lo que es ser *otro* animal (Malamud 9). De la misma manera, la psicóloga especialista en lectoescritura Maryanne Wolf indica, en *Proust and the Squid: The Story of the Reading Brain* (2007), que esta actividad, la lectura, puede definirse como una suerte de experiencia espiritual en la que por lo tanto, deduzco, es posible el encuentro entre el humano y el no humano.

Precisamente las novelas que analizo presentan este tipo de relaciones alternativas, alejadas del esquema que se propugna a partir de la mentalidad de amo. De hecho, utilizo el ejemplo de la literatura de primates porque los primates son una

especie frontera, es decir, una especie en la que se evidencia como explica el etnólogo y filósofo Raymond Corbey en *The Metaphysics of Apes: Negotiating the Animal-Human Boundary* (2005) la dificultad de la distinción entre lo humano y lo no humano, al verse ésta mediada por las construcciones culturales que la han afectado desde la Antigüedad clásica. Corbey analiza tres tipos de narrativa alrededor de las cuales se ha desarrollado la percepción de los primates no humanos por parte de los humanos. La primera arranca en el siglo dieciocho situando al ser humano en la cúspide de la creación divina y a los primates no humanos con los que se empezó a tener contacto desde el siglo diecisiete cerca de éstos debido a su similitud física. Se les consideraba pues seres que aún habitaban en una especie de tiempo edénico y por lo tanto en mayor armonía con la naturaleza que el ser humano. La segunda presidió todo el siglo diecinueve y buena parte del siglo veinte. Ésta narrativa se basa en crear una fractura con el animal a partir de considerar a los primates no humanos como el *otro* no civilizado, salvaje y monstruoso con respecto al cual se define el animal humano civilizado y superior en todo al anterior, liberado pues de sus ataduras animales. Por último, la tercera narrativa se desarrolla en el siglo veinte y redefine la relación entre los primates humanos y no humanos en base a los progresos científicos que han permitido afirmar la cercanía genética entre unos y otros llevando, junto con la filosofía de corte animalista, a que se defiendan el reconocimiento de una estatus moral y de unos derechos para ellos. El culmen de dicha narrativa lo constituye sin lugar a dudas el Proyecto Gran Simio que propone el reconocimiento de tres derechos fundamentales para los Grandes Simios: el derecho a la vida, a la libertad y al no sufrimiento.

A partir de estas reflexiones de corte antropológico realizo un repaso a lo que ha dado de sí la figura de los primates no humanos, los simios, en la imaginación literaria occidental a lo largo de la historia para poder establecer un marco de referencia, una

tipología básica y fundamental, a partir de la cual encuadrar mejor mi objeto de estudio y el porqué de su pertinencia hoy en día. Paso revista pues a un total de ocho imágenes de simios o monos. La primera de ellas recibe el nombre de encuentros con el *otro* y trae a la memoria como ejemplo arquetípico el personaje shakesperiano Caliban de *The Tempest*. Caliban se convierte en la representación del *otro*, sea éste esclavo, noble salvaje, persona de color o, como en el caso de las obras que nos ocupan, primate no humano. Seguidamente hago referencia al simio como espejo en el que los humanos ven reflejados sus vicios y errores como es el caso claro de la obra de Jonathan Swift *Gulliver's Travels* (1735) en la que el protagonista se enfrenta al contraste entre dos pueblos opuestos: los Houynhnms o el pueblo de los caballos sabios y estoicos, y los Yahoos o la raza de los seres antropoides caracterizados por su salvajismo. Al mismo tipo de historias pertenece la famosa novela del francés Pierre Boulle *La planète des singes* (1963), título traducido al español como *El planeta de los simios*, que ha inspirado una muy prolífica saga de películas de ciencia ficción. Un tercer motivo es el de la fábula del mono en la cual los protagonistas no humanos suelen aparecer investidos de cualidades que les convierten en seres superiores a los humanos. Este tipo de historias de clara vocación teriofílica quedan perfectamente ejemplificadas en la historia de Franz Kafka *A Report to an Academy* (1917) en la cual un mono cuenta su periplo por la sociedad humana y como éste le marcó profundamente al devolverle una visión descarnada de la sociedad humana. El mono aquí como en el caso de la novela de Daniel Quinn *Ishmael* (1992), que constituye parte del análisis central de esta tesis, se convierte en maestro del humano. Un cuarto motivo es el del mono como ser salvaje y cruel que aparece con cierta frecuencia en el convulso siglo diecinueve en obras como *Melincourt or Sir Oran Haut-Ton* (1817) de Thomas L. Peacock o en la muy conocida *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841) de Edgar Allan Poe. Sin embargo, en contraste

