Animal Remnants, Remaining Animal: Cross-Species Collaborative Encounters in Victorian Literature and Culture

by

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ABSTRACT

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“Animal Remainders” responds to the challenge of—and challenges to—Victorian animal studies, a sub-field of Victorian scholarship that has not seen the same popular critical reception as modernist or contemporary literary animal studies. Departing from the Victorian critical trend of reading literary animals as salient figures only so long as they can be imagined as symbolic or metaphoric for humans and human concerns, “Animal Remainders” takes literary animals—whether domestic pet or insect—seriously as animals. Moreover, these literary animals are acknowledged as producers of ethics as beings ensconced in a “chimerical collaboration.” The chimerical collaboration is inherently cross-species in nature and, within this collaboration, animals are capable of co-shaping the human and cross-species relations through the act of co-constitution, as well as being capable of explicitly or implicitly co-shaping texts such as literature and music in spite of communications barriers.

By reading literary animals as collaborators with, rather than metaphors for, the human I demonstrate that the humanism and anthropocentrism we credit the Victorians and their literatures with as a discipline breaks down—at least in part—as Victorian literary animals are more radical than they have been given credit for. In this spirit, each chapter of “Animal
“Remainders” focuses primarily on critically marginalized readings of cross-species collaborations as they manifest in Victorian texts—including Charles Dickens’ early novels, Wilkie Collins’ antivivisection novel *Heart and Science*, animal autobiographies by Virginia Woolf and Anna Sewell, and the poetry of Michael Field—as well as in contemporary literature, experimental music, and the digital humanities.

“Animal Remainders” foregrounds important methodological questions about the forces which discipline Victorian scholarship and the history informing our historicism, as well as more intimate questions about ourselves as scholars and living beings in a cross-species world. It enacts a fundamental un-knowing of the Victorian human and its—real or represented—animal other by asking, who is this nineteenth-century human (or) animal we study, but also who is the “we” doing the studying and through what histories and structures of knowledge have we come to know ourselves (and others) as such?
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I am especially grateful to my Chair, Helena Michie, as well as to Robert Patten. They have both shaped my dissertation in profound and positive ways, in addition to shaping me. They’ve presented me with excellent models for how to be a Victorian scholar, a teacher, and an advisor—models which I will strive to live up to. They’ve done this through their meticulous reading of my work, thoughtful and challenging commentary, and good advice, but also through their unfailing encouragement, understanding, and support during times of loss or difficulty. I thank them both, too, for actively supporting me and my project through a series of evolutions—“Animal Remainders” has changed a lot from the time I wrote my prospectus, in January 2011, to today—as well as for helping me to develop a Victorian animal studies project in spite of there being relatively few models out there.

I owe much thanks on this last score to Cary Wolfe as well; his Animal Theory course, which I took in my first semester, put a name and a concrete set of intellectual tools to a subject (literary animality) that I had been thinking about since I was a sophomore English major in college. Moreover, any time I met with him he would make me borrow a stack of books—sometimes I would return them and he’d give them back at our next meeting—whose insights became fundamental in some way to every chapter of the dissertation.
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I dedicate this dissertation to several individuals including my parents, my partner, and my grandparents. Although neither of my grandparents had college or advanced degrees, education was always a topic of pride for my grandfather when he would see my name in an honor roll list, while my grandmother was responsible for instilling in me the joy of reading (and being read to). This dissertation is also partially dedicated to Matthew Harding for being a selfless, supportive, and calming partner in my last push to finish the dissertation; his positivity,
humor, love and help all made finishing the dissertation a better experience than I ever thought it could be. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to Mike and Laura Eberhart, my parents. Perhaps surprisingly, my parents not only earn credit here for being the amazing and supportive parents that they are, but also because they have much to do with the substance of the dissertation that I wrote. My parents have always challenged me—sometimes in the form of a literal bet—to behave in ways that reflect my stated convictions. This is a characteristic they have continually modeled themselves. Well over ten years ago my dad challenged me to become a vegetarian in response to my reservations about, but complicity in, meat consumption. I accepted that challenge and have never looked back. Instead, my father’s challenge impels me to continue looking deeply into my own (still very questionable) consumption practices in addition to engaging in this dissertation and elsewhere with the issues of ethics and animality—activities which my parents have unfailingly supported and enabled.
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INTRODUCTION

As Alice Kuzniar, author of *Melancholia’s Dog*, aptly observes,

> The subject of dogs is presumed to be unfit for serious scholarly investigation: it is held to be sentimental, popular, and trivial, both by the academic and by the general lay population. Whenever I had to explain and justify to what I was devoting years of research and writing, I felt embarrassed. (1)

Where Kuzniar and I differ is that I have never felt embarrassed about my desire to think critically about the roles of nonhuman animals in Victorian Literature and culture. That I never shared Kuzniar’s externally-imposed embarrassment is due, in part, to two things: first, that I saw from my first year in graduate school, at which time I was enrolled in Cary Wolfe’s “Animal Theory” course, the inherent value of thinking seriously about nonhuman subjects in literature and, second, over the past six-years posthumanist, biopolitical, ecological, and animal-theoretical orientations have become increasingly popular in the humanities. Although I have had the question posed to me by my graduate school peers, it has become harder for well-intentioned humanists to seriously ask: “why worry about animals when we haven’t solved all of our human problems.” As the critical lenses mentioned above have pointed to, forcefully and convincingly, every part of our lives as humans—political policy, society and culture, the biological and otherwise—is tied up in how we have chosen to think about ourselves, our animal others, and our place within and relationship to a diversely speciated ecology.

To say that I have never been embarrassed by my work does not mean that others haven’t been embarrassed or incredulous on my behalf. Phrases like, “Writing about dogs—that must be fun!” have graced me at conferences and during conversations with non-academics. It’s true,
writing about nonhuman animals is fun for me—my undergraduate advisor recently pointed out that it has been a source of interest for me since college when I wrote about animality and race in Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and animal taxonomies in Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* without ever having heard the term “Animal Studies.” But, the “fun” of animal studies for me is not “sentimental, popular, [or] trivial” (Kuzinar 1). Instead, it is the fun of doing research and producing scholarship that, though difficult at times, has proven a source of sustained interest, intellectual challenge, and personal and professional growth. In the midst of writing and researching I have forgotten a lot about what I “know” about humans, nonhumans, and Victorian Literature and have discovered that, at the project’s end, I think of myself, animal others, and my chosen texts very differently from how I imagined them when I began. There have been unexpected surprises, epiphanies, and disappointments along the way and they have transformed the project I imagined in my prospectus in ways that I couldn’t have anticipated. Like Kuzniar, whose journey in writing *Melancholia’s Dogs* was perhaps more fraught than my own, this dissertation taught me to try to understand, write, and think about nonhuman others—including dogs, beetles, ravens, horses and pigs—as “demanding respect and attention on their own terms” and as capable of doing radical work as animals, rather than human metaphors, within the pages of Victorian and contemporary texts, and even experimental music (Kuzniar 4).

Discussing animals in Victorian literature is exciting not just for me, but for many academics I talk to at conferences. It conjures up a whole host of buried memories—forgotten passages about forgotten animal characters—which suddenly come to the foreground of recollection with force. Most frequently, these animals are recalled in ways that tap into standard Victorian readings of animal characters as symbolic for humans and human concerns. In “Animal Remainders,” I depart from this critical trend. I push beyond mere recollection of
animal characters and, moreover, beyond their standard reading as only or always symbolic or metaphoric. I push toward a new understanding of the Victorian period’s engagement with the cross-species, showing through the period’s literature that the humanism and anthropocentrism we typically credit the Victorians with breaks down—at least in part—when we closely read texts by Victorian authors and take the animal seriously on its own terms in those texts. Part of what “Animal Remainders” accomplishes is discovering Victorian animals in literature anew as more radical than Victorianists, as a group, have given them credit for. Animals are more than symbolic humans and (much) more than the ancillary characters they are sometimes made out to be.

Victorian scholar Ivan Krielkamp embodies, in his essay “Dying Like a Dog in Great Expectations,” the dominant critical trend which “Animal Remainders” resists. Krielkamp insists that Victorian literary animals occupy the status of “minor characters” (82). They are minor, he insists, because they can be and do only two things within the Victorian text. On the one hand, they can be ancillary characters who facilitate the activities of primary human characters with no direct benefit to themselves. Alternatively, then can be metaphors for human groups or human social concerns. Krielkamp is representative of a politically and critically meaningful agenda which Dominic Pettman, in Human Error, insists that many scholars “smuggle[]” in at the cross sections of literature and the cross-species (13). Pettman, using the specific example of Harold Bloom, characterizes this agenda as one which promotes the notion that whether we’re talking about Shakespeare or Dickens, “‘the representation of human character and personality remains always the supreme literary value’” (14). This agenda is deeply problematic and fundamentally reductive not only when applied to contemporary texts, but to Victorian texts as well.
Indeed, the Victorian period was characterized by many key moments in the history of animal rights, all of which moments reflect or ushered in changes to Victorians’ relationships with nonhumans. These key moments include Darwin’s explication of evolutionary theory (1859), the Antivivisection debates (1870’s), as well as the institution of various animal rights groups, including the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (1824), which was given “royal” status (RSPCA) in 1840. In the period, public and legal notions of animal ethics were just beginning to take shape and were alarmingly inconsistent even within committed animal rights organizations. Yet, in the period there was also an increased interest in the development and standardization of ethical structures that drew definitive lines between what kinds of relationships to nonhuman others, and specifically certain types of nonhumans, were permissible or not. A pervasive set of lower-class sporting and gaming activities, including cock and dog fighting, rat killing, bull running, and baiting wild animals, were, by the end of the century, made illegal, while similar sporting activities, like the genteel sport of fox hunting, remained legal (and did so until 2004) (Ritvo 125). The period saw, too, Victorians earnestly beginning to selectively breed and domesticate animals, most significantly dogs and show stock (such as cattle), who increasingly became re-valued as sentimentalized members of the family and/or status symbols for middle and upper-class households. Other nonhuman animals lived out their—often brutal—lives not as symbols of wealth and domesticity, but as vital components in working-class labor, while newly-valued domestics and non-domeats were co-opted into the scientific labors of the period’s most highly esteemed scientists and scientific institutions (Ritvo 125).

Although animal protection texts did exist in small quantities as early as the end of the eighteenth century, animal rights were of marginal importance to lawmakers in the early years of the nineteenth (French 23-4). When the House of Commons was presented with the first animal
protection bill in 1800, the issue was considered so much “beneath the dignity of Parliament” that the vast majority of members failed to vote on the issue, let alone attend the meeting (Ritvo 2-3; 125). By 1824, however, the issue of securing legal rights for animals began to surface as, if not a widely popular issue, one resonant with a select faction of the British public who collected under the leadership of Richard Martin to form the SPCA (later the RSPCA). The SPCA was formed for the explicit purpose of “extend[ing]…the ‘revolution in morals’” represented by Parliament’s passage of Martin’s Act of 1822, a bill drawn up by Richard Martin himself which sought to protect farm and draft animals from cruelty at the hands of their owners (Ritvo 127). Martin’s Act was followed in 1835 by another animal rights initiative born out of the activities of the SPCA: the Act to Consolidate and Amend the Several Laws Relating to the Cruel and Improper Treatment of Animals. This new piece of legislation, also passed by Parliament, was designed to extend to domesticated animals—pets such as dogs and cats—the same protection against cruelty that had previously been awarded to farm and draft animals, while also making animal combat events illegal (Ritvo 128).

RSPCA activity in the nineteenth century attempted to address a wide array of animal abuses through both legal and non-legal (such as prose and poetic) interventions—members produced and disseminated animal rights literature, authored and lobbied for legislation, and identified and prosecuted those who flouted extant animal rights laws. The organization was one primary force in articulating alternative ethical and practical relationships to nonhuman animals running the gamut from domestic pets to livestock and sporting animals; even animals used in period science. Moreover, it was the starting grounds for many off-shoot animal rights groups of the period, groups which often espoused more radical working and living relationships with nonhumans. One such group was Francis Power Cobbe’s Victoria Street Society, a group that
took a much harder line on the issue of animal vivisection as a legitimate scientific practice than the RSPCA dared to. The debates occurring between the RSPCA and Victorian society at large as well as between the RSPCA and its more radical offshoots highlights the period’s constantly changing and evolving consideration of nonhuman animal life. Rather than being unanimous in how they defined and related to animals, Victorians’ ideas on the cross-species were many and contradictory; animals were viewed as commodity and companion, as subject of justice, as a means for science or means in themselves, as Oedipal pet, as domestic and wild, native and foreign, rural and urban, upper-class and lower-class, purebred and mongrel, symbolic or non-symbolic (to name only a small list). Rather than demonstrating a coherent consensus on how to understand nonhuman lives and responsibilities and relationships to these lives, Victorians both within and outside of the animal rights movements were testing out and negotiating novel institutional and personal responses to the problem of the cross-species, a reality that manifests itself in the period’s literature.

My project exploits the often contradictory ways Victorians responded to certain types or classes of nonhumans, as well as the host of contradictory characteristics and qualities which they used to categorize them. Period literary texts are a multiplicity as they grapple in different ways, and with different outcomes, with the implications of the nineteenth-century historical shift in thinking the animal. The forms cross-species ethics take in the Victorian period, and the debates occurring within and between these forms, are pre-conditional to imaginings and reimaginings of cross-species ethical possibilities in the period’s literature. The period saw some of the first pieces of literature preoccupied with thinking the animal as a subject of respect, response, rights and even the ability to be a meaningful agent—even an author. We have the dog-, pony-, and raven- laden texts of Dickens—*David Copperfield’s* Jip (dog), *Oliver Twist’s*
Bull’s-eye (dog), and *The Old Curiosity Shop*’s Whiskers (horse), to name only a few of Dickens’ significant animal agents. Moreover, we have Anna Sewell’s tale about the plight of horses in *Black Beauty* (written to further the rights agenda of the RSPCA) in addition to Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s poem “To Flush, My Dog,” later novelized by Virgina Woolf as *Flush: A Biography* (1933). Add to these a whole host of other texts, including those by such disparate entities as Thomas Hardy (*Jude the Obscure* and *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*), Michael Field (*Whym Chow Flame of Love*), and Wilkie Collins (*Heart and Science*), that grapple with the question of the animal and the human-as-animal and each author foregrounding animality formally and conceptually quite differently than the one before. In many ways, this indeterminacy of representation mirrors the indeterminacy of period responses to the question of the animal.

Because of the richness of the Victorian period’s engagement with the cross-species and how this engagement is reflected in the period’s literature, the Victorian is an especially useful site for posthumanist and animal theoretical investigations of literary animal representation. Yet, Victorian literary studies, in conversation with the swiftly codifying fields of posthumanism and animal studies, have only begun to pay serious attention to representations of the animal and animality. This is in part, I suggest, because sustained Victorian animal studies projects challenge our consensus on disciplinary history and the forms our literary scholarship can take as Victorianists. As Cary Wolfe explains in *What is Posthumanism?*, dominant disciplinary understandings of period histories and their literatures are stories we tell and reify through re-telling. These stories and their reifications are a consequence of the governing structures of our own disciplinarity, hence Wolfe warns that “historicism has to be aware of the historicity of its own modes of disciplinary practice” and insists that “it can’t do that without theory” (106).
Posthumanist theoretical applications to Victorian texts, then, make apparent how “accepted modes and protocols of knowledge” both “discipline” and give “form” to Victorian history and literary historicist scholarship (106). Recourse to theory as a complementary critical lens helps expand our selective disciplinary histories and subsequent literary critical productions by increasing the data with which we can think and write. No longer constrained, as in Pettman’s example using Bloom, to reading period histories and literatures with traditionally anthropocentric disciplinary agendas, our critical possibilities increase exponentially alongside theory. Wolfe draws on the calculations of Franco Moretti to illustrate just how forcefully disciplinarity disciplines the work we do as scholars, noting that the British literary canon may only include .5% of the actual historical data (texts) extant, while leaving out, entirely, the additional 99.5% (106). Whether it is the canon itself at stake or the way we understand period history and, consequently, read literature alongside its historical contexts, it is clear that we sacrifice alternative histories and alternative critical agendas if we do not, at least partially, turn to theory.

Yet, posthumanist and animal studies projects have been slow to catch on in Victorian studies. There appear to be two dominant fears which operate in the background of such resistance to Victorian animal studies as an intellectual discipline. First, a fear that by subjecting historically distant Victorian texts to contemporary critical discourse, we merely set these texts up for failure as they inadequately embody contemporary theoretical notions of animality and the cross-species. A second fear seems to be that by reading Victorian texts through contemporary critical lenses we might, in some sense, lend these texts an undue level of cross-species sophistication, ameliorating real problems with the dominant forms animal representations take in the period and how these representations correlate to larger social-historical trends in
understanding cross-species interactions. Yet, the option that is left to Victorian scholars is no less—even more—problematic: to continue understanding Victorian cultural responses to the cross-species as unanimous, rather than complex and divergent, while continuing to read animals in Victorian texts only as ancillary and metaphoric for the human as a result. As Deborah Morse writes in the introduction to her edited collection of Victorian animal studies essays, *Victorian Animal Dreams*, Victorian animal studies is a useful and necessary sub-field of Victorian scholarship. It looks “backwards to the Victorian discourse on animals, but…from a sophisticated perspective that is aware both of continuity and change in the status of the ‘animal’ [and the human] in industrializing and postindustrial societies” (5). Morse’s explanation of the stakes and outcomes of Victorian animal studies is instructional. She highlights the fact that reading the Victorian literary text through the lens of animal theory does not sacrifice the historical or literary-formal integrity of the Victorian cannon. Instead, it is a means of acknowledging the Victorian period as an integral site for investigating and mapping the changing historical relations between humans and animals and, moreover, a means of thinking sophisticatedly, through theory, about the forces which “discipline” and “form” the version of history that determines our historicism and critical reading strategies as Victorianists.

“Animal Remainders” is a response to the challenge of—as well as challenges to—the Victorian animal studies project. In it, I am invested in utilizing posthumanist and animal studies critical insights to read and think the literary animal, the human, and the cross-species encounter in a way that attends to (1) the multiplicity of cross-species representation in Victorian literature; (2) the ways in which this multiplicity of representations converges and diverges from the dominant stories Victorian culture imagined and told about human and animal subjects, and (3) the ways in which this multiplicity of representation converges and diverges from the dominant
stories scholars tell about Victorians and the cross-species. In this spirit, “Animal Remainders” focuses primarily on historically and critically marginalized cross-species collaborations as they manifest in fiction or in authorship practices during the Victorian period and, in the final chapter, in contemporary literature, experimental music, and perhaps in the digital humanities. At its core, “Animal Remainders” foregrounds important methodological questions: questions about the forces which discipline Victorian scholarship and the history informing our historicism, as well as more intimate questions about ourselves as scholars and living beings in a cross-species world.

My methodology in the dissertation is multi-fold. I engage with historicism in order to place literary discussions alongside relevant historical materials on, for example, domesticity and masculinity in my first chapter (Dickens) and Victorian animal rights and antivivisection activities in my second chapter (Collins). However, “Animal Remainders” not only deploys historicism as a practice, but self-consciously questions our dominant disciplinary history through theoretically-inflected readings of period literature. To perform this questioning I rely throughout the dissertation on posthumanism and critical animal studies as lenses through which to focalize my extended engagement with the sub-discipline of Victorian animal studies. In my first chapter I draw upon Donna Haraway’s concept of the “contact zone” as the basis for identifying cross-species agency within the domestic space, while also discussing problematic attempts by Dickens’ male characters to “become-animal,” a process articulated in Deleuze and Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus, and which is critiqued by Derrida as just another humanist fantasy. In my second chapter, I draw on Derrida’s problematization of defining animality and humanity on the basis of reaction versus response,¹ and foreground the concept of “thrownness,” as articulated by Cora Diamond, to analyze and explain human ethical responses to nonhuman

¹ From “The Animal That Therefore I am (More to Follow).”
collaborative agency in Collins’ *Heart and Science*. I then revisit Haraway, along with Alice Kuzinar and Vicki Hearne, in my third chapter on Victorian forms of cross-species collaborative authorship. In my final chapter, in addition to turning to contemporary print, sound, and digital text, I turn to sound studies and acoustemology as well as slightly toward Haylesian-posthumanity in my discussion of the digital humanities as a pedagogical tool for understanding representations of animality.