con esta imagen, en el siglo veinte aparece también la idea de lo salvaje como lo alejado de la civilización pero de lo cual puede derivarse una mayor virtud y sabiduría vital como de hecho queda representado en *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912) de Edgar Rice Burroughs. En ella las fronteras entre lo humano y lo no humano quedan desdibujadas a través de la figura de su protagonista, Lord Greystoke, quien descubre mediante el contraste entre la selva en la que habitaba con los monos y su vida en una gran mansión inglesa, símbolo del refinamiento de la civilización occidental, como la buena vida está en el contacto con lo primitivo, con lo salvaje, lo cual se halla más cercano a un estado de plenitud edénica. En quinto lugar describo la figura del mono enamorado y del mono como amante. Es cierto que la idea del novio o de la novia animal, tal y como recoge Bruno Bettelheim en *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1976), procede de un acervo cultural compartido por muchas culturas. Normalmente aquellas historias en las cuales el animal es macho suelen utilizar como protagonista animales que se identifican con conductas agresivas y en ellas el impulso sexual se asocia con lo salvaje. Por otro lado, cuando el animal es hembra, suele optarse por animales que representan características de sumisión o delicadeza. En el siglo diecisiete, siglo en el cual se identificaba a los grandes simios con criaturas primitivas y salvajes, se popularizaron historias que describían el rapto de una mujer por parte de un gorila u orangután, motivo éste que continuó en el siglo dieciocho y veinte aunque protagonizado por hembras lujuriosas como es el caso del anteriormente mencionado *Gulliver's Travels* y de la obra de John Collier *His Monkey Wife or Married to a Chimpanzee* (1930). Este tema del mono enamorado o amante ha sido reelaborado en la segunda mitad del siglo veinte en historias más acordes con las preocupaciones de los activistas por los derechos de los animales y, curiosamente, de acuerdo con la famosa historia o cuento de la Bella y la Bestia que en la versión dieciochesca de Madame

Leprince de Beaumont ensalza el poder transformador del amor. De ahí que en novelas como *The Woman and the Ape* (1996) de Peter Høeg o en *Wish* de Peter Goldsworthy (1995) el cuento obre su poder de manera inversa. El mono enamora al humano y éste es el que se transforma al tomar conciencia de su animalidad gracias a la atracción que siente por el animal. De manera que en esta última vuelta de tuerca se reivindica lo animal como elemento regenerador del ser humano que siendo tan animal como el protagonista no humano ha decidido olvidarse de su naturaleza y construir una separación con respecto al animal y la animalidad que representa. Un sexto tema es el simio como causa del activismo animalista. Así ha aparecido con frecuencia retratado en películas como *Project X* (1987), *Gorillas in the Mist* (1988), o *Project Nim* (2011), pero también en novelas como la de la escritora estadounidense Sara Gruen *Ape House* (2010). Esta historia cuenta la lucha de su protagonista, Isabel Duncan, por liberar a un grupo de bonobos de su utilización por parte de una cadena de televisión como protagonistas de un *reality show* consistente en filmar sus vidas en el interior de una casa construida para humanos. Un séptimo tema en relación con las historias de simios es el de los xenotransplantes o los transplantes entre primates humanos y no humanos. De hecho en esta tesis se analizan dos novelas *Animal Heart* (1988) y *Eva* (2004) que tratan este tema. Ambas permiten insistir aún más en lo contingente de la frontera entre lo humano y lo animal. Por último, existe también el tema del mono ecologista o aquél que se convierte en adalid de la causa medioambiental erigiéndose así también en portavoz de los animales. Este tipo de ejemplo se encuentra en obras como *Ishmael*, *Wish* y *Eva*. Éstas son historias también de transformación moral de los protagonistas humanos que se ven afectados por el ejemplo de los animales no humanos con los que entablan relaciones que los cambian profundamente.

De toda esta elaboración se extrae una consecuencia fundamental, que la literatura de primates, al ser los primates una especie frontera, puede convertirse en un buen ejemplo de superación de la división que separa a los animales humanos y no humanos. Esto nos lleva a la cuestión del ecofeminismo como base filosófica sobre la que sustentar el posterior análisis que curiosamente también se nutre de la ecocrítica en una de sus más recientes manifestaciones, la ecocrítica feminista. Esta rama de la ecocrítica deriva de la crítica literaria ecofeminista cuyos planteamientos teóricos fueron asentados por Patrick D. Murphy y por Greta Gaard entre otros en su libro *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy* (1998). Como base de su formulación figuran el dialogismo de Bakhtin, la consideración de que es posible dar voz a lo silente y que la literatura es uno de los mejores medios para hacer esto.

El movimiento filosófico conocido como ecofeminismo nació en Francia hacia finales de los años setenta gracias a la feliz acuñación del término ecofeminismo por parte de Françoise d'Eaubonne. Como tal el ecofeminismo parte de identificar la opresión de las mujeres con la de la naturaleza con la cual se las ha venido asociando tradicionalmente. Esta idea originaria termina extrapolándose en otra serie de opresiones que se desarrollan a partir del mismo patrón: el sometimiento de la gente de color, de los pobres, de los discapacitados, y de los gais entre otros. A pesar de esta visión ciertamente omnicompreensiva de los patrones sobre los que se sustentan los esquemas de opresión de los grupos marginados, las ecofeministas tardaron un tiempo en relacionar su opresión por el hecho de ser mujeres con la de los animales. Esto se ha debido fundamentalmente al temor de ser acusadas de una aproximación esencialista al tema. La identificación mujer-animal conlleva una mirada desde un biologismo que resulta reduccionista al convertir a las mujeres en meros cuerpos orientados fundamentalmente a la procreación y al cuidado de las crías, y por ello condicionadas

desde su nacimiento a cumplir con los roles que las sitúan siempre más cerca de la naturaleza, de lo material, de los animales, y claro está, habiendo sido estos tradicionalmente devaluados por la sociedad, la mujer aparece no solo marginada, sino terriblemente condicionada de manera que, si las ecofeministas se dedican a identificar mujer con naturaleza, mujer con cuerpo y con materia, mujer con animal, lo único que consiguen es devaluar aún más a la mujer asociándola precisa e inexorablemente con roles condicionados por su biología cuando de lo que se trata es de liberarlas de tales constricciones para que puedan ser, en el amplio sentido de la palabra, fuera de dichos etiquetajes. Sin embargo, hay ecofeministas como Carol J. Adams, Josephine Donovan y Greta Gaard y otras tantas que bajo el paraguas de la denominación “ecofeminismo animalista” han desarrollado toda una teoría de liberación entorno a la identificación mujer-animal, algo que no ven como necesariamente opresivo en cuanto a que les permite contestar desde la valorización de lo tradicionalmente desvalorizado—la emoción, la empatía, el interés por el otro—las opiniones condenatorias existentes al respecto de esta identificación y de lo que suponen en la lucha por la liberación de ambos: mujer y animal.