The critical-theoretical underpinnings of my project are borne out most explicitly through my method of close reading Victorian literary animals. I read moments of animal representation against disciplinary reading practices to complicate our understanding of Victorian ethical and textual histories—histories in which nonhuman animals are read not as *animals*, but as ideological fantasies of the ethical subject par excellence: the human. Per my method, animals are read as “literal” or non-metaphorical, in the sense of not being metaphorical for the human or human concerns. My use of the terms “literal” or “non-metaphorical” to describe literary animals may sound contradictory or nonsensical given that most of the animals I read are, in fact, not “literal” or real, but are fictional representations that may have some form of metaphorical significance or relationship to the text. However, what I mean by reading Victorian animals as literal or non-metaphorical is a method of reading by which traditional scholarly interpretations of these animals as symbolic for humans and human activity are subordinated to make room for new critical readings which acknowledge the functionality, agency, and meaningfulness of these animals *as animals*. Hence, whereas Grace Moore argues in “Beastly Criminals and Criminal Beasts: Stray Women and Stray Dogs in *Oliver Twist*” that the dog, Bull’s-eye, in Dickens’ *Oliver Twist* is metonym and metaphor for domestic partners, Nancy and Bill Sikes, I suggest in my first chapter that such a reading is problematic and critically limiting. Moore’s (and others’)


insistence on interpreting Bull’s-eye as the metaphor he resists being is analogous to the antagonist, Sikes,’ own failed—even deadly—method of interpreting Bull’s-eye not as his dog, Bull’s-eye, but as a metonym for his deceased spouse, Nancy. Just as the violence of metaphorizing Bull’s-eye is deadly to Sikes intra-textually, so too is metaphorizing Bull’s-eye delimiting for our scholarship.

In addition to expanding the spectrum of our possible critical responses to Victorian literary animality in the way modeled above, my “literal” reading method is inherent to the texts themselves rather than being artificially imposed. I have chosen my dominant Victorian texts in the dissertation, including a selection of early Dickens novels, Wilkie Collins’ *Heart and Science*, the late poetry of Michael Field, and the animal autobiographies *Black Beauty* and *Flush*, in addition to two contemporary texts, Indra Sinha’s *Animal’s People* and Matthew Herbert’s experimental album *One Pig*, because they lend themselves to my method of close reading in the dissertation. Indeed, the animals I read—including Bull’s-eye—resist full interpolation into human symbol or metaphor on the basis of being actual or represented collaborators. The collaborations of which these animals take part are cross-species dyads or triads which occur within or outside of text, and animals in these collaborations perform their metaphorical resistance through verbal or embodied forms of communicative agency.² I term the collaborations of which these metaphorically-resistant animals are a part “chimerical collaborations.” I employ the term to stress that these are not just any collaborations, but are more concretely defined as collaborations which: (1) are cross-species, (2) perform two-primary

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² In my first chapter, for example, I read animals in Dickens’ early novels as non-metaphoric, literal animal agents who are both the recipients of domestication from humans, but are also capable of exerting what I call “reverse domestication” on their human partners. By turning the force of domestic power back on their human collaborators, animals help create or sustain particular forms of human identity (gender), domesticity, and cross-species ethical structures. Although the agency of the animal in the collaborative unit differs from text to text with unique results, something along the lines of “reverse domestication” is exercised by all of the animals that I identify as resisting traditional disciplinary reading strategies.
functions, the first related to humanity and co-constitution, the other related to authorship, and
(3) are characterized by the collaborators’ abilities to retain individual, species difference.

The two primary functions the chimerical collaboration serves are as follows: First, these
collaborations recuperate what I term the human’s disavowed “animal remainder”—its
biological, animal heritage—by expressing the being of humans and human activity (including
domesticity) as inherently cross-species and relational. These collaborations not only debunk the
myth of humanism—namely, that humans are set apart from all other animal life and that
humans have rightly rejected their own animality—but do so while simultaneously respecting the
real differences between cross-species collaborators. The second function of the chimerical
collaboration is tied to authenticity and authorship, as humans and animals form explicitly or
implicitly expressed units of authorship in which animal voices are spoken, to greater and lesser
degrees, with and not for. In this second function of the chimerical collaboration, the right to
claim authorship and the creation (real or imagined) of cross-species textual products are at stake
as “animal” forms of communication—captured in sound or embodied—are integrated in a place
of more and less prominence alongside the communications of the animal’s implicit or explicit
human collaborator(s).

Both functions of the chimerical collaboration articulated above are made possible by the
retention of species difference, even as divergent species unite to co-constitute and co-author.
Hence, rather than relying on the term “collaboration” alone to carry the primary conceptual
weight, I have supplemented the more general term with the word “chimera.” The chimera is a
female monstrosity from Greek mythology that is part lion, part serpent, and part goat; I use it
here to invoke and subsequently negate the notions of impossibility and fantasy that frame the
term. It is really, I argue, the humanistic notion of a humanity purified of and set apart from
collaborative cross-species activity that is fantastical, while the chimera’s seemingly monstrous species-multiplicity can be envisioned as more closely approximating the actual state of the human and the reality of cross-species life. The chimerical form is especially apt because it both gestures toward sameness—a shared body of being—while avoiding the absorption of multiple species into a fully integrated and seamless individual which can be all things at once: a dream that humanism has for the human who can be apart from, and yet master of, all nonhumans. The chimerical form retains difference and distinction, even as its cross-species parts are framed in one body. Despite sharing a body, the individual identities of the chimera’s animal constituents, and the borders between these identities, are obvious. This obviousness of difference is perpetually retained; there is no full absorption or synthesis of the individual animals. This lack of synthesis is significant, as the chimera physically embodies a continuous act of cross-species collaboration as interactions between its species-distinct parts produce a mode of being that is entirely new: not the mode of being experienced by any one of the constituent species but, instead, something else altogether.

The benefits of defining, identifying, and reading animals per my method and primary conceptual term, the “chimerical collaboration,” are multiple. First, my method of identifying metaphorically-resistant animals as participants in chimerical collaborations and subsequently reading them non-metaphorically enables me to directly contribute to Victorian scholarship. I contribute a historically, literarily, and theoretically competent Victorian animal studies project and I validate the stakes of such a project by way of contributing novel, ethically and disciplinarily salient interpretations of Victorian literary animality. My mechanism for defining and identifying metaphorically-resistant literary animals is sensitive enough to flag animal subjects, including insects and farm animals, that critics tend to overlook on the basis of their
status as either non-domestic or utilitarian in domestic function. Hence, my method expands the
types of nonhumans scholars may recognize and respond to in the theoretically and historically
sensitive ways discussed above, thereby challenging disciplinary consensus on what animals
count (as demonstrated in my second chapter). Moreover, my method of identifying and reading
metaphorically-resistant animals is both intrinsic to my chosen texts as well as being portable; it
can be taken up by other Victorian scholars while being applicable, too, to contemporary
literatures and texts whose animal subjects can be identified as agents within a chimerical
collaboration.

To animal studies—Victorian and not—I also contribute several terms which denote the
forms animal agency can take within a cross-species dyadic or triadic collaborative structure.
These include “reverse domestication,” which is when an animal turns the force of domestication
back on humans in a dyad or triad in an activity of co-constitution, as well as the term “animal
remainder,” which I define as the human’s often denied animal-biological heritage, which the
animal reinvests the human with via collaboration and co-constitution. Yet another
terminological and conceptual contribution is the “chimerical collaboration” itself. The
“chimerical collaboration” is an important contribution to Victorian animal studies (and animal
studies scholarship more generally), but also to theories on collaboration and, specifically,
theories on “queered” collaboration between traditional and non-traditional subjects.3
Chimerical collaboration re-describes collaboration as a cross-species, rather than human,
activity whose product is functionally hybrid and irreducible to any one category or species of

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3 For example, Victoria Ford Smith situates children as co-authors with adult writers of children’s fiction, thereby expanding the definition of collaboration to include non-traditional subjects who perform widely divergent activities when the collaborative relationship. Others, including the collaborators Susan Leonardi and Rebecca Pope, have discussed other forms of “queered” collaboration, including feminist collaborations, lesbian and gay collaborations, and the like (633). Because “queer” collaborations as a term “assimilates a variety of unconventional practices, desires, and social positions” it is, I suggest, a useful label for cross-species collaborations as well (Leonardi and Pope 633).
being. The hybrid character of the chimerical collaboration is in keeping with discussions by Donna Haraway, Susan McHugh, and others of the co-evolutional nature of species as well as their co-constitution. However, the chimerical collaboration I articulate has additional purchase: it figures nonhumans as functional co-authors not only of cross-species identity and being more abstractly, but of literature, music and other art forms. This is significant because animals are more typically understood as symbolic or implied co-authors or, alternatively, serve the function of passive subjects that do not author, but are represented by human authors.

In addition to contributing more generally to our understanding of who can be a collaborator and what forms and products that collaboration can take and make, the concept of the chimerical collaboration allows me to contribute specifically to Victorian scholarship on collaborations. Particularly, I contribute to our understanding of the Michael Field collaboration. First, I demonstrate that chimerical collaborative authorship, including Field’s, is inherently feminist. Consequently, I align my reading with feminist interpretations of Field and against scholars who have cited Field as not feminist on account of the male pseudonym and Bradley’s and Cooper’s secrecy about their female authorship. More importantly, however, while traditional Victorian scholarship associates the Field pseudonym only with Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper, I complicate this view. I articulate, through the concept of chimerical collaboration, several phases in the evolution of the Field identity. Each phase is defined by an animal co-author, Whym Chow, whose literal animal collaboration intensifies the Field collaboration, while his death and reinscription as a symbolic co-author and represented metaphor causes the Field collaboration to self-destruct.

“Animal Remainders” also contributes a concept for a multi-media digital humanities project. The digital humanities project I conceptualize in my final chapter, the “chimeric animal
autobiography,” involves the digital annotation of animal autobiographical texts (or animal-oriented texts more generally) with a combination of sound, moving, and static images. Such a digital product may constitute a new representational strategy for writing animal autobiographical fictions; it may also be useful as a pedagogical tool within the Victorian or animal-studies classroom and, perhaps, (although more problematically) to scholars as a new way to conceptualize Victorian digital editions.

A final contribution of “Animal Remainders” is that it enacts a fundamental un-knowing of the Victorian human and its—real or textually represented—animal other by asking, who is this nineteenth-century human (or) animal we study, but also who is the “we” doing the studying and through what histories and structures of knowledge have we come to know ourselves (and others) as such? Animal theory and posthumanism are at the core of these questionings, as well as of my theoretically-inflected close reading method, both of which allow “Animal Remainders” to undertake and model the largely un-taken challenge of a sustained Victorian animal studies project that is historically, literarily, and theoretically responsive. Like the chimera which produces something different and other than any one of its components, “Animal Remainders” produces something else: paying attention to chimerical collaborations in Victorian literature has surprising effects, surprising even to me at times, as traditional understandings of period texts, the period’s ethical imaginary, and our disciplinary knowledge undergo significant complication and transformation.

The dissertation is organized through companion chapters that are roughly chronological; each companion set taps into one function of the chimerical collaboration discussed above. In the first set of chapters I discuss how nonhuman animal characters in Victorian literature, including beetles, ravens, and bulldogs, can and should be read against the disciplinary grain and
against popular conceptions of Victorian relationships to animals. In these chapters nonhuman animals operate as agents who help, through collaborative activity, redefine human identity as a cross-species construct (rather than humans being viewed as purified of their animality or, what I call their “animal remainder”) in addition to re-defining themselves as reciprocal agents rather than passive recipients of human activity.

In these companion chapters my dominant term, chimerical collaboration, exists in the form of cross-species collaborations occurring between human and nonhuman characters as represented in the fictional Victorian text. These collaborations, whether implicit or explicit in the originating text, produce chimerical versions of human and nonhuman identity. As such, all collaborators operate as ethical agents who, through intimate interaction and response, produce and re-produce each other into continually new forms, each new form undergirded by new concepts of respect and responsibility that manifest on the level of definition of self and species identity, gender, domesticity, and even profession. Importantly, however, each chapter facilitates these insights through distinct animal categories. My first chapter foregrounds common domestic animal types, including dogs and horses, while my second chapter foregrounds a more unexpected animal intermediary: a beetle. Hence, even as the stakes of these two chapters align, the second chapter’s beetle-agent nuances the discussion, moving us away from idealized domestic animal types, and moving us instead toward nonhuman types that typically go unregistered.

The second set of companion chapters focuses primarily on the chimerical collaboration’s function in relation to the issues of authenticity and authorship. This discussion is staged through Victorian forms of animal co-authorship, including the animal autobiographies Flush and Black Beauty, contemporary forms of sound-based animal authorship, including Animal’s
People and One Pig, as well as in a digital humanities project I propose. In these companion chapters, chimerical collaboration operates differently than in the preceding set. In these chapters I’m interested in how implicit or explicit collaboration between humans and nonhumans in situations of co-authorship can enable a speaking with the animal rather than a speaking for the animal, a question I address first through print texts, and later through sound-based texts, and finally as a problem for multiple media via the digital humanities. In the final chapter I turn from Victorian texts to contemporary texts, in addition to turning to sound studies and acoustemology as interpretive methods. The result of the authorial chimerical collaborations I explore is the creation of a final product that—whether textual or audio, digital or not digital—foregrounds animal experience and animal voice in ways more and less responsive to the problems of anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism, while still being chimerical in the sense of being multi-species in origin.

In the first chapter, “Reverse Domestication and the Collaborative Politics of Domesticity in Earley Dickens,” I establish my project’s methodological stakes and debut my close reading practice by locating animals at the forefront of Dickens’ early domestic imaginary. In this and subsequent chapters, I read animals as animals imbued with distinctly nonhuman forms of agency and ethically-transformational collaborative possibility, rather than as metaphorical figures for marginal human figures or populations (as they are often read). I argue that Dickens employs a domestic triad—composed of human male, female, and animal—in his early work to insist that the agency of the animal as an animal is necessary for creating and sustaining a series of diverse domestic and masculine typologies. These typologies manifest in texts as diverse as Oliver Twist, The Old Curiosity Shop, Barnaby Rudge, and David Copperfield and through a
series of domestic animal types, including horses, dogs, and ravens who are either acknowledged
or go unacknowledged—with dire results—as animal collaborators in the cross-species triad.

The cross-species triad facilitates Dickens’ re-imagination of human-animal power
dynamics such that animals are able to trouble established period hierarchies by being not just
subjects of domestication, but exercising what I term “reverse domestication” on human beings.
Reverse domestication is my way of signaling Dickens’ reconceptualization of domestic power
as something wielded by humans and animals across species divides, this power proving
significant for understanding the domestic politics and ethics of Dickens’ early novels as he
carves a path toward radically challenging Victorian assumptions about masculinity, domesticity,
and the transformative ethical power of cross-species collaborations.

While in my first chapter on “reverse domestication” in early Dickens novels I introduce
my method of closely reading animals as non-metaphorical (for humans) through readings of
dogs, horses and other domestics, in “Beetle Ethics in Wilkie Collins’ Heart and Science,” I
demonstrate that this method is not constrained to domestic animals—an ethically and
aesthetically privileged group. Although we tend to associate cross-species ethical activity with
domestic animals, I reveal that in Wilkie Collins’ much neglected (and critically maligned)
antivivisection novel, Heart and Science, insects have the power for collaborative agency and
ethical promotion and, in fact, that the beetle a more successful ethical collaborator on account of
its non-domestic status. Collins moves beyond the ideological investments and activities of the
period’s animal rights and antivivisectionist groups in addition to critiquing late-period scientific
practices such as vivisection by problematizing a historically and culturally dispersed set of
speciesit ethical structures that allow animals to be envisioned as valuable on the basis of their
sentimentalized domestic status or their ability to be instrumentalized for human “progress” and gain.

Working with Cora Diamond’s concept of the cross-species encounter’s ability to “throw” or “jolt”—in an emotionally potent, embodied and fleshly way—the traditional humanist subject out of itself and into a new, multi-species being I argue that Collins imagines a Victorian ethical worldscape in which a mundane encounter with an insect puts into motion a re-description of the human self and the formation of collaborative animal ethics. In this chapter the agency of the animal is perhaps made even more powerful than in my first chapter, as a common beetle that goes unnoticed in Collins’ text—and which I left unremarked through several readings of the novel—emerges as that text’s most productive ethical subject. The beetle’s significance is manifold. It not only acts as a catalyst for the main character, Ovid’s, recognition of his own affinity with nonhumans and for his subsequent adoption of a professional and personal identity that is highly attune to the agency, specificity, and significance of non-human animal others, but also serves to trouble categories of species privilege that originated in Victorian middle- and upper- class pet-keeping practices and which persist in Western cultures today.

In “Animalizing Authorship: The Victorian Animal Autobiography and Michael Field,” I explore our desire for the anthropomorphic speaking animal and discuss how animal communication and collaborative animal authorship are figured in Victorian animal autobiography and the poetry of Michael Field. I define collaboration as an implied or overt co-authorship of a piece of literature by two or more (non)human authors who may be fictional or real. However, I make a distinction between forms of collaborative authorship in the chapter on the basis of three criteria: whether the collaborative product is (1) signed using a co-signature,
(2) resists division into individual contributions, and (3) challenges societal expectations about identity, communication or authorship through collaborational structure, literary form, or content. These three criteria are at the heart of a distinction I make between speaking or writing as and for an animal co-author, as in the Victorian animal autobiography, versus writing or speaking with that animal, as in the case of the poetry of Michael Field.

My discussion of Victorian animal autobiography highlights the tensions between representations of animal communication and the issues of authorship and authenticity implicit in the form of the animal autobiography itself. I read Victorian and early twentieth-century animal autobiographies, Virginia Woolf’s *Flush* and Anna Sewell’s *Black Beauty*, in ways that complicate two dominant critical responses to these texts—either to reject the animal autobiography as humanistic and anthropomorphic, or to read the animal autobiography only as symbolic of human individuals, groups, or concerns. Specifically, I demonstrate that the animal “author’s” embodied and verbalized animal communications as represented are met with misunderstanding, missed-understanding, or are rejected and, moreover, that these communications, as well as the spectrum of human responses to them, serve as moments of resistance to otherwise problematically anthropocentric collaborations. I then transition my discussion to the Victorian collaborative, cross-species poetic identity, Michael Field, which embodies an alternative vision of cross-species collaborative authorship: speaking with the animal instead of speaking for it.

I argue that Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper achieve a seamless, hybrid authorship by collaborating with their domestic dog, Whym Chow, under the pseudonym Michael Field. I demonstrate that Field’s collaborative authorship can only exist in its most unified, complete, and productively transgressive form alongside Whym Chow’s living, speaking body, while the
collaborative authorship dissolves when he is transmuted into a more traditional, symbolic animal author upon his. To this end, I demarcate two phases of the later Field identity, for both of which phases Whym Chow serves as a catalyst. Phase one, occurring between 1898-1906, takes shape with Whym’s introduction to the women’s domestic space and authorship. The Field identity during this period is not only collaborative, but collaborative across species lines, while the poetic texts produced are intimate and undivided: a true collaborative mosaic. Phase two, occurring between 1906-1913/14, is inaugurated by Whym’s death in 1906 and his subsequent “resurrection” into symbolic animal co-authorship by way of Bradley and Cooper’s recourse to Catholicism and the Catholic Trinity. The Field identity during this period is collaborative and cross-species only in a symbolic sense, and the poetic texts produced are only loosely collaborative, as Bradley and Cooper author individual poems and collections that are bound separately and only held together, in one instance, by the aid of a strap. This loose collaboration comes to an end with Cooper’s and Bradley’s deaths from cancer in 1913 and 1914, respectively.

Picking up where the previous chapter left off, in “Animal Audiobiography: Contemporary Reimaginations of the Victorian Animal Autobiography,” I reintroduce the concept of an animal autobiographer who speaks for itself—except this time through audio recording and other technologies. This sonic animal autobiographer, like Flush and Black Beauty, has agency to speak, but its speech is not so stringently policed in accordance with anthropocentric fantasies about species and domestic behavior, aligning it to a greater degree with Whym in the Field collaboration. In order to explore this sonic animal autobiographer I depart from the Victorian to discuss contemporary approaches to the issue of animal authorship which foreground sound as a preferred or complementary medium of animal expression. These
modern approaches include the novel *Animal’s People* by Indra Sinha and the experimental music album *One Pig* by Matthew Herbert.

In the chapter’s first section I discuss *Animal’s People* by Indra Sinha, which is composed of a series of tapes, rather than chapters, that contain the main character, Animal’s, story as told in his own language, by his own tongue, and as recorded on tape. Significantly, the tape recorder into which Animal, a quasi-human, quasi-animal, narrates his story also records pauses in narration, moments of narrative-divergence, and the sounds of Animal’s animate and inanimate environment. Sound, music, promise-keeping, and love are tied together in this text of environmental apocalypse, offering an ecological ideal of ethics in which the seemingly insignificant and mundane sounds made by humans, animals, and inanimate objects living together in a community or space form a music that bespeaks the fruition of loving and living together, and making and keeping promises to one another as authors of cross-species being.