El ecofeminismo animalista norteamericano ha intentado precisamente demostrar que las mujeres y los animales son objetos intercambiables de opresión. Esta conexión se hace evidente en artefactos culturales cotidianos como las imágenes publicitarias. En 1990 Carol J. Adams publicó un primer estudio a este respecto titulado *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* en el cual consideraba el significado de comer carne en la sociedad occidental como algo relacionado con la cosificación de las mujeres tanto en la publicidad como en el propio lenguaje. A partir de aquí se dedicó a continuar aplicando su esquema del referente ausente extraído de las teorías estructuralistas y posestructuralistas, según el cual la

palabra esconde y de alguna manera convierte en invisible la existencia del ser. Así, la palabra *carne* no nos deja ver al animal, por ejemplo a la ternera que tuvo que morir para que la convirtieran en filete que acabó en nuestro plato. Lo llamativo es que en este juego de sustituciones e invisibilidades la mujer como objeto de consumo al igual que la ternera acaba convertida en imagen que puede sustituir al animal en el plato y viceversa.<sup>183</sup> De ahí que Adams analice sin descanso el inmenso repertorio de anuncios y campañas publicitarias que colocan en su centro a la mujer-animal o al animal-mujer, animalización y feminización una y otra vez impidiendo que veamos lo perverso de una identificación que perpetúa la opresión tanto de animales no humanos como de mujeres, la cual es además extrapolable, como ya se ha señalado, a cualquier opresión causada por ocupar un espacio de diferencia, de otredad que margina y separa a pesar de la fluidez de las fronteras entre ambos.

Como ejemplo del funcionamiento de estos mecanismos de opresión sexista y especista, esta tesis hace referencias a campañas publicitarias recientes donde mujeres y animales aparecen con frecuencia retratados juntos o bien tomando uno el lugar del otro y viceversa. A través del análisis de anuncios de moda y de las impactantes campañas de PETA (*People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals*) elaboro una taxonomía de anuncios en función del mensaje subyacente a las representaciones que entrañan animalización o feminización de sus protagonistas. Hay, por ejemplo, anuncios que

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<sup>183</sup> Esta eliminación de la condición de sujeto del animal ocurre también en muchas de las maneras en que algunos idiomas se refieren a los animales como alimento. A este respecto el lingüista británico Arran Stibbe ha investigado en *Animals Erased* (2012) las formas en las cuales los animales se extinguen no solo literalmente, sino también, “de nuestra consciencia” por la manera en la que nos referimos a ellos (Loc. 86). Stibbe se refiere específicamente al caso del inglés. En este sentido, al tratar sobre cómo ocurre esta desaparición en un nivel léxico, Stibbe trae a colación la reflexión de Peter Singer sobre la manera en la que el lenguaje nos separa del sufrimiento animal. Esto, explica Singer, ocurre en el uso de diferentes palabras dependiendo de si nos referimos al animal vivo o al animal convertido en alimento. Así en inglés la vaca, *cow* se convierte en *beef*, el cerdo, *pig* en *pork*, o la oveja, *sheep* en *mutton* (*Animal Liberation* 95). Aunque también es cierto que, como apuntan los historiadores de la lengua Albert C. Baugh y Thomas Cable, también existen razones históricas para tal cambio de nomenclatura al referirnos al animal convertido en carne. Las palabras francesas—*beef*, *mutton*, *pork*, y *veal*—cuando fueron incorporadas al inglés se usaron para referirse a la carne mientras que en inglés—*ox*, *sheep*, *swine*, y *calf*—se asociaron los animales vivos (Baugh y Cable 168).

inciden en la opresión de ambos, animales y mujeres, y otros que, sin embargo, se orientan hacia la liberación de estos. Con ello finalmente me introduzco en el mundo del diseñador británico Alexander McQueen quien se hizo eco de la realidad de abuso que muchas mujeres viven en su entorno doméstico y utilizó el medio que conocía, la moda, para cuestionar prácticas que también relacionaba con el mundo de los animales no humanos. McQueen partió inicialmente de la utilización de alusiones a imágenes de mujeres maltratadas en sus desfiles. Así ocurre, por ejemplo, en *Jack the Ripper Stalks His Victims* (1992) y en su muy polémico *Highland Rape* (otoño/invierno 1995-96). En una segunda fase que va desde su colección *Dante* (otoño/invierno 1996-97) a *The Girl Who Lived in a Tree* (otoño/invierno 2008-09) empieza a incorporar imágenes de mujeres representadas como híbridos humano-animales. Por último, su interés por los temas medioambientales le llevó a un esfuerzo por trascender las fronteras de la diferencia entre lo humano y lo no humano para crear un espacio de seres híbridos como retrata en *Plato's Atlantis*, su colección de primavera/verano de 2010. Ésta me permite conectar con el tema de la porosidad entre los elementos integrantes de los pares opuestos u opuestos binarios a los que se refiere Plumwood en su obra, y además plantearme la lectura de las novelas que constituyen el corpus de fuentes primarias de esta tesis desde los fundamentos del ecofeminismo animalista que alimentan sin lugar a dudas la ecocrítica feminista a la que Greta Gaard lleva dedicando grandes esfuerzos en los últimos años con artículos como “New Directions for Ecofeminism: Toward a More Feminist Ecocriticism” (2010) o libros como su reciente *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism* (2013) editado junto con Simon C. Estok y Serpil Oppermann.

Como se puede comprobar, en esta tesis doctoral la ecocrítica feminista aparece sustancialmente relacionada con la ecocrítica material que en definitiva es una derivación de los nuevos materialismos y más concretamente de los feminismos

materiales con su aproximación a la realidad de lo material desde posiciones que ponen en valor su agentividad. Tal y como se explica, la ecocrítica, como reconociera Scott Slovic en el número de otoño de la revista *ISLE* del año 2010, debe mucho de su desarrollo a la influencia que sobre ella ha tenido el ecofeminismo. Éste, como se explica en esta tesis, favorece el análisis interseccional, presta atención a las diversas formas que la opresión puede adquirir y por lo tanto está abierto a otras voces, a otras tradiciones con todo lo que ello puede aportar a la ecocrítica. En definitiva el interés que la ecocrítica presta a la voz del *otro* procede en gran aparte, como afirma insistentemente en sus artículos Greta Gaard, de la influencia que recibe del ecofeminismo. De manera que la ecocrítica o es ecofeminista o no será, pues la voz de la naturaleza y de los animales solo puede ser tomada en cuenta desde posiciones que consideran la posibilidad de entrar en diálogo entrañable con ese *otro* sometido, marginado, abandonado a la suerte de los perdedores en este mundo de constantes riesgos al que se ha referido Ulrich Beck en su obra *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (1992). Es en la posibilidad de este diálogo con el *otro* en el que el ecofeminismo se convierte en un puente fundamental hacia los estudios de animales y más allá, hacia el posthumanismo. De ahí que en esta tesis se haga mención no solo del giro hacia lo animal, sino también hacia lo material en el que nos hallamos inmersos hoy en día gracias a campos que curiosamente están estrechamente ligados con el pensamiento feminista. Me refiero a los materialismos feministas que tan bien ilustran Stacy Alaimo y Susan Heckman en su *Material Feminisms* de 2008 o a la hoy también estimada ecocrítica material a cuya difusión tanto esfuerzo están dedicando las pensadoras europeas Serpil Oppermann y Serenella Iovino.

¿Qué implica dicho giro material? Un paso de gigantes por su valorización de lo que tradicionalmente se consideraba como desprovisto de agencia y de significado: la

materia, el cuerpo, el animal. De este modo, como explica la filósofa italiana Rosi Braidotti en su artículo “Posthuman Humanities” (2013), las humanidades se ven necesariamente abocadas hacia convertirse en humanidades posthumanas en cuanto que trascienden al ser humano como medida de todo y aceptan necesariamente una óptica alejada del antropocentrismo. De ahí que sean historias sobre relaciones entre primates humanos y no humanos las que mejor ejemplifican la nueva medida de las cosas que inspira a los estudios literarios.