In the second section I abandon the medium of text altogether to discuss the 2011 album, *One Pig*, where sound replaces text as the preferred medium for animal autobiography. The album captures the 60-days of a pig’s lifecycle from birth to slaughter. Offered by Herbert as a critique of factory farming practices, the album has been widely criticized by PETA for the ambiguity of the album’s ethics of animality. The album is composed, literally, of the sounds or voice of a pig throughout its life cycle and, here, the representational problematics at stake are issues like sound sampling and mixing, as well as issues surrounding embodiment and its abstraction through recording technology. I argue that technologies of sound not only allow productive new expressions of animal and animal authorship, but that they are also potentially technologies of animal suppression; first, because the trace of the human co-author is in some ways less apparent while, in addition, the technology of recording risks disembodying and
historically distancing the animal in ways that, problematically, reduce the likelihood of human ethical responses to that animal.

I conclude the chapter with a discussion of how I see the increasingly favorable climate for work in the digital humanities dovetailing with, in particular, the idea of a digital humanist project in which many representational technologies are combined into one digital textual space to create what I call a “chimeric animal autobiography”. In particular, I propose that by rendering animal authorship digitally as representationally mosaic—by including sound, text, moving and static image—we may capture and communicate the voice and embodiment of the animal in a way more likely to produce the forms of ethical response and activity desired from Animal’s People and One Pig.
CHAPTER ONE

REVERSE DOMESTICATION AND THE COLLABORATIVE POLITICS OF DOMESTICITY IN EARLY DICKENS

In this chapter I model the close reading method I utilize throughout “Animal Reminders.” I demonstrate that this method reveals animals in Dickens’ texts as more than merely metaphorical or metonymic figures for the disenfranchised domestic individual of choice—the woman, often one subject to male domestic abuse. Metaphorical animality is only one facet, albeit an important one, of the animal in Dickens’ representational schema. On a deeper and less explored level Dickens, along with the other authors discussed in “Animal Reminders,” portrays animals and humans as having reciprocities beyond the symbolic and analogical vagaries of the Victorian cultural imagination. Dickens’ portrayal of animal-human relations is radical, moving outward from the conventional depiction of the animal as symbolic stand-in for a marginalized human group, to a focus on the co-constitutive nature of humans and their nonhuman others, and the ways in which zones of contact both shape and are shaped by these interacting cross-species entities. This mode of thinking the human and animal is significant in that it necessarily grants animals more inherent value—significance in and of themselves—in addition to more power in their relationships with humans than traditionally

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4 Although the practice of reading animals in Dickens’ texts as metaphorical stand-ins for marginal human populations is ubiquitous in Dickens scholarship, for example Ivan Kriekamp’s “Dying Like a Dog in Great Expectations” and Grace Moore’s “Beastly Criminals and Criminal Beasts: Stray Women and Stray Dogs in Oliver Twist,” there are of course notable exceptions. Exceptions include recent publications such as Natalie McKnight’s “Dickens and Darwin: A Rhetoric of Pets” and A. J. Larner’s “Dickens and Monboddo” in addition to George Moore’s 1919 text, Avowals, which records a conversation between Moore and Edmund Gosse on literature and criticism.
recognized. Dickens takes seriously the idea of species “co-evolving” in his work, reimagining human-animal power dynamics on a path toward radically changing our “constructions of ourselves” as human beings by recognizing that “[h]uman nature is an interspecies relationship” (Nash 93; Haraway 218).

In the first installment of Household Words Charles Dickens expresses his desire to “live in the Household affections, and to be numbered among the Household thoughts” of his Victorian audience (Dickens 1-2). Dickens, as this editorial mission statement makes clear, situates himself, much like a domestic dog, centrally at the hearth, viewing himself as its “prophet” and as a “purveyor of cozy domestic bliss” (Waters“Gender, family” 120). Yet, in Dickens’ fiction, domestic bliss is never readymade and, for that matter, rarely achieved. Instead, the novels are replete with “fractured” or dysfunctional relationships characterized often by low-class status and male domestic abuse, while “idealised ‘happy families’” haunt the texts’ margins, or are simply nonexistent (Waters Politics of Family 28). What ties these otherwise very disparate functional and dysfunctional “families” together, along with the texts that house them, is the presence of an animal, typically a domestic one.

Dickens signals that such animals are the focal point of his own domestic space in an 1844 letter to F.W. Powell: “When you came in[to my home], I should have shewn you an Eagle (a real Eagle, you know, no nonsense or make believe), a Raven and a very small white dog” he explains (Letters). Dickens’ veritable domestic menagerie is also described by his daughter Mamie, in My Father as I Recall Him, as she populates the text with anecdotes about the numerousy specied animals—birds, cats, dogs (his favorite), and beloved but “‘villain[ous]’” horses—that found homes at Gad’s Hill, Devonshire Terrace, and Doughty Street (44). One dog, Mrs. Bouncer, was so intimately intertwined with Dickens’ conception of his domestic that he
sent her “many messages…during his absences from home” expressing his “‘loving and respectful duty to her,’” while to Mamie he confessed that he was surprised to “‘dream [] of ‘Mrs. Bouncer,’ [rather than his wife or children] each night!!!” (43).

Generations of animals—fathers and sons, such as the Newfoundland Don and Bumble—emerged on the scene; one generation’s (Don’s) humbleness within the domestic space became supplanted by the next generation’s (Bumble’s) “peculiarly pompous and overbearing manner” (42). The introduction of a new canary, Dick, turned the Dickens household into a warzone. This domestic “‘war,’” as Dickens described it, involved on one the side Dick, “a most important member of the household,” and the Dickens family while the attacking forces were comprised of two “‘tigerish’” mill-cats who trespassed into the Dickens home with the intent of eating Dick (49). Mamie’s account of the changes to the domestic incurred by the introduction of new animal members, such as Dick, as well as new generations of Dickens’ animal family strongly indicate that his domestic was not a static one, nor was it a homogeneously human one. Dickens’ domesticity, instead, was made and re-made according to the individual identities of its human and animal members.

Just as Dickens distinguishes animals as, sometimes, definitional of his own domestic arrangements in his letter to Powell and in Mamie’s memoir, animals and animal agency are equally important in creating and defining domestic spaces and domestic relations in Dickens’ novels. Located centrally in the domestic space—much like Dickens, the “domestic prophet,” at the hearth—the domestic animal is integral to the formation of cross-species collaborative units that manifest certain masculine and domestic types in novels spanning Dickens’ career. Here, however, I focus on Dickens’ early novels, including Oliver Twist, The Old Curiosity Shop, Barnaby Rudge, and David Copperfield, as they cohere around a project of normative
domesticity constituted through constellations of cross-species relations. The characteristics and products of “proper” and “improper” cross-species relations in the domestic get refigured throughout Dickens’ career as he transitions from the domestic imaginary productive of his early work—one structured around various forms of social, class, gender, and sexual normativity—to the domestic imaginary productive of his later texts, which no longer assumes normativity as the driving force behind representations of the domestic. Cross-species relationships within Dickens’ early domestic imaginary mark the modes through which animal and human domestic partners achieve or fail to achieve full ethical, political, and domestic saliency. The identities and domestic arrangements of human and non-human animals are constituted through a highly specific collaborative combination of multi-species and multi-gendered individuals, all of whom leave their mark or trace on the bodies and beings of their fellows to the effect of producing themselves and their others into modes of domestic assemblage that range from “ideal” heteronormative, middle-class, domestics marked by cross-species collaborative efforts to “un-ideal” domestics characterized by male violence toward animals and women or, alternately, characterized by problematic species- and gender- homogenies.

Dickens’ engagement with the phenomenon of species co-evolution is focalized through his imagination of a series of cross-species collaborative encounters in which animals are not merely the subjects of symbolic domestication, but actually have the power to exercise reverse domestication on their primarily male interactants as these males work to construct gendered identities alongside their formation and organization of domestic partnerships. For Dickens, the

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5 As Robert Patten notes, that “Clara isn’t mistress of her home, Dora can’t keep house, Pegotty can’t keep her buttons on, Traddles has a harem, and Agnes points to heaven, not the kitchen or the bedroom” signals *David Copperfield* as the terminating point for Dickens’s preoccupation with representing domestic normativity (Patten, personal communication). *David Copperfield* marks a transitional moment for Dickens as he discovers that normative domesticity “isn’t working” in his early novels and, consequently, goes on in his later career to problematize and reformulate the domestic, ultimately renegotiating the representational possibilities of the animals and cross-species relations he places at the forefront of a domestic imaginary no longer structured around normativity.
power of the animal originates, as Richard Nash puts it, through the animal’s collaboration in a “governing logic of interdependence that runs counter to the long-accepted doctrine of dominion, under which one species of animal domesticates another in the form of divinely sanctioned subordination” (93). The reverse domestication of, particularly lower-class, males in Dickens’ texts by the animals who they are codependent on performs the function of allowing men to rehearse masculine typologies that are subsequently extended into the realm of heterosexual relations and the shared space of domesticity. Ultimately, Dickens stages the inadequacy of violent, lower-class males who abuse both wife and animal, or who fail to gain a spouse at all, as a failure on the part of these men to “properly” domesticate, and be reciprocally domesticated by, the animals they encounter. Such men cannot achieve the middle-class domesticated masculinity which Dickens ultimately champions: a masculinity predicated upon the radical values of cross-gender and cross-species companionship and codependency that finds its origins in an ethics in which human subjectivity is forged through a heterogeneous assemblage of empowered gendered and speciated agents through the locus of the shared domestic environment.

I. THE CASE FOR REVERSE DOMESTICATION

It is tempting to read the distinction between particular humans and animals as entirely “blur[red]” in Dickens’ novels, and Victorian fiction at large (Ritvo 3). This is due to a pervasive Victorian cultural logic of dominance and subordination in which the “animal kingdom, with humanity in a divinely ordained position at its apex, represented, explained, and justified the hierarchical human social order” (Ritvo 14-15). The Victorian penchant for symbolically aligning human and animal via the issues of domestic violence and animal abuse
has been well documented by scholars such as Lisa Surridge who, in *Bleak Houses: Marital Violence in Victorian Fiction*, points to a significant link between the institution of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), the Parliamentarian Richard Martin’s 1820’s animal cruelty legislation, the rise of the “wife-assault debates,” and Robert Peel’s 1828 Offense Against the Person Act (Surridge 6-9). Surridge, as well as historians such as Harriet Ritvo, author of the seminal text *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age*, have documented how animal abuse, like spousal abuse, was culturally coded as an issue associated with the lower-classes.⁶ Woven or “knotted” together by intricately overlapping threads of socially condoned forms of domination, victimization, suffering, and violence, the class-laden issues of animal and spousal abuse are structured around a “symbolic economy” in which the body of the female becomes aligned with that of the animal (Haraway 4; Wolfe 8).⁷

In making such connections between the ethico-political issues of spousal and animal abuse, these literary and historical scholars have gestured, at least in part, to what Donna Haraway means when she speaks of the “doubleness” which characterizes intra- and cross-species interactions (4-5). But, where such arguments do not go, and where Haraway’s work points, is to the recognition of a lesser explored notion of human-animal reciprocity existing beyond the traditional symbolic coding of the animal as the double for, or representative of, a

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⁶ According to James Hammerton, middle- and upper-class domestic abuse received little to no visibility in the service of protecting an idealized middle-class value system in which instances of male violence against women existed only as “embarrassing aberrations” (274). Animal abuse was similarly coded as a lower-class phenomenon. William Gull, for example, proclaimed that animal cruelty laws were “for the ignorant, and not for the best people,” while a textbook produced by the RSPCA in 1885 was designed to “include kindness to animals in “the system of education among the poorer classes,”” which happened to be the class most often recorded as offenders in RSPCA reports (Harrison 791, 810).

⁷ Peter Singer in “All Animals are Equal” argues that humans and nonhumans are equally deserving of protection from physical and psychological pain due to their shared capacity for suffering, while Cary Wolfe, in *Animal Rights*, draws on Jean-Francois Lyotard’s *The Differend* to suggest that because animals are incapable of “bearing witness,” the animal represents a “paradigm of the victim” on to which other silenced groups can be mapped (and vice versa), in this case women (Wolfe 61-62).
particular classed or gendered marginal human group. Rather than merely being the convenient site on to which the human and human concerns can be offloaded, Haraway makes the claim that nonhuman animals are “meaning-making beings” who are “consequent” in shaping the human through a “dance of encounters” that transcends disingenuous species hierarchies and the logic of exclusion (4-5). Humans and nonhuman animals are “knotted” together into an “unpredictable kin[d] of ‘we’” as they engage in embodied interaction facilitated by the locus of a shared space, what Haraway calls a “contact zone” (4). Defined as any space shared by humans and animals which gives rise to the possibility of “world-making,” a process that entails “species interdependence” and “becoming with” the animal through forms of “regard and respect,” the contact zone in Dickens’ corpus is often the domestic space, and that is the zone I address in this chapter and throughout my project (Haraway 4; 19). If domestic spaces in Dickens’ texts are contact zones defined by meaningfully situated and interacting human and animal bodies, then it becomes clear that Dickens’ animals are not only meant to be symbolic twins for women in a domestic dyad (man-woman), but have an agency and characterological significance beyond such twinning.

In fact, the problematic nature of the ubiquitous practice of twinning animal identities and human ones in order to confirm the Victorian hierarchical social order is showcased in an 1867 All The Year Round article, “A Parenthesis or Two,” in which a miserly former-bachelor comments ironically: “‘Love me, Love my dog.’ A wise adage, I dare say. I don’t at all mind their loving me, but I have the strongest objection to their loving my dog—when, as in this instance, my dog is represented by my wife” (Year Round 106). Disconcerted by the way his male friends exploit the blurring of the positions of wife and dog, the former-bachelor attributes his failure of masculinity and domestic control to the way in which his wife, “warming her feet
by the fire,” is petted and coddled by other males as if she were a domestic dog at the hearth (106). The strategy of consolidating the positions of woman and animal is meant to perform the function of managing and cleaning up what Haraway, for example, might characterize as the “messiness” of embodiment in a cross-species world by collapsing multiple distinct entities into one symbolic one for easy insertion into a pre-described hierarchy.

The former bachelor’s commentary makes it clear, however, that this strategy of identity consolidation effects the removal of one sort of mess at the cost of creating others. In fact, the cultural imaginary produced through the conflation of woman and dog entails a symbolic promiscuity that legitimates the sexual promiscuity of the former-bachelor’s pretty wife and male friends. The wife’s inhabitation of the representational position of “my dog” leads to the disintegration of masculinity and normative domesticity rather than serving its intended purpose: the consolidation of middle-class heteronormative domestic relations as well as entrenched Victorian gender and species hierarchies. Just as the former-bachelor rearticulates the practice of equating woman and animal as dangerous rather than socially productive, Dickens offers his own radical counter narrative to efforts at symbolic consolidation. And, notably, this narrative is one that often gets obscured in disciplinary readings of Dickens’ literature that assume a more customarily promiscuous blurring of human and animal identity in his work, and in Victorian fiction at large.

The traditional Victorian rhetorical strategy of collapsing human and animal, along with the traditional scholarly reading that is its companion, is held in strong tension with Dickens’ more radical representations of human-animal relations. Namely, relations in which the animal occupies the role of a co-participant in meaning-making as staged through the related issues of masculinity and domesticity formation. As in “A Parenthesis or Two” where the promiscuous
symbolic exchange between woman and animal occasions the disruption of the former-
bachelor’s masculinity and domestic arrangements, in Dickens’ texts the formation of ideal
masculine and domestic types is dependent on the existence and agency of an animal *as an
animal*, while dysfunction arises when the animal is symbolically overwritten by or overwrites
human identities. Dickens materializes this conviction by eschewing the traditional domestic
dyad in which woman and animal occupy the same relational space, an arrangement that is cross-
species only in the sense of animal-as-woman, or in the former-bachelor’s words, arrangements
in which “my dog is represented by my wife” (*Year Round* 106). Dickens opts instead for a
radical cross-species domestic triad in which the human male and female are partners with a
nonhuman animal that occupies its own distinct space in a triadic relationship, rather than being,
as Grace Moore has argued, the figure through which the identities of male and female domestic
partners can be simultaneously triangulated.\(^8\) Dickens’ orientation of the domestic around a
cross-species triad in which the animal itself is an agent in domestic arrangements troubles the
notion, proffered implicitly by Moore and explicitly by Ivan Krielkamp, that animals cannot be
significant characters within Victorian texts because their “‘essential formal position’” is one of
“subordinate beings who are delimited in themselves while performing a function for someone
else” (Krielkamp 83; 82).\(^9\)

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\(^8\) My definition of the domestic triad is distinct from the “triangular relationship” discussed by Grace Moore in
“Beastly Criminals and Criminal Beasts: Stray Women and Stray Dogs in *Oliver Twist*” in which the animal figure,
in this case Bull’s-eye, carries the representational weight of both the male and female domestic partners—Nancy
and Bill Sikes. I am arguing beyond the triangulation of human identity through a nonhuman animal to suggest that
the animal itself forms one unit in a triadic relationship.

\(^9\) In evaluating the animal as such, Krielkamp is drawing on Alex Woloch’s character schema in which minor
characters are analogous to “*the proletariat of the novel,*” Krielkamp suggests that because animals are
representationally subordinate even to minor characters, they are the “sub-proletariat” or, as I rephrase it for
clarity, “sub-minor.” He confirms the minor state of the animal by arguing that animals, especially domestics, are
“represented, but only in passing,” are given no “true markers of identity” and “posses[s] no solid claim to
recognition or memory” (“Dying Like a Dog” 82).
Animals in Dickens’ texts do fit into this character schema in the sense that they “perform[] a function for someone else,” emerging as the entities through which male characters can rehearse their masculine and domestic types (Krielkamp 82). However, the animal for Dickens is far too complicated, robust, and full of cross-species agency to be easily demarcated as “minor” (82). Domestic animals in Dickens’ novels might be supposed to be “subordinate” to, and present only to “perform[] a function” for, the males who attempt to domesticate them—but, notably, this is only the case when Dickens is representing dysfunctional males and dysfunctional domesticities. In Dickens’ most functional domesticities, on the other hand, the act of domestication is not the traditionally imagined arrangement in which the human male is at the center of all agency and public and private powers as he exerts his gender and species superiority over an animal that merely plays the role of malleable and passive receptacle or symbolic wife (82). Instead, Dickens actively re-writes the parameters of domestication such that it is no longer a stubbornly linear, hierarchical visitation of power by the male upon nonhuman animals. Dickens represents domestication, instead, as a dynamic cross-species arrangement entailing a cyclical exchange of power between the male and the domestic animal, and also inclusive of the female domestic partner.

In this cyclical rather than linear cross-species power arrangement, the force of domestication is usurped in part by the animal and returned to the male and to the larger domestic arrangement in the form of reverse domestication exercised by animals themselves. Centered upon a notion of “harmony” and “companionship” tied specifically to masculinity¹⁰,

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¹⁰ Much scholarship on Victorian gender has focused on either homosocial masculinities or the “conflict between masculine and feminine”; I consider conflict within literary representations of masculinity by focusing on the “competition among” a multiplicity of socially constructed functional and dysfunctional masculine types (Sussman 367; 372). My treatment of domestic masculinities is in keeping with the historical work done by Martin Francis, James Hammerton, and John Tosh suggests men were very significant in the domestic space and that scholars “might need to pay more attention than hitherto to the male presence” in the domestic (Francis 638-39).
ideal domesticity in Dickens’ texts requires that the male be reciprocally guided by animals who occupy a role similar to, but distinct from, the role of the companion female through whom men can achieve a form of masculinity conducive to idealized middle-class domesticity (Surridge 20; Francis 639).  

Animals, it seems, are not minor at all. Dickens’ re-imagination of the politics of domestic power across species categories extends to animals a very significant role in the formation of ideal cross-gender and cross-species domestic relations. To be a middle-class male with an idealized middle-class home, the male must not only deal out, but must also be willing to receive unto himself, the force of domestication from the animal, who is “a feature of that constellation of cultural equipment and social constructions that characterize bourgeois identity” (Brown 33). For Dickens, imagining a diverse array of possible masculinities across a range of texts becomes integral to a process of parsing out a middle-class gender and domestic project that is also, simultaneously, a project of cross-species collaboration.

In Dickens’ assemblage of imagined masculinities, dysfunctional masculinities occur with the greatest frequency. Dysfunctional males in Dickens’ work often suffer from problematic relationships with their animal others. Many of these men breed lower-class, violent, and otherwise un-ideal domesticities by being too wedded to rigid gender and species hierarchies to surrender the power of domestication, temporarily, to the animals and women through whom they might become ideally masculinized. Others deny animals domestic influence by forcibly marginalizing them via the promiscuous symbolic exchange between

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11 Defined by James Hammerton as “both partners...work[ing] together in the interests of harmonious companionate marriage...This [conception of domesticity]... impose[d] a more direct responsibility on men for the success of the companionate partnership. It required a considerate husband who took an interest in and...shared the domestic burdens of his wife...The husband’s primary concern remained the public sphere, but there was greater stress on his entry into domestic matters in a more supportive and intimate way...The messages directed at men focused on the male virtues necessary for a harmonious marriage: on patience, tenderness, consideration, forbearance...” (281).
human and animal identified in “A Parenthesis or Two” as posing problems to the maintenance and development of normative gender and domestic types. Paradoxically, men such as Sikes of *Oliver Twist*, Quilp of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and Barnaby of *Barnaby Rudge* practice both of these strategies of animal marginalization. Unlike the two ideally masculine characters I will discuss as test cases for the functionality of reverse domestication at the close of this essay—David of *David Copperfield* and Kit of *The Old Curiosity Shop*—these dysfunctional men champion linear power dynamics analogous to the dynamics of patriarchal masculinity while, simultaneously, consolidating multiple distinct human and animal subjectivities into one symbolic domestic identity that disrupts the tripartite structure of ideal cross-species domesticity. Indeed, these dysfunctional men and the texts that house them demonstrate three distinct instantiations of dysfunctional masculinity, with each successive dysfunctional male I discuss below showcasing a more profound desire to encroach upon and subsume the distinct subjectivities and domesticating agencies of animal and female members of the ideal cross-species domestic triad.

II. (un)DOMESTICATING MASCULINITY IN DICKENS

The specific representational function of Bull’s-eye in Dickens’ early novel *Oliver Twist* has been discussed at length. However, rather than viewing Bull’s-eye as a violently marginalized animal participant in a dysfunctional domestic arrangement spearheaded by Sikes—a low-class, abusive, criminal—the bulldog has been read either as Nancy’s symbolic twin (and by extension as representing all abused women), or as a figure through which male and
female domestic identities in the novel can be triangulated. Neither of these interpretations pays attention to Bull’s-eye himself as an animal in interaction with Sikes and Nancy because his animal identity is too completely and continuously overwritten by the human identities that surround him. There is good reason why literary scholars have tended to read Bull’s-eye in this way, as it is a form of “reading” animals modeled for us on a meta-level by Dickens’ characters themselves. It is, in fact, the strategy of reading and interpreting animal bodies that Sikes adopts toward the close of the novel before accidentally hanging himself before the mob of men that have mobilized to hold him accountable for the murder of his domestic partner, Nancy: “looking behind him on the roof, [he] threw his arms above his head, and uttered a yell of terror. ‘The eyes again!’ he cried…Staggering as if struck by lightning, he lost his balance and tumbled over the parapet. The noose was on his neck…he hung” (Oliver 412).

As in “A Parenthesis or Two,” where the conflation of the subjective positions of wife and dog entails an unintended corruption of accepted hierarchies and norms, Sikes suffers the ultimate corruption—death—for enacting what Surridge has characterized as a “grotesquely concrete” transfiguration of Bull’s-eye into Nancy, such that Sikes sees “Nancy’s eyes looking out of the dog’s body” (Surridge 43). Even when Sikes removes Nancy’s literal body from the domestic equation, he persists in symbolically mapping wife onto dog, effectively using Bull’s-eye as the vehicle for Nancy’s posthumous re-embodiment by overwriting Bull’s-eye’s identity as an animal with Nancy’s identity as human wife. For Sikes, who participates in the Victorian imaginary in which abused animal and abused spouse occupy symbolically identical positions, the bodies of Nancy and Bull’s-eye become metonymically collapsed into one another so completely that, for the remainder of the text, Bull’s-eye is continuously misread by Sikes as human rather than as an animal. Bull’s-eye’s animal form, his physical animality, seems to

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12 See Grace Moore’s “Beastly Criminals and Criminal Beasts”
disappear entirely for Sikes only to be recalled and reaffirmed through the perspectives of other, functional males as related by the narrator.

Unlike Sikes who reads “The eyes again!” as the eyes of Nancy rather than the eyes of Bull’s-eye, the men who crowd together to watch the scene unfold are able to read the visual and auditory information that Bull’s-eye offers them—his physical form and howl—apart from the symbolic register which Sikes depends upon, and which contributes to his death. As the narrator explains, “each man [was] crushing and striving with his neighbor, and all panting with impatience to get near the door, and look upon the criminal…” and, after Sikes hangs, they see “A dog, which had lain concealed till now, run backwards and forwards on the parapet with a dismal howl” (Oliver 411-412). Whereas Sikes looks at Bull’s-eye and actually sees particular physical traits of Nancy, for the crowd of men the only things to be seen are a (soon to be) hanged man and a howling dog—the very pieces of visual data represented in the scene’s accompanying illustration. If Nancy is anywhere in the scene, she is present only as the un-embodied and un-illustrated specter of injustice and domestic dysfunction that these men convene to appease.

Although the vast majority of literary interpretations of Oliver Twist employ Sikes’s strategy of reading women and animals as interchangeable, his reading strategy is a flawed one. Sikes’s perspective is not the perspective Dickens endorses, nor the “proper” perspective for the reader, whether popular or scholarly, to emulate. The alternative perspective we are meant to adopt is activated by the men in the crowd who watch Sikes fall prey to, and die because of, the ubiquitous tendency to blur human and animal identity to the point that actual bodies can become overwritten by the qualities of other bodies, even those of other species. As harbingers of justice who are outraged at Sikes’s violation of ideal middle-class domesticity, these men become the
true carriers of public and political opinion, as well as the only individuals capable of recognizing Bull’s-eye as an animal—one who might, through loyalty, compassion, and self-sacrifice, have had the power to domesticate even Bill Sikes. By putting the interpretive voice of the narrator behind the group of men while allowing Sikes to speak for himself his violent erasure of Bull’s-eye’s doggishness—“The eyes again!”—Dickens makes his position on animal representation and the cultural imaginary clear: a parallel between domestic violence and animal abuse exists, but it is not a parallel that should be sustained through the metonymic eradication of the animal. Instead, it must involve an awareness of the import of each individual interacting human and animal body, and the recognition that to erase one of these bodies either literally or symbolically, as Sikes does, is to commit an act of violence that violates the domestic politics of the novel and effectively undermines the very normative cultural values seeking reification.

It is not only the case that males misread their female partners as interchangeable with animals to the detriment of domestic relations; sometimes they perform the more insidious act of actively misreading themselves as animal in order to destabilize their species identities and, consequently, domestic arrangements. Demonstrating a permutation of the pernicious symbolic alignment of human and animal performed by Sikes, the monkey-faced dwarf, Quilp, of The Old Curiosity Shop perversely disavows both his humanity and what would otherwise be considered an ideal domesticity in an effort to “become-animal,” a process which he fundamentally misunderstands and, consequently, fails to achieve in any productive sense.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} Some may want to resist viewing the mob of men who pursue Sikes and witness his death so benevolently, but that Mr. Brownlow, the good angel to Fagin’s bad one, offers the men a reward of “fifty pounds” for taking Sikes alive makes him a participant in the proceedings and suggests a more positive reading of the mob by association. That he offers the men a reward as motivation to seek justice rather than the exercise of extra-legal revenge indicates that the mob is at least indirectly motivated to deliver Sikes up to a courtroom, judge, and proper justice (411).

\textsuperscript{14} Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in A Thousand Plateaus describe becoming-animal as a state involving the “fascination” of the human by a “demonic” animal. The fascination with the demonic, wild, pack animal—the
Quilp is perpetually in the process of becoming a cur—a mean, mongrelly dog—who “snarl[s]” and bites without provocation like the wharf dog he warns Mr. Brass about, which “bit a man last night, and a woman the night before, and last Tuesday he killed a child” (Old Curiosity 42; 468). Similar to the undomesticated wharf dog whose home-space is uncertain and shifting—“He lives on the right hand…but sometimes he hides on the left, ready for a spring”—Quilp is fascinated by, and repeatedly imagines himself to be one among, the aggressive dogs who emblemize unattained or dysfunctional domesticities like the “broken” domesticity he shares with his wife (468; 169). In a telling moment of cross-species interaction, Quilp:

> had like to have met with a disagreeable check, for, rolling very near a broken dog-kennel, there leapt forth a large fierce dog, who, but that his chain was of the shortest, would have given him a disagreeable salute. As it was, the dwarf remained…in perfect safety, taunting the dog with hideous faces…hissing and worrying the animal till he was nearly mad. (169-170)

Quilp does not treat the dog as a domesticated or domesticateable animal. Instead, he chooses to antagonize it until “he goes nearly mad,” a phrase whose ambiguous pronoun, “he,” is able to travel across species groups to indicate that, perhaps, Quilp’s act of beating produces madness not only in the dog, but also in himself (170 emphasis mine). Associated with rabies, the dog’s and Quilp’s proximities to a state of “mad[ness]” points to the instability of the domestic-wild binary and the disconcerting way in which domestic animals or domestic men, through infection nondomestic—allows for a radical transformation of human subjectivity by moving beyond thinking of the animal only in terms of an Oedipal pet that is overwritten by the human, human culture, and its desires. The goal of becoming-animal is not to lost one identity as human only to take over the identity of an Other defined species of animal but, instead, to embrace the anomic, or “the condition in which standards of definition and practice lose their application or are placed in suspension” or, in other words, a situation in which one “avoid[s] all forms of incarceration” by moving from a state of unity, to a state of multiplicity and increased complexity (Bruns 706; 709; 704). Becoming-animal facilitates the human’s occupation of a state of in-betweeness and non-identity, a state of a more ambiguous and multiple personhood (versus identity as human) to which the animal is always subject (Bruns 713-715).

15 See John Walton’s “Mad Dogs and Englishmen: The Conflict over Rabies in Late Victorian England” or Lynn Festa’s “Person, Animal, Thing: The 1796 Dog Tax and the Right to Superfluous Things” among others.
or other means, might revert to violent, undomesticated states. Such states of rabidity and madness fundamentally threaten the very concept of normative domesticity, as women and children—principal domestics—become possible, if not probable victims: “last Tuesday he killed a child” (468, emphasis mine).

Quilp embodies this potential to revert as he rolls his ape-like form across the wharf—as though willfully abandoning the human capacity for upright bipedal movement—and into the dog’s path. As he rolls, he becomes a source of infection as he communicates his violence and domestic dysfunction to the dog whose “broken” home space and “shortest” chain signal its special susceptibility to Quilp’s disease: domestic unease. The dog and Quilp are both chained—literally by metal or symbolically by the law—to domestic arrangements they deem unnatural, restrictive, and inhospitable, both yearning instead for the violent and spatially shifting state of existence of the wharf dog, which Quilp describes as an “agreeable freedom from the restraints” of domestication (375). The domestic chafing that Quilp and the dog share gives birth to a retaliatory violence which acts to consolidate their representational positions. Just as the chained dog “worr[ies]” Quilp as a means of retaliating against domestication and the working-class man or woman who has subjected him to it, Quilp actively worries his wife—“inflict[ing]” her with “pinches” and sleep deprivation—in order to dismantle the idealized, middle-class home that his undomesticated masculinity rejects (107).

Quilp is not interested in middle-class domesticity or its requirements, nor is he particularly interested in being domesticated through the influence of his loving and patient wife or through the animals he encounters in the text who demonstrate to him the unhappy fruits of undomestication. While in *Oliver Twist*, Sikes resorts to violence due to a mistaken, lower-class belief that it will allow him to create and sustain domestic relations, Quilp’s violent, masculine
orientation to the domestic demonstrates an added layer of dysfunction as it is meant to achieve a complete dissolution of his humanity, his marriage, and the surprisingly ideal domestic space his wife has created for him. Quilp repeatedly imagines escaping from idealized middle-class domesticity and his domestic responsibilities as a human male, either by fantasizing about his wife’s death, or by fantasizing about reverting to a “Robinson Crusoe” state of isolation and bachelorhood at the wharf amongst the undomesticated wharf dogs (373; 375). Quilp makes this latter fantasy a reality toward the close of the novel as he is overcome with a “mad…rage” similar to the madness he earlier inculcates in the chained dog, demanding in the wake of this diseased feeling of madness that his wife: “‘ask no questions about me, make no search for me, say nothing concerning me. I’ll not be dead, mistress, and that’ll comfort you’” (507). Failing to domesticate himself and his masculine orientation to the middle-class domestic space, Quilp abolishes his domestic ties in an effort to achieve a bachelor identity, but does so by attempting to consolidate his identity with the wharf dogs’ in the mistaken belief that to surrender his human identity for the dogs’ animal one will be a productive rather than destructive act.

Quilp who, from the outset, occupies a questionable position on the species hierarchy due to his ape-like appearance, is caught in some sense between domesticated man and undomesticated animal, an observation reinforced by the words which frame his illustration in the text: “Man” and “Beast” (448). Through their vertical alignment on the page the terms “Man” and “Beast” visually embody an accepted cultural hierarchy of social and evolutionary “progress” in which domesticated man is the ultimate state of development, while undomesticated beast is a subsidiary. In trying to create a new bachelor and non-domestic identity for himself, Quilp ostensibly works against this hierarchy: moving down the accepted hierarchy to symbolically become-animal. Quilp, however, rather than embracing a new identity
outside of the strongly delineated species categories—man and beast—that literally and symbolically frame his character, reifies the very binaries—wild/domestic, animal/human—he is outwardly antagonistic to. Rather than re-inventing himself outside of the close-confines of species identities and species hierarchies, Quilp merely swaps out one identity—human—for another—animal—ultimately serving to reinforce the human-animal binary and its attendant domestic-wild binary even as he attempts to transcend both.

Quilp yearns to channel the *animal remainder*\(^\text{16}\) written onto his animlaized physiology into a psycho-symbolic transformation into an actual nonhuman, nondomestic animal. Rather than desiring either to progress normatively forward toward fully normalized humanity or to follow through on the destabilizing and “anarch[ical]” process of a proper becoming-animal, Quilp merely fixates on a new animal identity, undomestic dog, which he intends to fully overwrite his human identity and a middle-class domesticity he has never seen himself as fit or desirous to own. Quilp enmeshes himself in a hubristic human fantasy in which he, as a human, is *imagined* as having complete access to, and mastery over, the particular mode of being-in-the-world embodied by nonhuman animals. In relying on this fantasy of an all-knowing human subject who can violently re-populate other species identities, Quilp fails to understand the distinctions that mark the *actual animals* in question, instead only having access to generalized concepts of animality and animal being arising out of dominant anthropocentric and anthropomorphic intellectual traditions.\(^\text{17}\) Quilp is guilty of an act of symbolic sacrifice as he

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\(^{16}\) “Animal remainder” is the term I use elsewhere to describe the remnant of an animal biological heritage that cannot, finally, be purged even though this is the ostensible goal of progressive theories of human evolution as manifested in species hierarchies.

\(^{17}\) In *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Derrida argues that Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming-animal must be critiqued because it is “always only about man, about the becoming-animal of man, the history and stories of man in his becomings-animals, in other words, of the becoming-anthropomorphically-animal of man, and not about the animal and the beast, as it were, themselves” (196). However, it is well to note that Susan McHugh, in *Animal Stories*, recuperates stories of becoming-animal, insisting that they are “key points of ethical negotiation across artistic and scientific models of species and social life” (14).
sacrifices the individuality and distinct physiological organization and beings of individual animals, collapsing them into broad and overly simplistic categories of “undomesticated” and “the animal,” which categories are a function of his failure to pay attention and respect to cross-species similarity and difference. 18

Quilp fails to recognize his own resistently domestic human identity as distinct enough from the dogs’ animal ones to put in motion the process of dynamic cross-species domestication that is the key to Dickens’ successful male characters. This failure ultimately contributes to Quilp’s death, much like it contributed to Sikes’s in Oliver Twist. Quilp encroaches upon the dogs’ territory as animals within his tripartite (non)domestic arrangement to such an extent that he both forecloses their ability to perform reverse domestication on him and, also, permanently forecloses his own access to an identity as human male who can be functionally domesticated. Quilp’s failure to respect and understand the autonomy and difference of the animals he encounters makes him blind to his “proper” function as a domestic and a domesticator as he fails to attend to the dogs as they mirror back to him his own violence and dysfunction and offer him a cautionary glimpse of the danger that arises outside of the domestic space and, in particular, of the danger posed by the non-domestic animals he is so desperately trying to become. His steady belief that he can trade in his humanity for a more desirable animality demonstrates that he cannot fully understand or accept the limits and dangers of his own subjective position in relationship to nonhuman animals. Despite the assurances Quilp offers his wife that his abandonment of her and their domestic via a desire to symbolically become an undomestic will

18 As Jacques Derrida explains in “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)” and elsewhere, we must respect similarities and differences across types of animals and between individual members of those types. To elide either the similarities or differences of particular nonhuman and human animals is to do a fundamental violence. This violence is akin to that which Derrida identifies in the use of the term “‘the Animal’ in the singular” to erect a divide between humans and all other animals via a disingenuous erasure not only of the human’s shared status as animal, but the erasure of the differences between different types of nonhuman animals (400).
not result in him “be[ing] dead,” his efforts to become-animal at the cost of abandoning an ideal domestic arrangement and potential identification as a representative of middle-class masculinity cause him to share in Sikes’s fate: violent and premature death (507).

The undomesticated dogs onto whom Quilp incompletely maps himself on to become, like Bull’s-eye, agents in his death, emerging as sirens who call to him in a language he cannot, finally, truly understand or use as a guide for his own behavior, precisely because he is not really one of them: “He stood listening intently…Nothing was to be heard in that deserted place, but at intervals the distant barking of dogs. The sound was far away—now in one quarter, now answered in another—nor was it any guide” (509). As Quilp stumbles across the wharf, the unintelligibility of the dogs’ barks makes it impossible for him to reorient himself to his makeshift domestic space, for he is excluded from communication with the dogs as they call out to, and answer, one another in a language he has only imagined himself as fluent in

[H]e staggered and fell; and next moment was fighting with the cold, dark water…he could hear the knocking at the gate again—could hear a shout that followed it—could recognize the voice…[he knew] they were close at hand, but could not make an effort to save him; that he himself had shut and barred them out. He answered the shout—with a yell…It was of no avail. (509)

It is only in the moments he spends submerged in water and on the verge of drowning that Quilp appears to comprehend his folly in abandoning ideal domesticity and a functional human position within it and, concomitantly, the impossibility of attempting to reconstitute himself as a body of non-human animals whose specific modes of being in the world he can never have complete, transformative access to.

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19 As Richard Nash has noted, “as we listen to dogs, we must know that we cannot hear as well” on account of linguistic and other species-based difference (93). And, as Cary Wolfe explains, the ability to really listen to what nonhumans are telling us necessitates that we “have our own modes of perception,…habits of knowledge,…[and] own prerogatives of power, interrogated by taking seriously the radical alterity of other, nonhuman, ways of being in the world” (“Speciesism” 103, italics mine).
While the barking of the dogs cannot “guide” Quilp to safety, he realizes that the sound of the human hand knocking against the gate of his alternative domestic space at the wharf could have. Moreover, unlike the voices of the dogs which Quilp can neither decipher nor respond to, he “c[an] recognize the voice” of the human male calling for him and can respond to it. Even as Quilp calls out to the man for help, however, he realizes that he cannot be saved. Quilp’s recourse to an inarticulate “yell” that falls somewhere between the barking of the dogs and the language constructions of man signals his occupation of a subjective state so mired in an always already doomed process of radical species-identity transformation that he can never be fully recovered either as a singular human identity or a multiplied human-animal one. In his inattention to and disrespect for difference, Quilp has effectively “shut and barred” this man, all men, even his own identity as a human male out in a failed attempt to construct for himself a subjectivity contiguous with that of the undomesticated animal (509). The resounding knocks on Quilp’s alternative domestic space at the wharf revivify his discarded identity as a domesticated human male and open up the possibility for the constitution of a multiplied identity, but only fleetingly, as the act of calling out to another human being “seemed to make the hundred fires that danced before his eyes tremble and flicker as if a gust of wind had stirred them” (509). This is the final resurgence of Quilp’s human identity before he surrenders to the death he has chosen for himself: that of a man masquerading as nonhuman animal, and who cannot speak or bear witness to either of the species communities (509).20

The dysfunctional male Barnaby, of Barnaby Rudge, not only replicates the process of becoming-animal as showcased by Quilp but, in the process, demonstrates an extra layer of

20 In this instance, Quilp is doubly incapable of speaking his imminent death because his status as in the process of transitioning to a singular animal identity has closed him off from both available species communities that might have remained open to him if he had adopted a multiplied identity, such as Freud’s Wolf Man, who Deleuze and Guattari recuperate in A Thousand Plateaus by reading him as an ideally “multiplied and depersonalized subject,” a “single assemblage” produced through “multiplicities of multiplicities,” “packs,” or “collective agents” (34-38).
dysfunction. Unlike Quilp who is content to only encroach upon the identity of the animal, or Sikes who retains his masculine identity while consolidating Nancy and Bull’s-eye, Barnaby reimagines the gender- and species- heterogeneity of the ideal domestic triad as a mono-species and mono-gender triadic assemblage in which human males subsume the individuated subjectivities of domestic animals and women. Identified, much like Quilp, as occupying a subjective position that is fraught with death or the threat of death, Barnaby falls largely outside of the normal parameters of humanity and domestication. Although his “features [are] good,” he is described as “terrible” due to his “absence of soul,” a lack which not only denotes his perceived sub-human status, but even a sub-animal one (Barnaby 35).