Por ello, la segunda parte de esta tesis, titulada HUMAN-ANIMAL DIALOGUES, se centra en cuatro novelas que describen formas diferentes de encuentro entre el animal humano y el no humano derivadas de prácticas de atención al *otro*. Esta segunda parte está dividida a su vez en dos secciones: DIALOGUES OF THE MIND: LEARNING FROM THE ANIMAL and DIALOGUES OF THE BODY: BECOMING ANIMAL. Esta división se debe a que en la primera sección el encuentro entre el animal humano y el no humano se produce dentro de un marco centrado en el diálogo entre maestro y alumno, mientras que en la segunda parte la comunicación entre humano y no humano se produce a través de la relación entre los cuerpos.

Ambas secciones giran entorno al análisis de dos pares de novelas respectivamente. En la primera se analizan *Ishmael: An Adventure of the Spirit and the Mind* (1992) del escritor estadounidense Daniel Quinn y *Wish* (1995) del australiano Peter Goldsworthy. La segunda comienza con el estudio de la novela *Animal Heart* (2004) de la autora norteamericana Brenda Peterson y *Eva* (1988) del británico Peter Dickinson.

*Ishmael* está narrada a modo de fábula contemporánea. En ella un humano sumido en grandes dudas existenciales encuentra un sugerente anuncio de un maestro a la búsqueda de alumnos a los que enseñar como salvar el planeta. Intrigado por

semejante ofrecimiento, Allan, el humano, acude al lugar en el que aparentemente el maestro se reúne con sus alumnos y allí encuentra un inmenso gorila con el que establece un diálogo telepático. La novela dividida en trece capítulos se centra en un primer momento en el tema de la cautividad. Este tema se trata en una primera fase literalmente en cuanto que se relaciona con los periodos de cautividad que el gorila ha sufrido a manos de los humanos, pero más adelante adopta un valor metafórico al comparar el gorila su privación de libertad con la esclavitud de los humanos a manos de un tipo de cultura que les hace prisioneros. A continuación el gorila reta a su alumno a analizar el porqué de esta cautividad que ha llevado a la sociedad humana a estar dividida en dos grupos, los *Takers* y *Leavers*, unos los que toman y explotan, otros los que habitan el planeta en armonía con la creación no utilizando más que aquello que necesitan. Una vez que el alumno comprende la dinámica que ha convertido a una gran parte de la humanidad en explotadores desmedidos de los recursos y opresores de los *Leavers*, así como del resto de especies que pueblan la Tierra, decide lanzarse él mismo en pos de su propia liberación y de la transmisión a otros de las enseñanzas de su maestro. Lamentablemente la novela termina con un sabor agridulce, al fallecer el gorila víctima de enfermedades contraídas como resultado de su cautiverio.

En el caso de *Wish*, la historia también se enmarca dentro de un esquema de relación maestro-alumno en la cual un profesor de lengua de signos, J.J., es requerido por una pareja para educar a su hija adoptiva. Al poco tiempo J.J. descubre que Clive Kinnear y Stella Todd son dos activistas animalistas cuya hija no es otra que una gorila rescatada de un laboratorio en el cual estudian la mejora cognitiva mediante experimentos con animales. Esto hace que Eliza, que así se llama la gorila, sea un individuo particular ya que tiene una gran facilidad para aprender. De esta manera, Eliza se convierte en la alumna preferida de J.J. que actúa como su Pígalión, enseñándole a