Lacking the “noblest powers” of the human soul, Barnaby is viewed by functional males in the text as simultaneously akin to nonhuman animals who are poor in soul, and to the soulless dead (35). Barnaby’s deathliness is not occasioned by any desire on his part to actively spurn a soul-full identity as human male in an effort to become-animal, as Quilp does. Instead, Barnaby’s soullessness and questionable status as human or man, living or dead, is a product of his innate, biological “idio[cy]” which makes him incapable of understanding and embodying the normative cultural codes of domesticated masculinity (390). Barnaby, who “wander[s] abroad from dawn of day…into night” with the only companions who can keep up with him, “a score of vagabond dogs,” inhabits a space and participates in a set of relations outside of ideal, middle-class domesticity (371). Only his mother’s tales, which “she would repeat, as a lure to keep him in her sight…within doors,” are capable of temporarily holding him to the domestic as he flits

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21 In Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question Derrida elucidates (and ultimately critiques) Heidegger’s philosophical work on the animal. As Derrida explains, for Heidegger the animal must occupy a status as “poor in world” due to the fact that animals are lacking the “spirit” or soulfulness which he associates directly with humanity and fully actualized being or living.
between two subjective states that are not naturally conducive to it: undomesticated animality and death (371).

Though mentally defunct, Barnaby recognizes at some level the way in which he and other animalized men, such as the “centaur” figure Hugh, are separated off from mankind and traditional domestic arrangements and collapsed with the animal (622). When Mr Chester gives Barnaby, whom he calls “‘a strange creature’” (94), money for delivering a message for him, Barnaby excitedly exclaims: “For Grip [the raven]22, and me, and Hugh to share among us…Grip one, me two, Hugh three; the dog, the goat, the cat—well, we shall spend it pretty soon’” (96). Barnaby appears at a quick glance to vocalize two distinct triadic relationships in this moment: first, an ideally inter-species one—Grip, me, and Hugh—that seemingly replicates the triadic cross-species structure of ideal domesticity and, second, an undesirably homogenized, inter-species (or inter-animal) one—dog, goat, and cat. However, if Barnaby’s two triadic structures are viewed as two sides of one algebraic equation, it becomes apparent that in Barnaby’s symbolic imaginary, each side is numerically equivalent and, therefore, the sum and parts of both sides are identical. The sum of Barnaby’s equation is, in fact, “we,” the word he uses to finally effect a violent consolidation of the two triads into one, such that the dog, goat, and cat become un-individuated from the individuals who precede them (96). If in Barnaby’s algebraic formula Grip, the triad’s figurehead, is equivalent to the preeminent domestic animal, the dog, then his two other animalized, human male constituents make up the remaining two positions. Hugh, who John Willet describes as having all of his human faculties save for imagination and an uncommonly “small” bit of soul (111), maps nicely on to the lesser domestic, the cat, while Barnaby, as the most animalized figure in the triad due to his idiocy and soullessness, can

22 As Mamie Dickens explains in *My Father as I Recall Him*, Grip was the name of Dickens’s pet raven at Devonshire Terrace (38; 40).
undoubtedly be mapped on to the figure of the goat, a “dumb” beast who, unlike the dog and cat, lives on the border of the domestic space rather than being a functional member in it.

Barnaby’s domestic equation is dysfunctional, then, because it is doubly homogenous: structured initially by the gender homogeny of the triad he completes with Grip and Hugh and the species homogeny of the goat, dog, and cat triad, Barnaby produces a second layer of homogeny when he violently equates the individuated species-identities of the dog, goat, and cat with those of human males and Grip. Barnaby’s triads, and his violent act of consolidating them under the language of “we,” marks a return to a more traditional, linear power dynamics of domestication which excludes the sharing of power across gender and species boundaries, precisely because those boundaries are continuously encroached upon by an exclusively male group which excludes one set of domestic others—women—while usurping the identities of another—the animal.

Reverse domestication of the male by animals and women is impossible in Barnaby’s domestic imaginary because representative individuals from those groups are either not included in the triad at all, or they have been symbolically consolidated with the males to such an extent that they occupy all three places in the triad: Barnaby’s relational structure is a purely masculinized one and a purely animalized one. Barnaby’s homogenous triadic relational structure pervades the novel and contributes directly to the destruction of its functional domestic spaces, as well as to the imprisonment and deaths of it dysfunctional male practitioners. Framing the action of the novel are the Gordon Riots of 1780, spurred on by the anti-Popery rhetoric of Lord George Gordon. Ironically, the creaturely and primitive mob of men that mobilizes to oppose Catholic emancipation in England, destroying functional Catholic homes in the process, are unaware that they have much in common, structurally, with a processional model of the
Trinity associated with some forms of Catholicism. Although the Trinity, composed of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is described as having an ostensibly male\textsuperscript{23}, three person, one substance structure across Christian traditions, some Catholic interpretations of the Trinity imbue the Father with an exalted position as the originator of its other two members.

Replicating the power structure embodied in this model of the Trinity, the men who participate in the Gordon Riots mobilize around an all-male triad composed of Hugh, Barnaby and Dennis, with Barnaby singled out as occupying a position of symbolic, if not actual, power for the rioters. As in Barnaby’s imagined triad with Hugh and Grip in which power flows unilaterally from the male animal, Grip, to animalized men in an inversion of the “divinely ordained” Victorian species hierarchy, the mob reinscribes what Mary Daly has characterized as the “patriarchal patterning” of power relations implicit in the “paradigm of the trinity” (Ritvo 14-15; Daly 38). Through their replication of a processional structure, the mob consolidates power in one animalized male individual, Barnaby, whose position of power within the processional schema makes him a figure beyond the reach of other forces of domestication, such as women and actual animals.

As the symbolic representative of the anti-Popery movement, the undomesticated Barnaby and his homogenous triad structure emerge as the model on which the mob of men come to constitute a new set of relations that are antithetical to the normative middle-class domestic space. Because they are predicated upon a unilateral movement of power achieved through gender and species homogeny, the alternative relations born out of Barnaby as Trinitarian figurehead demand not only that rioting men falsely assume non-human animal identities, but that they reformulate the normative heterosexual desire of ideal middle-class

\textsuperscript{23} Women are excluded from the Trinity, according to Mary Daly, who argues that the “classic answer [to Christian women] has been: ‘You’re included under the Holy Spirit. He’s feminine’” (\textit{Gyn/ecology} 38).
domesticity into the homosocial desire implicit in the Trinity. The Trinity, Daly notes, idealizes “male monogender mating” in the service of realizing “the perfect all-male marriage, the ideal all-male family” inscribed by patriarchy (Daly 38). Just as the all-male Trinity demands a male, rather than female, practitioner as its “proper” desiring subject, the animalized mob of men participating in the riots must sublimate traditional heterosexual desire into a desire for other animalized men. The men of the mob renounce fully humanized identities and heterosexual desire—“‘You an’t in love I hope, brother? That an’t the sort of thing for us, you know’”—and, instead, reconstitute love in the form of a homosocial brotherhood focalized through the animalized male triad composed of Barnaby, Hugh, and Dennis the hangman—the mob’s unholy Trinity (Barnaby 405).

In the wake of Lord Gordon’s inflammatory rhetoric, the homosocially oriented mob of men combine to actively destroy the material marker of functional gender and species heterogeneity—the domestic space—in the service of consolidating an “all-male family” born outside the parameters of domesticity (Barnaby 465, 462; Daly 38):

The besiegers being now in complete possession of the house, spread themselves over it from garret to cellar, and plied their demon labours fiercely. While some smaller parties kindled bonfires underneath the windows, others broke up the furniture and cast the fragments down to feed the flames below…they hurled out tables, chests of drawers, beds, mirrors, pictures, and flung them whole into the fire; while every fresh addition to the blazing masses was received with shouts, and howls, and yells. (460)

By reducing functional homes to “heaps of ruins” and murdering domestic animal companions such as the caged canaries that they “cast into the fire alive,” Dennis and the other mobbing males attempt to expose gender and species heterogeneity as the middle-class domestic space’s point of weakness and offer their homosocial and animalized arrangement as the better alternative (Barnaby 461; 552). Unlike even a lesser functional domestic male, Mr Haredale,
who mourns the loss of his home, the surging mass of men who “danc[e] and trampl[e]” on beds of flowers, while yelling and howling as the domestic space and its animal constituents burn, foreclose the possibility for normative domesticity by replacing and then eradicating actual animals but, also, by excluding women. The mob’s policy of exclusion is reinforced, in part, by the act of destroying the very domestic spaces which would provide women the opportunity for forging companionate relationships with males: as Dennis says, love and marriage “‘tan’t the sort of thing for’” them (Barnaby 405).

Even when female figures like Dolly Varden and Emma Haredale are introduced into the body of mobbing men for the purpose of completing heterosexual couplings through (forced) marriage, the men regress from the domestic ideal of heterosexual desire into a desire to reinstate homosociality through gender-bending. The men, in fact, move from desiring the women in marriage to desiring to be them: “Who could look on and see her [Dolly’s] lavish caresses and endearments, and not desire to be in Emma Haredale’s place; to be either her or Dolly; either the hugging or the hugged? Not Hugh. Not Dennis” (495). Explicit even within the syntactical logic of the sentence is the reorientation on the part of mob-men from heterosexual coupling—“Who could…not desire to be in Emma Haredale’s place”—to an alternative desire for gender-inversion and the reinstitution of gender-homogeny—“Who could…not desire to be…either her or Dolly” (495). Just as in the Trinity, however, where the Holy Spirit is coded as “He” but also as “feminine,” in this moment of potential gender-bending Hugh and Dennis implicitly subsume the feminine into an otherwise monogender male structure, just as they have earlier subsumed animality only to burn up and disenfranchise actual animals (Daly 38). As Daly notes, “male made-up femininity has nothing to do with women” as they actually are; the all-male Trinitarian model invoked by the mobbers seeks to include women like Dolly and Emma only by
interpreting them through, and subsuming them in, the male—whether that male be the “He” of the Holy Spirit or Dennis and Hugh (Daly 38).

By identifying as and desiring to be women and animals, men such as Barnaby, Hugh, and Dennis enact a *doubly* promiscuous and violent consolidation of identities that effectively dismantles any potentiality for a “properly” heterogeneous and heterosexual domestic triad involving the exercise of reverse domestication by animal *and* women companions. Grip, who perhaps understands the way in which he has been disenfranchised by the mob’s Trinitarian brotherhood of animalized men becomes an informant rather than a domesticator as he works to secretly uncover the brotherhood’s theft of the domestic space’s riches—“Golden cups, spoons, candle-sticks, coined guineas—all the riches were revealed”—as if, in the process, attempting to recover his own treasured status as a domestic animal (*Barnaby* 478). Grip, in this moment of revelation, exposes the fact that the ideal middle-class domestic space offers domesticated males a life of material comfort, while simultaneously demonstrating how the alternative masculinity assumed by the homosocial and animalized brotherhood of rioters offers no material, no comfort, and no chance at freedom and continued life.

As if in confirmation of Barnaby’s status as soulless and deathly, the unholy Trinity of men who take Barnaby as their processional Trinitarian figurehead have, as Dennis explains, “‘got into bad company’” and reap the benefits—imprisonment and death by hanging—of sharing in Barnaby’s dysfunctional masculinity and the criminal homogenization of the human and animal, male and female, constituents of ideal middle-class domesticity (619). Only Barnaby, the figurehead, is spared a deadly fate, his madness allowing him to be recuperated and reincorporated into the domestic by his mother who, perhaps, continues only to have a tenuous hold on him.
In Dickens’ later text, *David Copperfield*, the class, gender, and species dynamics of masculinity and the domestic space operate in a way distinct from the lower-class and dysfunctionally animalized masculinities evidenced in *Oliver Twist*, *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge*. This is the case most notably because the male protagonist, David, not only undergoes a series of class transitions—moving from middle-class boy, to working-class orphan, before finally returning to his middle-class origins as an adult—but because he undergoes a transition from dysfunctional domestic male to functional male within the scope of the *bildungsroman* narrative through domestication by the dog, Jip. David prefigures his initially dysfunctional relationship to Jip in his descriptions of his childhood domestic space. David’s childhood home is oddly emptied of its animal constituents, characterized by “a pigeon-house…without any pigeons,” and a “great dog-kennel…without any dog” while also missing the rooks that lend the home its name—The Rookery (*Copperfield* 25).

David’s youthful domestic is one pregnant with absence: absent a domesticating male, due to his father’s death, and a slew of domestic animals, David grows and develops without “proper” masculinity and cross-species domestication modeled for him. Moreover, even when these roles in the domestic triad are filled by a stepfather, Mr. Murdstone, and a dog, the newly introduced masculine and animal triad members embody dysfunction. The dog which fills the “empty dog-kennel” is “a great dog—deep mouthed and black-haired” which “sprung out to get at David,” signaling the failure of David’s stepfather, Mr. Murdstone, to successfully domesticate the dog and, consequently, the foreclosure of reverse domestication for Murdstone himself. Rather than an opportunity for David’s indoctrination into normative domesticated masculinity, the step-father and dog offer a legacy of dysfunctional domesticity to David and his mother.
Murdstone, demonstrating a similarity to Sikes, Quilp, and other dysfunctional men in Dickens’ corpus, resorts to violence not only in his interactions with “obstinate horse[s] or dog[s]” but preeminent human domestics such as spouses and children, viewing David as a “creature” whom he will “conquer” and control by making him “wince and smart” with beating (57). Sent to school for biting Murdstone, David’s creaturely-ness is concretized through his consolidation with the abused domestic dog of his childhood as he must wear a sign around his neck that proclaims him to be nothing more than a bad dog: “Take care of him. He bites”(90). Admitting that, “I positively began to have a dread of myself, as a kind of wild boy who did bite,” David’s interaction with a dysfunctional masculine type, Murdstone, leads to confusion about his own identity as human male as he wonders if, instead, he might really be a “wild boy” or a dog (90). It is this very confusion that causes David to fail to relate to nonhuman animals, such as Jip, in a way productive of middle-class domesticity because he is unable, initially, to adequately understand the domesticating influence that Jip, Dora’s lap dog, offers to him as he begins his courtship of Dora. Conditioned from youth to expect that animals will either be absent or violent toward him, and to think that he is one of them, David reads Jip’s antagonism as typical rather than instructional, and undergoes confusion about the distinctly speciated but co-shaping roles he and Jip are meant to perform for one another. David’s various layers of confusion ultimately cause him to commit to a failed first marriage with Dora before constituting an ideal domesticity with Agnes.

Jip proclaims David an unfit suitor for Dora when he responds to David’s first indices of love for Dora by “show[ing] his whole set of teeth” and “snarl[ing]” in order to ward off the “least familiarity” (401). Jip, as Dora’s lifelong companion, has insight into Dora’s character, capacities, and needs that David does not, and that David ignores his attempts at masculine
domestication causes Jip to be, as Dora indicates, brokenhearted over what he realizes will be a failed marriage (640). In fact, many of the trials and tribulations that the couple encounters once married are issues that Jip identifies as problematic during their courtship. When Jip “stands upon” the cookbook that David buys for Dora prior to their marriage, Jip is actively communicating to David that Dora will never use the book, and that she will never be capable of making David the “nice Irish stew” his future self might desire from her (612). Moreover, that the pencil case David buys in the hopes of teaching Dora “accounts” and housekeeping is made by Jip into a chew toy rather than used by Dora as a practical instrument of homemaking signals that Dora will never know how to buy David’s hypothetical “shoulder of mutton for dinner” from a butcher’s shop without getting swindled or going over the household budget (611-12).

In such moments of seeming un-domestication and bad behavior Jip performs something akin to what Susan McHugh has described as “intelligent disobedience” in seeing eye dogs who “refuse[] (no matter what the consequences) to bring the guided person into danger” (McHugh 53). David is, indeed, much like a blind man and Jip much like his seeing-eye dog when it comes to domestic matters, but David continually violates the cross-species power dynamics of this relationship in failing to recognize when to surrender himself to the dog’s “leadership” (McHugh 53). David is too “undisciplined” to recognize Jip as an empowered agent capable of intelligent disobedience and capable, also, of fulfilling the role of a guide to domestic happiness, leaving David to blindly enmesh himself within a domestic relationship with Dora that ultimately proves dysfunctional (Dickens 704).

In his marriage with Dora, David has “no partner” and must perform the “toils and cares” of a domestic arrangement which seems to accrete and expand its dysfunction as it attracts drunken and thieving servants, cheating shop keepers, and even criminals to its coal cellar (654;
Jip, who “positively refused to adapt himself to circumstances,” and who is physically sickened by the “wedding cake” he eats, is distanced, even after marriage, from the couple and the dysfunctional domestic they’ve originated, refusing to be an active animal constituent of their domestic triad (610; 639). In fact, Jip’s distance from the dysfunctional domesticity of David and Dora is reinforced by the couple through their very inability to adequately perform the material duties of the household, as they buy an overly-large alternative domestic space for Jip, a “Chinese house…with little bells on top,” in lieu of “a kitchen fender and meat-screen” meant to enhance the comfort and functionality of their own home (633). That Jip lives, to some extent, outside the bounds of the couple’s domestic space leaves him open to facilitate a functional cross-species domestic triad between David and the female companion, Agnes, who is more fit to be the “comfortable” wife that David feels Dora is not (643). When Jip interacts with Agnes, he displays an affection and acceptance of her that he routinely denies to David, his Aunt, and other visitors to the domestic space. Whereas David and his Aunt meet with Jip’s antagonism for their shared history of poorly chosen spouses and domestic discord, Agnes has long been a fit housekeeper, entrusted by her father with the housekeeping keys and the duties of the household for most of her life. Jip intuits, through “her manner of making acquaintance” with him, Agnes’s capacity to play the role of functional female in a domestic triad and “respond[s] instantly” to her domestic ideality by receiving her into his good graces as the long-missing constituent of David’s domestic triad (617). David’s profound awareness of Jip’s open approval and preconception of the ideal match he could make with Agnes allows Jip to play the role of animal domesticator in the couple’s triad, even though his death and Dora’s precede the couple’s union. Jip’s efforts at domesticating David—sitting atop the cookbook and chewing pencil cases—become retroactively effective as David begins to understand what Jip has, from the start, been
conditioning him to understand: “There can be no disparity in marriage like unsuitability of mind and purpose” (671).

In much the same way that, in David Copperfield, David must have his masculinity domesticated and, in some sense, rehabilitated by Jip before being capable of forging an ideal domesticity with Agnes, in The Old Curiosity Shop, Dickens pits the young, lower-class male Kit against a pony with a penchant for misbehaving to create a scenario in which a non-violent, non-bestial masculinity is deployed effectively to achieve not only the domestication of a truly hard to manage animal, but normative middle-class domesticity forged through reciprocal, cross-species domestication. Kit is regularly described in the text as a source of domestic order, sustainability, and creation. He assumes masculine control and surveillance over little Nell’s domestic space when her grandfather abandons her in the evenings to gamble, and when Quilp seizes the home little Nell shares with her grandfather, Kit offers his own “poor one” to them as a return to normal domestic life sans Quilp (Curiosity 87; 96).

Although Kit is never able to see his offer realized in the way of introducing Nell and her grandfather into the home he shares with his mother and siblings, one can imagine that if Nell had in fact come to live with Kit that the outcome might have been a functional domestic triad, most notably because Kit partially fulfills his promise of a home to Nell by taking in her bird, which Nell is sure will “by some means fall into the hands of Kit who would keep it for her sake” (101). Just as Dickens makes the link between ideal domesticity and animal relations clear by describing the veritable animal menagerie that defines his home in the letter to F.W. Powell, Kit’s functional masculinity and potential for creating an ideal, middle-class domestic space is predicated upon the relationships he forges with domestic animals like Nell’s bird and Whiskers, Horses were viewed by Victorians as one of the preeminent domesticates, but also one of the more wild, spirited, and hard to tame ones (Dorre 10-11, 26).
the good-natured but rather headstrong and independent pony owned by the Garland family (Letters).

The Garland household is largely ideal in that Mr., Mrs., and Abel Garland seem to constitute a loving, charitable, felicitous, and surprisingly functional family unit. However, their domesticity is constantly disrupted by the family pony, Whiskers, who seems more often than not to invert traditional power relations by “‘mak[ing] the family go where he will’” in much the same way that the raven Grip exerts a hierarchy-inverting mastery over Barnaby and his movements in Barnaby Rudge (Barnaby 61). Upon Kit’s introduction into the family as the Garland’s servant, it is notable that the disorder caused by Whiskers is significantly reduced, not through Kit’s application of violence or other forms of antagonism and abuse, but by his ability to forge a relationship of respect and mutual dependence with the pony while other characters, such as the Garlands and the insidious Mr. Chuckster, fail to do so.

While the Garlands, who chase after Whiskers as he “dodged the family round a small paddock in the rear, for one hour and three-quarters” fail to exert mastery over and even seem to surrender domestic mastery to the pony, Mr. Chuckster threatens to “‘break’” Whiskers and seeks recourse in the Victorian species hierarchy and the linear exchange of domesticating power written into that hierarchy as he wishes to “asser[t] the supremacy of man over the inferior animals” (Curiosity 174; 289). By contrast, Kit treats Whiskers as though he is a true “‘Christian,’” a relationship of mutual respect and shared moral obligation that not only allows Kit to domesticate and shape the pony to his will or, rather, that of the Garland family, but allows for Whiskers to ultimately facilitate Kit’s transition into heterosexual marriage and normative domesticity (427). Whiskers, who has “such a remarkable partiality for” Kit, and who, “from being the most obstinate and opinionated pony on the face of the earth” went to being “the
meekest and most tractable of animals,” fosters the burgeoning heterosexual relations and ultimately ideal domesticity of Kit and Barbara.

Towards the close of the novel, Dickens inserts Barbara into the Whiskers-Kit dyad, creating a functional cross-species and cross-gender domestic triad in which none of the members—whether man, woman, or animal—is symbolically consolidated into the identity of any other member of the triad. Although Kit, Whiskers, and Barbara are autonomous and heterogeneous individuals, it is clear that all three individuals are necessary components in the formation of an ideal domestic state. Although cross-species and cross-gender dyadic relations between Kit and Whiskers, Kit and Barbara, and Barbara and Whiskers persist in the early parts of the novel, “proper” domesticity arises only when the individuals are unified into one heterogeneous triad upon Kit returning from jail after being (intentionally) wrongly accused of theft. That functional domesticity could not occur for Kit and Barbara in the absence of their third member, Whiskers, points to the significance of the pony within the domestic relations of the couple. In fact, it is the respectful bond that the human male and female form with the pony that ultimately brings them together, their union significantly staged not within an existent domestic space but in the peripheral space, the stable, of the domesticating animal:

Kit takes the first opportunity of slipping away and hurrying to the stable…and when Kit goes up to [the pony to] caress and pat him, the pony rubs his nose against his coat, and fondles him more lovingly than ever pony fondled man…But how comes Barbara to trip in there?…How comes Barbara in the stable, of all places in the world? Why, since Kit has been away, the pony would take his food from nobody but her…It may be that Kit has caressed the pony enough; it may be that there are even better things to caress than ponies. He leaves him for Barbara…Was it natural that at that instant, without any previous impulse or design, Kit should kiss Barbara? He did it, whether or no…[and] the pony kicked up his heels and shook his head, as if he were suddenly taken with convulsions of delight. (515)
Although Laura Brown has argued in “The Lady, the Lapdog, and Literary Alterity” that sexualized physical exchanges between humans and animals, such as Kit’s “caress[es],” express an “immoderate love” that ultimately speaks to the animal’s displacement of appropriate human relations—whether familial or romantic—it is clear that Whiskers’ relationship with Kit is formative of, rather than destructive to, Kit’s burgeoning domestic relations with Barbara (Brown 37; Curiosity 515). Dickens effectively shows how Kit signals to Barbara his domesticated masculinity by transferring the companionate relational structure and physical intimacies he indulges with the pony—the “caress[es]” and “fondl[ings]”—to Barbara who signals her reciprocally ideal status as domestic partner through the functions she performs for the pony, which are transferrable to Kit and to the domestic space.

In fact, whereas in David Copperfield Jip demonstrates Dora’s unsuitability for marriage by signaling, via the cookbook, that she is incapable of nourishing her domestic partner, Whiskers is able to endorse Barbara with “convulsions of delight” precisely because she proves equal to this task while Kit is away and unable to nourish Whiskers himself. Unlike Dora who is “no partner” and forces her husband to perform the “toils and cares” of the domestic by himself, Barbara demonstrates through the domestic function she performs for Whiskers—feeding him and otherwise caring for him—that she will make Kit a “comfortable” wife, much like Agnes is a “comfortable” wife for David (Copperfield 654; 643). Both Kit and Barbara, then, ultimately must prove their domestic suitability for one another by first rehearsing their domestic potentials in their interactions with Whiskers, who acts less as an uncomplicated symbolic double or replacement for Barbara than as a matchmaker whose approval the couple needs in order to move toward a happy domestic. Ultimately, the Kit-Whiskers-Barbara triad confirms that animal
agents as reverse domesticators are imperative to the formation of the middle-class masculine and domestic values so integral to the domestic politics and ethics of Dickens’ novel.

III. REVERSE DOMESTICATION AND DICKENS’ ETHICS OF CROSS-SPECIES REPRESENTATION

Dickens’ ostensible goal in his early novels—parsing out a normative domesticity predicated on a middle-class masculine ideal—is achieved through a representational multiplicity in which a host of competing classed masculinities are constructed through highly specific constellations of cross-species, as well as cross-gender, relationships formed within the realms of domestication and domesticity. For Dickens, “[h]uman nature is an interspecies relationship” and animals are, therefore, meaningful as representational subjects apart from their traditional function as symbolic representatives of marginalized human populations (Haraway 218). Dickens’ early novels give us new ways of authoring the animal in literature as well as, simultaneously, reconditioning the ways in which we can read and interpret animals in literature, as well as their place within broader ethical frameworks existing or taking shape beyond the pages of the text. Dickens, in resisting the ubiquitous literary practice of promiscuously collapsing human and animal identities, offers resistance to the ethical system taking shape in the period.

Dickens marks individual animals as ethical subjects in ways that drastically diverge from the predominant stance on animal rights in the Victorian period: namely, that animals must be protected not because they themselves are of individual ethical value, but because violence against animals is a stepping stone to violence against other humans (Ritvo 131). According to
this humanist ethics the latter violence against the human is the real ethical dilemma, and the violated human the true ethical subject. Dickens, in resisting the ubiquitous literary practice of promiscuously collapsing human and animal identities, also resists this flawed ethical system. The period’s prevalent animal rights discourse, in seeking to determine the ethical weight of the animal in direct proportion to its ability to prefigure or correspond to ethical infractions against *human* individuals, operates in much the same vein as the symbolic erasure of the animal and its agency in period literature: a practice carried out in the service of privileging the representational value of *human* over animal subjectivity. Dickens, in order to escape these mutually reinforcing systems of animal erasure and human exceptionality, radicalizes his representational practices in order to actively rewrite this logic, ultimately recognizing animals in his novels as powerful partners within a domestic triad characterized by relations of cross-species companionship and co-constitution. In so doing, Dickens imagines a set of relations in which animals are placed alongside humans as significant subjects of ethical and political power, as well as fundamental components in the formation and development of human individuals and traditionally human constructs, including heteronormative domesticity and gender identities.

Dickens achieves a laudable degree of radical ethicality by imagining animal agency in the domestic as a marker of normative middle-class homes and men, but also as constitutive of what Susan McHugh has described in twentieth-century literature as a “relational ethics” in which assemblages of humans and nonhumans work together to produce a phenomenon greater than the “sum of [their] individual efforts” (McHugh 5). In this way, Dickens asks readers to think a new representational and cultural ethics in which the animal is not only an entity empowered enough to facilitate its own and humans’ needs and desires—however much these needs and desires might look suspiciously heteronormative and middle-class in Dickens’
rendering of them—but in which the animal and human must combine in order to achieve a more ethical outcome that would not be possible in the absence of such cross-species cooperation.

As empowered agents who resist the “substitutive logic of” symbolic erasure, animals in Dickens’ texts are able to challenge the notion of the human as a privileged site of “singularity” within the nation’s ethical system and a tradition of literary representation which both take the human as, finally, the only “proper” subject of consideration (McHugh 8). To these ends, it seems no coincidence that it is men whom the animals in *Oliver Twist, The Old Curiosity Shop, Barnaby Rudge, and David Copperfield* must exercise their power of reverse domestication over to establish normative class, gender, ethical and political values. Dickens, through animals endowed with the power of reverse domestication, challenges the role of Victorian men as the ultimate or “singular” subjects of ethical consideration as well as the ultimate engineers, via judicial enforcement and parliamentary legislation, of the nation’s ethical investments—including a swiftly codifying investment in animal rights in the period as a national value that would set Britain apart from other nations, such as France.

Dickens ultimately envisions the goal of establishing a more ethical balance within the domestic and without as dependent upon the joining of nonhuman animal and human agents who, in coming together and domesticating each other, constitute new communities and new, more functional, ways not only of interacting within the multiply gendered and speciated space of the domestic, but new ways of living and being in a cross-species world. The domestic imaginary Dickens brings to fruition through cross-species ethical relations in his early novels is a problematically heteronormative, middle-class, and traditionally gendered imaginary.
CHAPTER TWO

BEETLE ETHICS IN WILKIE COLLINS’ HEART AND SCIENCE

Wilkie Collins’ *Heart and Science* (1883) emerged amidst intense late-Victorian debates about the ethicality of animal vivisection, or the use of live animals by medical professionals for physiological experimentation. Although authored with the express intention of proffering an antivivisectionist ideology, *Heart and Science* is a unique contribution to the antivivisection literature of the period. The novel’s uniqueness lies not only in the form it takes—the sensation novel—but in its foregrounding of an insect, rather than a metaphorized domestic or working animal, as a nonhuman collaborative agent. Just as Dickens focuses on domestic animals as ethical agents and collaborators in his early work, antivivisection literatures including pamphlets, essays, government reports, periodicals, and pieces of fiction including short stories, poetry and novels foreground domestic animals, such as dogs and cats, as the victims of vivisection. Although antivivisection literatures make domestic animals the face of antivivisection because they are central to period conceptions of domesticity, middle-class identity, and are especially sentimentalized, these literatures are made less effective for that choice—a choice Collins does not make.

Fictionalized accounts of vivisection authored by animal rights activists and sympathizers—for example Frances Power Cobbe’s novella *A Lost Dog*—often came under attack by Victorian literary critics and popular audiences for the maudlin sentimentality with which they portrayed already highly sentimentalized nonhuman types: domestics. It would be hard, in fact, to defend many instances of antivivisection fiction from this charge. One such
example is Lewis Morris’ poem, “Song of Two Worlds.” Published in the *Victoria Street Society Pamphlet*, a publication of the antivivisection group the Victoria Street Society, the poem conjures up an emotional melodrama in which the narrator, an owner of a domestic dog, imagines himself in the subjective position of a vivisector about to experiment on his pet. The narrator describes his dog as “a helpless kinsman, fast and bound,” who “licks” the hand of his imagined vivisector before being subjected to “some keen acid” that makes him “writh[e]” in pain and “wrench[es his] still beating heart”—just as the implied reader’s heart is meant to be wrenched, not by a “keen acid,” but by the poem itself (338). As demonstrated by Morris’ poem, making domestics the face of antivivisection and animal rights agendas incurred two primary problems. First, recourse to domestics in animal rights literatures implicitly or explicitly equated the value of animals directly with humans’ high or low emotional investments in those animals as pet or non-pet. As Theresa Mangum explains in “Animal Angst: Victorians Memorialize Their Pets,” “attention to animal suffering” revolved almost exclusively around “animals that could have been ‘pets,’” and even “[t]hose who ‘loved’ animals doomed most (the non-pets) to misery when they demarcated and exalted a few species as ‘pets’” (18). Second, recourse to domestics, referred to by Morris as “helpless kinsm[en],” promoted the idea that the animal’s ethical value was tied to its ability to be metaphorized as other *human* kinds of domestics, namely women and children. This, in turn, served to naturalize period species, gender, and domestic inequalities and hierarchies. Both of these problems highlight how animal rights and antivivisection literatures often situated themselves as less interested in animals themselves than in their abilities to impact or mirror human emotion, human domestic types, and widely accepted period hierarchies.
Collins acknowledges and resolves these issues by foregrounding an insect—a beetle—in *Heart and Science*, while he leaves domestic animals, including dogs and cats, to occupy less prominent positions. In so doing, he frees his text from the metaphorical and emotional burdens attendant on the Victorian domestic pet and recuperates the antivivisection agenda as inherently oriented around the nonhuman. While nonhumans in the novel share the danger of vivisection with other types of domestics, such as women and children, Collins, via the beetle, problematizes a spectrum of symbolic ethical exchange in which domestic nonhumans are metaphorized as human, while certain human domestics are metaphorized as animal. Moreover, Collins divorces the human’s emotive response to the animal from the sentimentalized domestic animal itself. Instead, he recovers emotion as a possible ethical response called forth by recognition of animal qualities, including finitude, shared by humans and nonhumans—whether domestic or not. Characters such as Ovid and Carmina, as well as the child Zo, forge new cross-species affective communities through witnessing and being threatened by animal finitude, as well as through their welcoming of sensorial and embodied qualities typically labeled animal. Their emotive responses to their own inherent animality, as well as to animal others, is indicative of cross-species co-constitution, responsibility, and ethics, rather than being a symptom of the unevenness of the Victorian species hierarchy, the violence of animal metaphor, or a product of domestic sentimentalism.

Collins creates the space for renegotiating the value of affective responses to nonhumans not through a typical form of animal rights literature—a pamphlet, essay, report or periodical—but by incorporating elements of these “purposeful” antivivisection literatures into the form of the sensation novel. Collins’ utilization of the sensation genre is significant with regard to the register of emotional response. Indeed, charges of affective extremity were not limited to
instances of the animal rights genre of fiction, such as Morris’s poem, but were also made against popular sensational works, such as Collins’ _The Woman in White_ (1860) and _The Moonstone_ (1868). Collins destabilizes both the sensation and animal rights genres, as _Heart and Science_, with its dual prefices—one for “Readers in General” (sensation-seekers) and the other for “Readers in Particular” (antivivisectionists)—marks a site on which the sensationalism sought by general readers and the ideological sentimentalism sought by readers in particular become deeply intertwined on a formal level to surprising effect. By combining the antivivisection and sensation genres, Collins poignantly allows the burden of overwrought emotionality to shift back and forth between _Heart and Science’s_ generic markers and readerly audiences to destabilize assumptions about the social, aesthetic, and intellectual merits of sensational and antivivisection literatures. Through his combination of genres and narrative structures, Collins forces the responsibility of emotional and embodied stimulation to be shared between the sensational and antivivisectionist aesthetics of the novel, forcing readers into a new mode of textual consumption in which the novel’s generic hybridity might force them out of an automatic consignment of either genre or its represented subjects to hyperbolic emotionality.

The instability of Collins’ formal aesthetic recuperates extreme affective responses to the non-human encounter as ethically productive in ways not captured by traditional animal rights

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25 Moreover, antivivisection and sensation texts were often feared to share one in the same primary audience: “irrational” females who read sensation novels for sexual or physical stimulation and who, alternately, engaged their grosser sentimentalism championing the rights of nonhuman animals, especially domestics, as members of animal rights and antivivisection societies.

26 Collins interweaved two genres that seemed to be at formal and aesthetic odds in _Heart and Science_ much to the chagrin of critics contemporary with him, as well as to the chagrin of modern critics for whom _Heart and Science_ is rarely a text chosen for serious scholarly engagement. Charles Swinburne said in a biting couplet about the novel, “What brought good Wilkie’s genius nigh perdition? / Some demon whispered—‘Wilkie, have a mission’” (Swinburne 262).

27 Collins not only combines elements of the sensation novel with elements of non-fictional antivivisection texts, but also incorporates a traditional conversion narrative seen in much antivivisectionist fiction. In this narrative a male protagonist is converted, often reluctantly, into a proponent of antivivisection. Alternatively, this narrative took the form of a young woman defying a violent, dominant male to protect helpless domestic animals (Li 46).
or, specifically, antivivisectionist discourses. Emergent in this ethical-affective space which Collins creates is an ethics of the cross-species that is borne out through the collaborative or hybrid form of the novel itself, as well as through the cross-species collaborative structures represented in the novel, which are most effective when they privilege the least domestic nonhuman types. The resultant cross-species ethics is one in which the encounter with a mundane nonhuman agent is an act of chimerical collaboration. This collaboration facilitates the human’s experience of an embodied, emotional extremity that throws her out of herself and into a new mode of animal being as a human-animal, rather than an ostensibly pure human subject. This experience of emotional and physical extremity is transformative and chimeric as it acts as a vehicle for re-writing human subjectivity and cross-species ethics: first, by reinvesting the human with its animal remainder and, second, by way of acknowledging the disavowed characteristics, including finitude, which humans share in common with nonhumans.


In 1875 Frances Power Cobbe asked the following question in a periodical titled “The Moral Aspects of Vivisection”:

If it be proper to torture a hundred affectionate dogs or intelligent chimpanzees to settle some curious problem about their brains, will they advocate doing the same to a score of Bosjesmen [Kalahari Bush People], to the idiots in our asylums, to criminals, to infants, to women? (Hamilton 1: xi-xii)
Cobbe’s question highlights the central tensions surrounding antivivisection debates in Victorian Britain, as well as period activists’ anthropocentric and humanistic conceptualizations of the issue. As in the example of Morris’ poem, above, central to Cobbe’s question is a domestic animal—the dog—whose ethical value is determined by its “affectionate” relationship to the Victorian people, for whom dogs and other domestics were becoming increasingly sentimentalized and definitional members of domesticity, class, and even British-ness. In a place of prominence beside the domestic dog is the chimpanzee which, though not considered or valued as a domestic, is given special status for its demonstration of rational intellectual ability, “intelligent[ence],” like the human’s. Hence, Cobbe constructs and reflects a spectrum of animal value, this spectrum creating a legible and concrete system for determining human ethical responsibility. On one side of the spectrum are animals which Victorians had affectionate attachment to (domestics) or which were uncannily human in valued ways (the chimpanzee). On the other side of the spectrum is an expanse of other nonhuman types who go unnamed; with no special affective relationship with humans, and no special likeness to them, this unnamed mass is afforded little or no ethical relevance. Unlike the dog and chimpanzee who become ethically salient, in part, because they can be imagined as alike in cultural subordination to, and metaphorized as, natives, infants, criminals, women, and idiots, these ethically defunct others resist metaphor and naming, conglomerating into a body of beings—the animal—that, in Derrida’s words, are subject to “sacrifice” (“Eating Well” 112-116).

Yet another issue that Cobbe’s question raises is the tension between period scientific practice and “the greater good,” as Cobbe asks if the work “they”—vivisectors—do is meaningful and necessary, or merely a product of the scientific discipline’s increasing drive for status and knowledge at any cost. Cobbe strips vivisectors of their professional and educational
statuses—their institutional and cultural protections—to question their motivations for undertaking vivisection. She notes that “they” use the practice for “sett[ing]” what she characterizes as “some curious problem” for which acquiring an answer may be interesting, but seemingly non-essential. Moreover, the metaphorical relationship she constructs between the “hundred” dogs or chimpanzees and various culturally subordinated human groups, including women and children, indicates that nonhumans are subjected to vivisection in a disproportionate degree to the humans who may actually benefit from its outcomes while, also, expressing the fear that certain types of humans might eventually be subjected to vivisection in place of the dogs and chimpanzees she champions (Hamilton xi-xii).

Cobbe’s question is instructional as a micro-encapsulation of the larger antivivisection debates which reached their height throughout the 1870’s and mid-1880’s (Farmer 13). It points to the very problematic, even contradictory, ways in which Victorian animal rights and antivivisection activists conceptualized animal value and ethics on the basis of human affective investments or human likeness, as well as how such determinations of animal value lent themselves to the seamless reinscription of animals and the vivisection problem through the human and human metaphor. Cobbe’s question taps, too, into the difficult problem of regulating scientific professionals and their methods late in the century, as Cobbe and others attempted to parse out the boundary between beneficial science and sacrificial science, as well as enforce this boundary with a group of high-class and high-status medical professionals who went largely untouched by the period’s most influential animal rights society: the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) founded in 1824 and given the title “Royal” (RSPCA) in 1840.

RSPCA activity in the nineteenth century attempted to address a wide array of animal abuses through both legal and non-legal interventions—members produced and disseminated
animal rights literature, authored and lobbied for legislation, and identified and prosecuted those who flouted extant animal rights laws. During its infancy as an organization, the RSPCA focused its attention on lobbying for animal rights legislation pertaining to abuses committed by the working classes, the individuals considered by the RSPCA to be the most egregious perpetrators of animal abuse and, not coincidentally, individuals lacking the socio-legal powers and protections which safeguarded the educated classes. As such, a pervasive set of lower-class sporting and gaming activities, including cock and dog fighting, rat killing, bull running, and baiting wild animals, were, by the end of the century, illegal (Ritvo 125). Other sporting activities, such as the genteel sport of fox hunting, however, retained legality and did so until 2004 (Ritvo 125).