comunicarse y motivándola a desvelar con ello un pensamiento de extraordinaria sensibilidad que acaba por seducir a J.J. Pero de esta fascinación que siente J.J. por Eliza se deriva un final trágico, al igual que en el caso de *Ishmael*. Eliza, transformada ya en Wish ('deseo'), por ser la expresión de lo que todos desean ver en ella—portavoz animal, devota alumna, amante entregada—, termina por poner fin a su vida al haber sido confinada en un parque zoológico tras haber sido descubierta yaciendo con su profesor quien no ha dudado, enamorado como está de su alumna, en mantener relaciones sexuales con ella. Curiosamente, el bestialismo en esta novela aparece como expresión no de desviación, sino como expresión máxima de la eliminación de todas las barreras entre lo humano y lo no humano, ya que J.J. no ve en Eliza/Wish un objeto de placer egoísta sino verdaderamente un ser al que admira profundamente y a través del cual por fin se ha encontrado a sí mismo tras su fracaso matrimonial. *Wish* funciona como transición hacia la segunda sección en la que se habla de relaciones en las que la dimensión física o corporal alcanza una gran relevancia.

Ambas novelas de la segunda sección hacen referencia a las similitudes físicas entre animales humanos y no humanos lo cual sirve a la perfección para desestabilizar la frontera construida entre los dos. En *Animal Heart* Brenda Peterson se inspira en casos conocidos y recientes de xenotransplantes. Ésta es una técnica que consiste en utilizar el organismo de animales no humanos como fuente de órganos para curar o prolongar la vida de los seres humanos. La novela gira entorno a la historia de Marshall McGreggor, un fotógrafo marino que a raíz de un infarto y en un desesperado intento de salvarle la vida, recibe el corazón de un babuino. A partir de este momento, Marshall experimenta una serie de cambios importantes en su carácter y en su perspectiva de las cosas. De ser una persona generalmente retraída e individualista, sin apego por sus raíces, pasa a ser un hombre interesado por los demás y deseoso de establecer vínculos

con ellos. Reconecta con su familia y comienza a sentirse fascinado por una patóloga forense, Isabel Spinner, quien siente una gran devoción por los animales. Precisamente será Isabel, al igual que la madre y las hermanas de Marshall, la que percibirá desde el primer instante la transformación que ha experimentado Marshall tras el trasplante. Marshall ya no es la persona que solía ser, encerrada en sus proyectos y poco amigo de compartir con otros. El corazón del babuino le ha cambiado. Al sumirse en estados de casi inconsciencia como consecuencia de los inmunodepresores que toma, Marshall conecta con Sol, el babuino que fue sacrificado para prolongar su vida, y a través de él descubre el drama que desvelan sus recuerdos de un laboratorio en el que él y su familia vivieron la atrocidad de ser objetos de experimentación médica. Se les trasplantaban corazones de cerdo en el cuello para poder estudiar la viabilidad de este tipo de trasplantes en humanos. El mismo Marshall se siente una especie de experimento también ya que nadie le preguntó su parecer sobre el trasplante y ya no sabe muy bien cómo definirse a sí mismo. Lo que sí encuentra a través de Isabel es una gran afinidad por los primates no humanos además de por el resto de criaturas no humanas que pueblan la novela. De ahí que al abrirse a la realidad de otros seres y acogerlos literalmente dentro de sí, surja un voluntarioso deseo de acabar con su cautiverio y rescatarlos para darles una vida más acorde con sus necesidades.

En cuanto a la última novela analizada, con *Eva* el británico Peter Dickinson reescribe el mito judeo-cristiano de la creación desde la perspectiva de una adolescente, Eva, que consigue continuar con su vida tras ser víctima de un grave accidente de tráfico gracias al trasplante de su memoria neuronal al cuerpo de una chimpancé, Kelly. A partir de aquí Eva tiene que hacer un esfuerzo por adaptarse a los condicionamientos físicos del nuevo cuerpo, pero también a las tensiones derivadas de conjugar la naturaleza humana con la animal. Eva se convierte en la única representante de la

posibilidad de conjugar lo humano con lo no humano y, como tal, en un símbolo de esperanza de regeneración para el planeta Tierra que en el espacio distópico de esta novela aparece como un lugar cuyos recursos han sido explotados sin límite ni respeto alguno por el resto de las especies. De manera que, salvo por algunas especies de aves y de roedores y por los primates protegidos en las reservas por su posibilidad de uso para beneficiar al ser humano, ningún otro animal existe ya en el planeta.

La historia de Eva ejemplifica bien el proceso de deconstrucción o de eliminación de las barreras entre los pares que se mencionaron al hablar de Val Plumwood y su definición de la mentalidad de amo. Así Eva trasciende la división entre humano y animal, mente y cuerpo, cultura y naturaleza y termina por representar el posible futuro de una humanidad reinventada en la cual resulta de fundamental importancia la fusión con lo animal.

Todas estas obras plantean relaciones de tremenda cercanía entre animales humanos y no humanos y sirven para ilustrar que el futuro pasa por acoger lo animal en nuestro espacio vital y en nuestro interior. También a través del análisis de estas obras se logra demostrar el poder de la imaginación literaria para ofrecer alternativas, formas nuevas de entender y de estar en el mundo de manera que se produzca un efecto regenerador en nuestra sociedad. Este análisis abre las puertas también a un nuevo tipo de comprensión de las humanidades que se convierten ya en humanidades posthumanas, en el sentido de que éstas ya no miran exclusivamente hacia el ser humano como medida de la experiencia, sino que le consideran un ser más en la inmensidad de lo existente. Este campo tiene sin lugar a dudas un tremendo potencial e implica desde una perspectiva literaria tener en cuenta al *otro* en sentido amplio. Así la ecocrítica de origen alemán Ursula Heise en su artículo “The Posthuman Turn: Rewriting Species in Recent American Literature” (2011) hace una repaso a lo que ha sido el reflejo del

posthumanismo en las últimas décadas en la literatura norteamericana y menciona la figura del alienígena, del animal y del cibernético como los protagonistas de las distintas fases a través de las cuales se ha desarrollado el giro hacia lo posthumano. Heise describe cómo, desde los años cincuenta y hasta los setenta, el alienígena se convirtió en el imaginario popular americano en un ser del espacio exterior que operaba como *otro* en términos biológicos y tecnológicos. Más tarde, durante los ochenta y los noventa, le llegó el turno al cibernético, el humano al que se le han mejorado sus habilidades físicas o intelectuales a través de avances tecnológicos y que por ello se convierte en el *otro* con respecto al cual contrasta la idea del humano y las posibilidades que la ciencia y la tecnología le ofrecen de cara al futuro. Finalmente, a finales de los noventa y principios de los dos mil, el giro posthumano ha derivado en la atención que se le otorga al animal. Este interés mana en gran parte del valor que ha adquirido en los últimos años la biomedicina con avances como los xenotrasplantes que cuestionan la tradicional separación entre animales humanos y no humanos. Precisamente esta preocupación por la inexistencia de límites corporales entre los animales humanos y los no humanos alimenta el movimiento filosófico de los feminismos materiales al que he hecho referencia con anterioridad. La ecocrítica turca Serpil Oppermann en su artículo “Feminist Ecocriticism. A Posthumanist Direction in Ecocritical Trajectory” (2013) establece con meridiana claridad la influencia que el ecofeminismo ha tenido en este giro material de la ecocrítica que ha permitido que podamos pensar en la diferencia y en el *otro*, ha desmontado los dualismos y por lo tanto ha logrado colocarnos en un camino del cual puede surgir la regeneración de un planeta sumido en una creciente crisis medioambiental. Pensar en el animal no humano a través de la imaginación literaria que inspira los textos analizados en esta tesis nos lleva pues a interesarnos por nuestra

*Summary in Spanish / Resumen en español*

dependencia del resto de especies que nos rodean. Nos brinda por tanto la oportunidad de repensar las humanidades, la literatura y nuestra forma de existir.