Alongside the eradication of lower-class animal sporting activities, Victorians earnestly began to selectively breed and domesticate animals, most significantly dogs, who increasingly became re-valued both as sentimentalized members of the family and status symbols for middle and upper-class households (Ritvo 87). This cultural re-description of certain animals and animal-oriented activities as desirable, permissible, and associated with the middle- and upper-classes was held in tension with the fact that domestics were co-opted, sometimes through illegal means, into the scientific labors of the period’s most highly esteemed scientists and scientific institutions (Ritvo 125). As French notes in Antivivisection and Medical Science in Victorian Society, vivisection “was simply one among many problem areas” addressed by the RSPCA, and because “involving…educated individuals of recognized status in the community, a particularly delicate one” (French 27). In fact, Brian Harrison explains in “Animals and the State in Nineteenth-Century England” that animal abuse was considered to be almost exclusively a lower-class phenomenon. William Gull, for example, proclaimed that animal cruelty laws were
“‘for the ignorant, and not for the best people,’” while a textbook produced by the RSPCA in 1885 argued for including instruction on “kindness to animals in ‘the system of education among the poorer classes’” (Harrison 791; 810 my emphasis). The activities of vivisectionists, by contrast, went unhampered as RSPCA leaders argued for a distinction between the justifiable infliction of pain by scientists and medical doctors for the sake of human advancement as compared to the seemingly unjustifiable pain inflicted upon nonhumans by working men and women in the streets (Ritvo 158). As Harriet Ritvo notes in *The Animal Estate*, RSPCA founders made distinctions between lower class *abuses* of animals and upper- and middle- class *uses* of them on the assumption that scientists “automatically belonged in a different moral category” than other classes of individuals on the grounds that “vivisection was the exclusive prerogative of the responsible and the highly educated,” (i.e., the wealthy upper classes) and was practiced by “certified professionals” in the form of educatory experiments or demonstrations (157-8).

As early as the 1870s, however, several breakaway factions from the RSPCA and other animal rights groups began to espouse far more radical perspectives on vivisection. These radical antivivisection organizations, for example the Victoria Street Society, believed (unlike the RSPCA itself) that the legal system should protect animals from vivisection; their first step toward this goal was to “‘rouse public conscience directly’” (Ritvo 161-2). The antivivisection movement as represented by these breakaway factions rejected “a social order that allowed scientists to appropriate animals for experimentation with the unthinking confidence that they were serving the ends of progress” (Ritvo 163). Jonathan Hutchinson embodies this “‘progressive’” stance in his pro-vivisection essay, “On Cruelty to Animals.” Published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1876, Hutchinson’s essay represents vivisection as a product of the “commonwealth” forged between humans and nonhuman animals (107). For Hutchinson and
other pro-vivisectionists, animal vivisection was a problem of reciprocity, as they perceived nonhuman animals as having “gained greatly by the gradual subjugation of the earth which its head and leader [the human] had accomplished” (105). Indeed, Hutchinson explains in the essay that the “victory” of nonhuman animals is due to “the industry and ingenuity of man,” which he correlates to an increase in animal populations and a “soften[ing]” of animals’ “conditions of life” (105).

Dedicated antivivisectionists argued otherwise and offered vastly differing definitions of what an actual cross-species “commonwealth” might entail. These definitions most certainly did not include animal vivisection. An 1876 essay in *The Home Chronicler*, a weekly anti-vivisection journal, for example, debunked the sentiment that nonhuman animals employed in vivisection were equal beneficiaries to humans, stating that “Nature’s creatures have their particular rights and claims as much as mankind have theirs” and that animal lives were being infringed upon in vastly unequal and negative proportions (*Home Chronicler* 310). Period antivivisectionist writings not only “offered a radical critique of Victorian materialism” at large, but they also identified what Hutchinson might have characterized as the “ingenious” practitioners and institutions of science—such as the Royal College of Physicians, the Royal College of Surgeons, the Royal Veterinary College, Oxford and Cambridge—as their primary antagonists (Ritvo 164). They refused to make a distinction between the utilization of animals in the labors of the educated and the non-educated, and resisted the questionable narrative of progress and animal reciprocity offered by Hutchinson and other pro-vivisectionists (Ritvo 163-4). For antivivisectionists, science constituted not a means to progress, but an “abstract process of domination” (Ritvo 1). Indeed, the antivivisectionist goal was to reveal this domination by exposing “scientific experimentation on animals” to the public as “a symbol of what was wrong
with a world in which people had assigned the highest priority to themselves, their reasoning power, and the gratification of their desires” (Ritvo 164).

One salient example of the increasing public visibility of vivisection practices made possible through antivivisection groups was the revelation that veterinary students regularly vivisected horses to “improve...[students’] manual dexterity” (Hamilton, 1: xvi). This use of animal vivisection to increase “dexterity” deviated from public perceptions of the practice’s usage: first, by contradicting the profession’s stated goal of utilizing vivisection to acquire new and practically beneficial knowledge and, second, by employing a highly favored and protected domestic animal—the horse. The *Handbook for the Physiological Laboratory* (1873) by the British Physiologist John Burdon Sanderson, as well as the French Physiologist Claude Bernard’s *Lecons sur la Chaleur Animale* (1876) excited similar kinds of criticism. Both texts touted the unscrupulous pedagogical goal of instructing fledgling students and lay-purchasers in how to reproduce physiological experiments that had already been carried out and documented by better trained hands, while both also provided detailed instructions, results, and images of vivisection experiments featuring domesticated animal types including rabbits, pigeons, and dogs (Hamilton, 1: xvi).

Bernard’s text, for example, provides detailed descriptions and diagrams for the reproduction of experiments involving a “Stove” apparatus which he utilized to “study the Mechanism of Death by Heat” (Cobbe, “Light,” 1: 309). Cobbe reproduces text and images from Bernard’s book in her pamphlet, “Light in Dark Places,” first published in 1883. Cobbe’s pamphlet attempts to rally readers around the antivivisection cause by providing them access to the inner workings of the physiological laboratory. No longer expressed in the disinterested voice of the scientist, Bernard, Cobbe reports with horror how an array of domestics, including
canines, pigeons, and rabbits took six, ten, and twenty-four minutes, respectively, to expire in temperatures ranging from ninety to one-hundred degrees centigrade (Cobbe, “Light,” 1: 309). Bernard’s records of the animals’ behaviors during the stove experiments are included in Cobbe’s account and accompanied by the official illustration of the experiment (at right):

‘The animals…exhibit a series of symptoms always the same and characteristic. At first the creature is a little agitated. Soon the respiration and circulation are quickened. The animal opens its mouth and breathes hard. Soon it becomes impossible to count its pantings; at last it falls into convulsions, and dies generally in uttering a cry.’ (Cobbe, “Light,” 1: 310)

In yet another disturbing physiological experiment, which Cobbe sarcastically terms Bernard’s “triumph,” Bernard models how he has “transform[ed] a living dog—the period’s preeminent domestic—into the resemblance of a piece of wood” (Cobbe, “Light,” 1: 310). This feat of turning a living dog’s body into an inanimate, wood-like substance is memorialized in a portrait exhibited in Paris. In the portrait, Bernard is portrayed holding “up the tortured animal in the attitude depicted” in the illustration above (Cobbe, “Light,” 1: 310). Cobbe’s characterization of the experiment as Bernard’s “triumph” is poignant, as the image of the petrified dog appears to verify that
it is not a living being, let alone a domestic animal with special status in Victorian culture—it is merely a piece of “wood.”

*The Shambles of Science: Extracts from the Diary of Two Students of Physiology,* published in 1903 by L. Lind-af-Hageby, a member of the Women’s Freedom League, and her Swedish compatriot, L.K. Schartau, reinforces both the brutality and focalization on domestic status captured in Cobbe’s “Light in Dark Places.” The diary details vivisection experiments performed in the late 1800’s at University College, London; the most famous entry details the multiple vivisections of an un-anaesthetized terrier that took place over the space of several hours and in violation of extant legislation (Rappaport 394; Hageby & Schartau, 238-240). The incident was widely reported in medical journals and the popular media, and fostered a heated public debate about the legitimacy of vivisection practices in university lecture halls and beyond. In the wake of reporting on the event, the vivisected terrier, known as the “Old Brown Dog,” became a household name and a lasting symbol for the antivivisection and animal rights movements.28 Such revelations of animal suffering helped articulate to the public the ways in which vivisection, as a scientific activity, was as much (or more) in the service of carving out—sometimes quite literally—disciplinary professionalization via the standardization of methods, experimental “materials,” and scientific reporting as it was about bringing about knowledge capable of producing a happier, healthier public at “minimal” animal cost (Hamilton, 1: xviii).

Antivivisectionist groups and individual contributors to the cause accomplished what the RSPCA, wary of targeting educated, upper-class, scientific professionals, initially would not. These groups revealed vivisection as an ethically tenuous practice, creating a demand for the

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28 A statue was erected in 1907 through subscriptions to commemorate the Old Brown Dog and to symbolize the public’s resistance to vivisection practices. The completed statue had to be protected from destruction and vandalism from vivisection sympathizers and was removed in 1910 for exacerbating tensions. A new Old Brown Dog memorial statue was erected in its place in 1985 (Rappaport 394).
RSPCA’s intervention. This intervention took the form of the RSPCA’s prosecution of the French physiologist Eugene Magnan and three English doctors who performed a highly controversial experimental vivisection procedure at an annual meeting of the British Medical Association in 1874 (Ritvo 16). Rather than being amenable to Magnan’s demonstration—injecting a dog with absinthe to cause an epileptic response—many attendees were appalled; Ireland’s President of the Royal College of Surgeons even went so far as to “cut the restraint of one of the dogs used in the demonstration and call[ed] for the county magistrates” (Hamilton, 1: xxii). Although the RSPCA intervened in the affair by igniting an official inquiry which eventually ended with Magnan (and only Magnan) being found in violation of Martin’s Law, the attempt was a legislative failure in the sense that Magnan’s three British co-experimenters were let off on a technicality. The case was widely reported in the press, engendered much public attention and sympathy on the part of the antivivisection cause, and ultimately led the RSPCA to propose a law that would regulate the use of nonhuman animals in scientific research practices (Ritvo 137; 160). The legislation, initially drafted by Cobbe, was addressed to Parliament on May 3, 1875 as the Henniker Bill, and it was joined only eight days later on May 12 by legislation proposed by Cobbe’s opposition—the medical and scientific community—in the form of Playfair’s Bill (Hamilton, 1: xxiv).

Although the Henniker Bill was not accepted into law, the proposed legislation and the incidences of abuse at its core did spur on the establishment of a Royal Commission in 1875. The Commission, made up of representatives from both sides of the vivisection issue, including the famous scientist T.H. Huxley and the antivivisectionist editor of the Spectator, R. H. Hutton, was responsible for investigating the phenomenon of vivisection in Britain to determine its scope and to measure its level of cruelty (Hamilton, 1: xxv). The intention was to use this information
to develop adequate regulation of the practice (Hamilton, 1: xxv). One primary method which the Commission used to collect data on the practice of vivisection was witness testimony from practitioners and animal activists (Hamilton, 1: xxv). Testimony from a practitioner had the greatest influence on the Commission, although in a perhaps unexpected way. The testimony of Emmanuel Klein, co-author of the *Handbook for the Physiological Laboratory*, Lecturer in Histology at St. Bartholomew’s Hospital, and Assistant Professor at the Brown Institute, marks a dramatic turning point in the events of the Commission. As Huxley noted of Klein after his testimony, “He has done more for our enemies [antivivisectionists] than they could have done by their joint efforts, without him, by his wantonly and mischievously brutal talk” (qtd. in Hamilton, 1: xxvi). Huxley’s criticism of Klein is not over-harsh, as Klein became the Commission’s star witness, effectively turning the tides in favor of the cause of regulating vivisection. In fact, French and other scholars have argued that by “so clearly fulfill[ing] every stereotype about the cruel Continental physiologist,” who “must approach a difficult vivisection with…joyful excitement, and…delight,” Klein inspired the Commission to recommend regulations that they were “unlikely” to have offered otherwise (French 305).

The piece of legislation resulting from the Commission’s recommendations, the Cruelty to Animals Act of 1876, however, did little to advance the cause of nonhuman experimental research subjects, leading some Commission members, such as Hutton, to voice their dissent. Hutton and other antivivisectionists viewed the Act as inadequate not only or primarily because the licensing system “made approval for painful experiments relatively easy for scientists to obtain,” but also because it offered “no firm protection” to the domestic animals thought to be

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29 The antivivisection activist Mona Caird, in fact, comments in her essay, “The Inquisition of Science,” that “It appears to be assumed…that physiologists (unlike ordinary erring mortals) are to be absolutely and entirely trusted in matters connected with their own avocations and interests, so that in the Act, which has been framed ostensibly to
most vulnerable to, and most appropriately exempted from, the vivisector’s violence (Ritvo 16; Hamilton 1: xxviii). In a “minority report” appended to the Commission’s final report, Hutton sets out on a special mission not to ban vivisection altogether, but to offer a rationale for banning the use of all *domestic* animals for experimentation. In the vein of much antivivisection literature, Hutton argues that domestic lab subjects were often stolen property and that their special “relations” with and “confidence” in human beings would make them more vulnerable to vivisection when it should, instead, earn them the “special privilege[]” of being excluded from the practice (qtd. in Hamilton, 1: xxviii). Hence, Hutton’s official response to vivisection legislation was in keeping with other forms of fictional and non-fictional antivivisection and animal rights literatures of the period, including the story “Pompey’s Peril” and Cobbe’s essay “The Consciousness of Dogs.” In “Pompey’s Peril” by Mrs. Cashel Hoey, which appeared in 1883 in the *Zoophilist*, for example, Pompey is almost vivisected because he makes the mistake of trusting and offering his paw to a vivisector who intends to capitalize upon the dog’s innate species-trust to procure him as a specimen. Pompey’s trust of the vivisector as a domestic animal is, Hutton and other antivivisectionists argued, what made the domestic animal more vulnerable to experimentation than a wild animal, as well as the reason why domestics had to be afforded special legal protections. Cobbe, in her essay “The Consciousness of Dogs,” goes so far as to suggest that “faith” in mankind is a “sacred trust,” not of just any domestic animals and their human caretakers, but specifically between “man and dog” (Cobbe, “Consciousness,” 1: 60). Hence, Cobbe even further refines Hutton’s desire to include legal protection for domestics, as she lobbies, particularly, for the special protection of dogs. In many ways, Hutton, but

regulate their experiments, its clauses are carefully arranged so as to provide the experimenters with special charters for whatever they happen to aspire to do” (83-2: 84).
especially Cobbe, confirm Ritvo’s assessment of the antivivisectionist’s extreme relationship to dogs: “[t]hey professed a love of dogs so intense as to verge on the ideological” (197).

As many antivivisectionists like Mona Caird and Cobbe realized, the failure of the British legislative body to enact effective protection for nonhuman research subjects—whether only or especially dogs (as Cobbe suggests) or domestics more generally (as Hutton suggests)—stemmed from an inconsistency within the “rhetoric of the humane movement” itself (Ritvo 161). Many of the leading members of the RSPCA “sympathized” with the position of scientists and believed that “not all cruelty was equally reprehensible and threatening” to morality if it ultimately served the greater human good and was contained to sacrificial animal subjects (Ritvo 161). According to Cobbe in her essay “Sacrificial Medicine,” published in the *Cornhill* in 1875, the implicit moral and intellectual faith put in the medical community’s use of vivisection was part of a long, sordid history of medical malpractice in which “meekly … accept[ing]” patients would “swallow everything” from “potable gold” and “powdered skulls” to “toads and earthworms” in accordance with a “false system” of medicine that promised, like vivisection, to benefit individual and collective human life (“Sacrificial,” 1: 115). For Cobbe, period medical science was, indeed, a “sacrificial medicine” in which “poor brutes [were] made to suffer instead of the human patients” who might benefit—an inequitable “price” and, moreover, a price that resulted in disconcertingly inconclusive payoffs to mankind (“Sacrificial.” 1: 123-4).

II. “TORTURING A HUNDRED AFFECTIONATE” BEETLES, OR COLLINS’ BEETLE ETHICS
It is precisely this debate, not only between animal rights organizations like the RSPCA and the medical community regarding the justifiability of vivisection practices, but also the debate between specific animal rights societies with greater and lesser investments in the antivivisectionist cause, with which Wilkie Collins engages in *Heart and Science*. Moreover, Collins challenges dominant humanistic impulses in the antivivisection rhetoric of the period to posit a new ethics of animality for which “the human” or special relations to the human are no longer the guidelines for determining which living entities—animal or human, domestic animal or wild—might deserve ethical consideration or differing levels of consideration. Although still invested in the force of feeling and emotion in forging relationships of respect across species lines, Collins significantly rearticulates the emotional relationship to the nonhuman other. No longer a pat, even maudlin, sentimental attachment to some animals and not others (on the basis of, for example, domestication), emotional response to the mundane cross-species encounter is an impetus for cross-species ethics—ethics for which an insect is just as productive, even more so, than a domestic dog, cat, or horse. This emotive cross-species encounter is a form of chimerical collaboration, as the human refigures himself not as some purified and ultimate measuring stick by which animals and ethical relations to them are determined but, instead, as an animal-human hybrid capable of ethically being and becoming—with nonhumans in previously unexplored ways.

*Heart and Science* contains a multiplicity of nonhuman figures—a domesticated dog named Tinker who lives with the Galilee family, a stray, nameless dog who the novel’s heroine sees getting run over in the London streets, a monkey who shifts from living animal on popular display at the Zoo to dead animal for display on Dr. Benjulia’s vivisection table, and a stray cat adopted into the domestic space by the novel’s medical hero, the antivivisectionist Dr. Ovid
Vere. Putting these many domestic or human-like animals aside for the moment, the nonhuman that I want to fix our attention on initially is not only an insect, but a “common” and scientifically valueless species (Collins 1: 103). As Eric Brown explains in *Insect Poetics*, “the insect has become a kind of Other not only for human beings but for animals and animal studies as well, best left underfoot or in the footnotes” (ix). However, for Collins, the insect embodies an ethical imperative.

If any one nonhuman is to be viewed as the crux of the novel’s cross-species ethics, it is the common beetle. Perhaps paradoxically, the beetle facilitates Collins’ critique of the late-Victorian scientific practice of vivisection even though the beetle itself is only legible as a victim of vivisection through its metonymic relationship to more commonly vivisected animal species. Because the beetle operates both within and outside of the vivisection debates, its ethical figuration allows Collins to exact a critique not only of vivisection, but of larger and more historically consistent cross-species ethical structures in the period—structures which undergirded the practice of vivisection, but which also undergirded early-period scientific activities as well as the Victorians’ everyday interactions with nonhumans more generally.

Collins’ more capacious ethical critique by way of the beetle extends to all nonhumans represented in the text—the beetle itself, Tinker the dog, Ovid’s cat, and a plethora of other nonhumans—recognition as ethical agents regardless of whether or not they are threatened by the more local and specific practice of vivisection. For Collins, the problems of vivisection, generally, and the problem of vivisecting domestics more specifically, must be positioned as a product of a lineage of Victorian cross-species structures, scientific and not, which determine how nonhumans generally or typologically become valued and defined in relation to the human and human society.
Collins uses the insect to trace a cross-species ethical genealogy of the sciences that moves from the unsystematic and disbursed violence of early-century naturalism to an increasingly systematized and hierarchical violence attendant on the turn, later in the period, toward professionalization and specialization. According to Cannon Schmitt in his essay “Victorian Beetlemania,” scientific activities, such as collecting, deemed desirably by early-period naturalism are, for Oscar Wilde writing in the second-half of the nineteenth century, the “most incommunicable, inconsequential, and uninteresting passion[s] extant” (35). According to Wilde, naturalism “demand[ed] mastery of endless minutiae but with no purpose beyond itself”—it was, in effect, pointless (35). Such an appraisal is contiguous with a dominant scientific narrative circulating in the later-Victorian period in which “amassing and studying collections of insects and other bits of the natural world” was labeled “an amateur” and “affective,” rather than professional, “pursuit” (Schmitt 36). Supplanting such amateurish science were late-century “apparatus[es] of rational and institutional knowledge production” embodied by the new biological sciences as well as by the practice of vivisection itself (Schmitt 36). Collins places his common beetle literally under the vivisectionist, Dr. Benjulia’s, foot as he invokes for his readers this narrative of scientific progress in which the act of collecting, preserving, and cataloguing insect bodies becomes displaced by a set of methodological and philosophical investments that value mastery over, rather than exhaustive description of, the nonhuman body. This shift in the scientific paradigm of the period from description to a more formalized investment in knowledge production makes insects valuable only in the most exceptional cases, with the new biological and medical sciences effectively re-figuring them from their identity in the popular imagination as “vectors for disease and psychosis,” “pestilence” and “distress” into profoundly mundane and manageable living beings beneath—as
Collins’ beetle is literally beneath the vivisector Benjulia’s foot—the purview of science (Brown, ix).

Yet, Collins invokes this progressive narrative of science only to disrupt it. Collins places the beetle, a remnant of an earlier scientific moment, in a productive metonymic relationship with science’s new object of methodical, rationalist inquiry: a brain-diseased monkey whose scientific value is great due to the fact that its brain function and, consequently, its manifestation of neurological symptoms of disease, mirror that of human beings. The monkey’s position significantly shifts from operating, like the beetle, within an earlier scientific paradigm as a collected specimen on display—in this case at the Zoological Gardens—into the context of a newer scientific paradigm in which it is transformed into a material of systematic knowledge production as a vivisected animal corpse. The monkey’s transformation from collected live-specimen into a body of deconstructed physiological knowledge illustrates the way in which early- and late- period scientific activities are not as discontinuous as imagined by practitioners or the public, while the metonymic relationship developed between beetle and monkey illustrates that all nonhumans, not any particular individuals or types, are subject to the violence of humanistic ethical and value structures. Moreover, Collins’ particular attention to the way these two embodied nonhuman subjects disrupt a progressive and linear scientific narrative enables him to locate the cross-species ethical dilemma posed by vivisection at a moment historically pre-dating both the widespread practice of vivisection and the shift in the period to more institutionalized and systematized cross-species relations in the sciences. Collins, instead, does the more sophisticated and reaching work of tracing historically consistent structures of animal-exploitation and valuation across the perceived divide between early- and late- period science, calling into question a cross-species ethical history that elides the violence
of naturalism’s collective impulse and, instead, locates the full force of ethical scrutiny myopically in an isolated time—the Late-Victorian, and an isolated practice—vivisection.

Collins not only diverges from period antivivisection literatures by relocating the cross-species ethical dilemma posed by vivisection to a historical moment pre-dating its widespread use in Britain, but also by figuring the beetle as his preeminent ethical subject. Collins, then, is not so much interested in what he calls “[t]he weary old nineteenth century [that] had advanced into the last twenty years of its life,” or the status quo of the antivivisectionist agenda; instead he is interested in looking simultaneously forward to the twentieth-century and backwards at the past eighty-years in order to disclose and trace the structure and systematicity of humanism (45). Collins mobilizes the insect instead of the cats, dogs, horses, and humanoid apes more commonly deployed in antivivisection literature because, unlike humanoid apes and domestic animals, the insect is not a source of sentimental attachment for the human, nor is it frequently or easily metaphorized or anthropomorphized as human. Hence, the beetle is less prone to being co-opted back into the uneven species-value systems and anthropocentric tendencies he sets out, in part, to critique. It is true that these more familiar, commonly anthropomorphized and metaphorized, nonhuman animals are treated by Collins elsewhere and often in the novel, but not in what I would argue is the most pivotal ethical moment in *Heart and Science*.

Collins allows the insect to take the fore at the novel’s most poignant moment of ethical extremity, and does so precisely because its perceived non-domesticity and non-value is a necessary condition for the radically disorienting ethical work Collins wants to perform. The

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30 According to Derrida’s work on temporality, time is not unidirectional. The present is always already the past and the past can become present, as in *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*. This concept of temporality is integral to Derrida’s work on politics (the democracy “to come”) but, more importantly here, to his work on ethics. In “The Force of Law” and elsewhere Derrida posits true ethics as “impossible” because always “to come,” in other words, ethics must always be a futurized event that is continuously deconstructed and deferred so as to resist the impulse toward ethical mechanization which, Derrida argues, is inherently destructive to ethical action, which occurs by first passing through a crisis of undecidability.
beetle enters the text and almost simultaneously exits it, the finitude it embodies serving as a catalyst for Collins’ beetle ethics:

[Ovid] started, and seized Benjulia by the arm. “Stop!” he cried, with a sudden outburst of alarm. “Well?” asked the doctor, stopping directly. “What is it?” “Nothing,” said Ovid, recoiling from a stain on the gravel walk, caused by the remains of an unlucky beetle, crushed under his friend’s heavy foot. “You trod on the beetle before I could stop you.” Benjulia’s astonishment at finding an adult male human being (not in a lunatic asylum) anxious to spare the life of a beetle, literally struck him speechless. His medical instincts came to his assistance. “You had better leave London at once,” he suggested. “Get out into pure air, and be out of doors…” He turned over the remains of the beetle with the end of his stick. “The common beetle,” he said; “I haven’t damaged a Specimen.” (103)

In the passage, the doctor, Ovid’s, mundane encounter with a native insect, a species of beetle, is utterly ethically transformative. Ovid recognizes in the beetle’s impending death the finitude he shares with it. This finitude is, in fact, shared by all human and nonhuman animals—a recognition that causes Ovid to cry “Stop!” and restrain Benjulia. In the passage, Collins challenges the reader to question her initial impulse which, problematically, is more often than not an impulse to share in Benjulia’s “astonishment” that any sane man, not a “lunatic” in an asylum, would be “anxious” about the fate of a beetle lacking any traditional value as an object of scientific import, let alone emotional or ethical stakes. This moment of readerly distance from the antivivisectionist medical hero, Ovid, and proximity to the vivisectionist, Benjulia, is jarring and troubling, particularly given the question it prompts—why are Benjulia’s impulses the reader’s own when, throughout the rest of the novel, his vivisection of monkeys, dogs, and even the threat of vivisecting human beings produces more or less robust sensations of ethical

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31 Collins’ choice to name the main, antivivisectionist medical practitioner in the novel Ovid is significant, as the name references the Roman poet, Ovid, whose Metamorphoses begins with a promise that the speaker will inhabit a range of forms, including the human, the inanimate and the animal. In this way, the speaker promises, to use a modern critical term, something along the lines of Deleuze and Guttari’s concept of becoming-animal and presupposes that we can become or experience the word and sensoria as an animal—a notion that is more idealistic than realistic. While it may be tempting to import this notion of inhabiting the being or life of nonhumans into our understanding of Collins’ cross-species ethics, this is not supported by the text itself, as human characters including Ovid learn to recognize the animal characteristics and qualities inherent to the human rather than imagining that they actually can and do occupy states of being identical to nonhumans in the text.
discomfort? The notably *common* beetle becomes a vehicle through which Collins can posit an ethics that Anat Pick, in *Creaturely Poetics*, describes as a crisis of the self that is disclosed through “the ordinary—yet extraordinary—living encounter” (13). The beetle, an ordinary insect, through the force of the encounter it shares with Ovid, shifts from the register of the mundane and manageable into a register of ethical distress and horror by way of death. The emotional extremity Ovid experiences in relation to the beetle is coded by late-century medical discourse as trauma and disease but gets coded, I argue, more positively by Collins as Ovid’s awakening to a more embodied and ethical entanglement with nonhuman others as he learns that his own “individuality” is not “an atom,” but, in Derrida’s words, “divides itself in gathering itself together to answer to the other” (“Eating Well” 261). As a result of answering this particular non-domestic other, Ovid is forced to locate his distress—his horror—at the beetle’s death and Benjulia’s disregard for this death as originating outside of Victorian species-favoritism and even beyond the issue of vivisection itself, although the latter becomes the staging ground for Ovid’s performance of new cross-species ethical commitments in the novel.

Cora Diamond’s influential essay, “The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy,” sheds light on Ovid’s cross-species encounter and the destabilizing, disorienting, and ultimately ethically productive impact it has on him. In the essay, Diamond conceptualizes the difficulty of reality as a moment of ethical awakening in which “our human capacities to respond—the bases or limits of our human nature—are, for some, put to the test, threatening to freeze or to overwhelm understanding and imagination” (Cavell 281). Diamond herself describes this phenomenon as an:

experience[] in which we take something in reality to be resistant to our thinking it, or possibly painful in its inexplicability, difficult in that way, or perhaps awesome and astonishing in its inexplicability…the things we take so may simply
This difficulty that Diamond describes is staged by Collins most obviously through Ovid, but Benjulia is also subjected to this difficulty through Ovid, whose response to the beetle’s death leaves Benjulia literally speechless and without resource. Like Ovid, Benjulia is made vulnerable, if only for a moment, by the non-knowledge, non-understanding, and non-power at the heart of the encounter he shares with Ovid and the beetle. Unlike Ovid, however, Benjulia reinterpolates the difficulty of his experience back into the master narrative of rational science by noting that the beetle is not a scientifically valuable specimen and that Ovid’s relationship to the beetle as a subject of ethical consideration is a product of derangement and sickness. Benjulia’s recourse to the master narrative of science to explain and dismiss the difficulty of the cross-species encounter undercuts the transformational ethical potential of extreme cross-species affective relationality. The full force of the difficulty of reality that Ovid, and not Benjulia, experiences ignites a re-appreciation of the animal such that it can no longer be understood within a rationalist scientific framework. The animal, for Ovid, is not a body of rational, biological knowledge with “this or that interest or capacity in common or at variance with our human interests or capacities” (Cavell 286). Instead, the beetle is a fleshly creature and fellow who is “sought as company” who cannot be fully rendered through late-period scientific frameworks: Ovid cannot merely dismiss the beetle, as Benjulia does, for its lack of scientific status as a specimen (Cavell 286).

Ovid’s experience of nonhuman insect life as ethically significant on a non-biological register immobilizes species discourses and speciesist ethical structures, while a new vision of the nonhuman-as-companion opens up modes of cross-species ethical productivity. To use the term “companion” signals the possibility of recuperating the ethical force of cross-species
affective relations. However, it also produces an opening on to a second layer of companionate
cross-species relationality: a relationship of companionability in which the nonhuman animal is
companion to, but also companion within, the human subject. By stretching the traditional
boundaries of what it means to be in a relationship of companionability, the nonhuman and
human—the beetle and Ovid—can be read as ensconced within what Donna Haraway has
articulated as a relationship of “becoming-with” (4). This conception of companionability that is
also a becoming-with the animal acknowledges the ability of the nonhuman to leave behind a
Derridean trace of itself after the cross-species encounter, this trace serving to haunt the human
who becomes radically jolted outside of himself through the encounter. The encounter and its
trace reveals the nonhuman as an intimate and constant companion of the human self—a
fundamental constitutive part of humans’ bodies and beings, and a reminder of an animal
remainder, or a disavowed animal self. Haraway describes the human’s constitution through the
nonhuman as a “symphony” playing out within the confines of the human body, and insists that
the inextricable combination of human and nonhuman within the human is “necessary to…being
alive at all” (4). For Ovid, recognition of this multispecies symphony comes about through
being a witness to death, as his own animal finitude is reflected in the beetle’s crushed body
which both produces and foreshadows Ovid’s experience of a more abstract, ethically-oriented
“soul sickness” as well as bodily sickness.

As Diamond notes in her essay, there is an appreciable difficulty to the self in the process
of becoming-with a nonhuman animal. It entails “being shouldered out of how one thinks, how
one is apparently supposed to think” and it involves recognizing the “inability of thought to
encompass what it is attempting to reach”—an inability that manifests itself in a bodily, rather
than purely intellectual, way as “bodily thrownness” (Diamond 58-59). Ovid’s encounter with
the beetle manifests this difficulty. His attempt to save the beetle is as an “abortive little act of mercy” that “marks and isolates” him from human around him, including friends and members of his profession. He is marked as having opened on to a new form of human subjectivity and cross-species relationality that is inexplicable and fundamentally unrecognizable by “proper” rationalist humanistic subjects, like the vivisector Benjulia, as anything other than disorder and disease. For Collins, however, what Benjulia terms Ovid’s “sickness”—his experience of disorientation and affective extremity—is a positive and productive state of discomfort that cannot be contained, described, or treated by biological or medical discourse. Indeed, Ovid’s is not so much a sickness as it is a re-birth from an imagined, purely-human state into a hybrid or chimeric human-animal self which recognizes its prior state as purely human as both unrealistic and ethically bankrupt. As William James notes in his Gifford Lectures, “We can learn from the ‘sick soul’ how to see reality,” and I propose that, for Collins, Ovid’s ostensibly sick soul is the proper state of ethics—a Derridean bad conscience—that lets us see the difficulty of reality, “the difficulty of human life in its relation to that of animals, the horror of what we do, and the horror of our blotting it out of consciousness” first and foremost by re-conceptualizing humanity without animality as a state of impossibility (Diamond 55).

Ovid’s recognition of his own isolation and horror at the state of human relationships to nonhuman animals becomes a way through which Collins creates new cross-species communities. For Ovid, these new communities are constituted through his experience of the disorienting and throwing force of the cross-species encounter. Indeed, he is literally expelled by Benjulia’s prescription out of his male, British community of medical professionals and into new local affective communities composed of individuals and relationships that, at the beginning of the novel, are described as being outside of and even antithetical to his “professional prospects”
These new communities are forged with nonhumans, like the cat he adopts into his home and the dog, Tinker, both of whom shift from present but frequently ignored members of Ovid’s local ecology to individuals who hold Ovid’s gaze and command various forms of respect and activity from him. Ovid shares this new community of responsivity and respect also with women, such as his fiancé Carmina, and his sister Zo, both of whom, in their own particular ways, come to join with Ovid in imagining new narratives of humanity and, subsequently, new narratives for human-nonhuman modes of relationality and ethics. The individuals in these communities encounter, emerge from, and re-merge into imbrecation in and amongst one another in order to demystify not only rationalist humanist endeavors like antivivisection (or period science construed more broadly), but also to demystify the idea of the human purified of its animality, which Cary Wolfe, in *Animal Rites*, calls the “humanized human” (101-2).

Throughout the novel, Collins demonstrates that those qualities thought “proper to man” and which humanity is “careful to guard, and [is] jealous of,” constitute an inadequate rationale for the symbolic and bodily subjection of nonhumans (Derrida, “Animal That Therefore I Am” 383). The inadequacy of the terms by which rational humanism defines nonhumans as sacrificial bodies is particularly salient since the “traditionally distinctive marks of the human (first it was the possession of a soul, then ‘reason’, then tool use, then tool making, then altruism, then language, then the production of linguistic novelty, and so on)” not only fluctuate in importance over time, but also “flourish quite reliably beyond the species barrier” (Wolfe 2). In acknowledgement of this fact, Collins celebrates the qualities shared by human and nonhuman species and does so without turning cross-species similarity into an invitation for

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32 One of two “ostensibly ‘pure’” humanist ideological categories—the humanized human and animalized animal—that Wolfe argues are “the merest ideological fictions [as] evinced by the furious line drawing at work...It is as if these two pure poles can be secured as pure (and hence immensely powerful) ideological fictions only be constantly revisiting the locales where they cannot be discerned (101-102).
anthropomorphizing or rendering as human metaphors his animal characters. Instead, Collins simultaneously honors the abilities nonhumans share with humans as well as the real differences in abilities, needs, and characteristics which accrue to different species types and individuals. In so doing, Collins models the difficult work of learning to unknown the human, its animal others, and a humanist philosophical current that uses humanity as a measuring stick and easy metaphor for evaluating and describing nonhuman others, often as lesser or defunct human-esque beings. This re-appreciation of the nonhuman apart from traditional humanistic definitions or metaphors comes about through what Stanley Cavell calls “‘underknow[ing]’” them (Wolfe 5). For Cavell, coming to ethical terms with nonhumans means being willing to “stand ‘under,’ not above” them and “surrendering the dream of mastery” so that our “knowledge come[s] to an end’” (qtd. in Wolfe 5). It is by “underknowing” the nonhuman by, first, coming to un-know ourselves as humans that we realign “our stance toward otherness and difference generally,” this reevaluation being best “index[ed]” by how we stand in relation to nonhuman others (Wolfe 5).

Collins uses his combination of sensational and antivivisectionist fiction to experimentally “shift the terms of representation away from human subjectivity” and the so-called being of humanity itself (McHugh 2). At its core, then, Heart and Science is preoccupied with dismantling the assumptions we make about ourselves as humans in order to open up a space for reimagining the human and its animal others in the wake of that initial self-demystification. Collins stresses how humans are “very different creatures” from what they pretend to be; instead, they are much like nonhumans and, as such, share a degree of resemblance to nonhumans (Wolfe 17). While humanism traditionally makes a distinction between instinctive reaction and rational response, the former being aligned with animality and the latter with the human, Collins challenges this distinction. He recasts many forms of response
as reactions masked, made artificial, and made human through the language used to describe or capture these reactions, as well as through the various cultural rationales and hierarchies which distinguish these human reactions as response\textsuperscript{33} (Derrida 383). Collins suggests that the behavioral repertoire of the human is not so entirely and radically other than that of the animal in all instances, and that in some cases behavior that could be labeled “animalistic,” instinctive, or reactionary is reframed as innately human and intrinsic to the human biological or cultural norm even though it is not uniquely human at all.

The problem, then, is not that humans and all nonhumans fail to share a complementary set of abilities and needs, the problem is in knowing what an action or response means and how to distinguish it within and beyond the human species itself. As Derrida explains in “The Animal That Therefore I Am,”

>[t]he said question of the said animal in its entirety comes down to knowing not whether the animal speaks [or exhibits other behaviors and abilities attributed to mankind], but whether one can know what respond means. And how to distinguish a response from a reaction. (377)

Humanism’s egoistic vision of humans as omniscient, masterful, and singularly gifted subjects not only obscures human ability to recognize animal response, but also obscures the roles that nonhumans play in co-creating human identity and being through a shared set of abilities and needs that frequently go unregistered or are registered as ethically and practically lesser. For Collins, however, humans are not responsive in a uniquely human or even particularly extra-animal way. In fact, his initial strategy for demystifying the perfect human of humanism is to suggest that humans—regardless of what they’d like to tell themselves—are largely “reactionary” entities rather than “responsive” ones. Moreover, he refuses to morally or ethically

\textsuperscript{33} Defined by Wolfe in \textit{Animal Rites} as the situation “of the ethical acceptability of the systematic ‘noncriminal putting to death’ of animals based solely on their species” and the extension of this rationale to “any social order” to “mark” it as animal and capable of sacrifice (rather than murder) (7).
devaluate the animal’s (or the human-animal’s) unmediated natural response and even takes pains to articulate reactionary behavior as more honest and “real” than so-called rational human responses. In such moments, Collins laudably “keep[s] open the incalculability of the difference between reason/the human and its other/the nonhuman (animal)” in order to “approach the ethical question of nonhuman animals not as the other-than-human…not as the primitive and pure other…but as a part of us” (Wolfe 71, my emphasis). As such, while Ovid’s scientific mother, Mrs. Gallilee, and the vivisectionist Benjulia are portrayed as cannibals34 whose practices of medical science figuratively eat away at their human and cross-species affective communities, Ovid continually invites and builds these communities in part by rejecting hard distinctions between human and nonhuman. He observes of animal instinct and human reason that: “it was no easy matter to decide where instinct ended and reason began,” and moreover, that “he had sometimes found people of feeble minds, who judged by instinct arrive at sounder conclusions than their superiors in intelligence who judged by reason” (98). Ovid’s commentary upon the “sound[ness]” of “feeble” individuals operating by instinct rather than reasoned response suggests that, at its basic level of operation, the human is, like the animal, a reactionary and instinctual entity and, moreover, that the traditional humanist practitioner of science fails to place proper value on the importance of these instinctual qualities in the human.

In a striking scene which effectively evokes the strength of automatic physiological responses to environmental stimuli in human beings, the novel’s primary practitioner of vivisection, Dr. Benjulia, “tickles” Zo, the submissive child of Mrs. Galilee and sister to Ovid: “He put two of his soft big finger tips on her spine, just below the back of her neck, and pressed…Zo started and wriggled under his touch” (Collins 96). Not only does Zo’s

34 Collins describes Mrs. Gallilee as having gotten her sentimental education in the Cannibal Islands in the Caribbean where Christopher Columbus reported man-eating behavior as common practice (67).
“wriggl[ing] under Benjulia’s touch” suggest that there is an automatic, uncontrollable quality to her response to sensory stimulation, but this tactile exchange also conjures up a parallel between Zo’s behavior and that of her family dog, Tinker, a prior subject of Benjulia’s ticking who reacts by compulsively kicking his leg (Collins 96). Zo and the dog form a community forged through their so-called extra-human, instinctive responses to a shared tactile stimulation. Collins makes clear in this moment of cross-species juxtaposition\textsuperscript{35} that there are some circumstances, such as basic tactile stimulation, in which reason and rationality have no real power in distinguishing the human from the animal any more than privileged aspects of the human sensorium do. As Wolfe explains in Animal Rites,

> For if [vision or sound of speech] purchases the transcendence of the human only at the expense of repressing the other senses (and more broadly the material the bodily with which they are traditionally associated), then one way to recast…the figure of the human…is to resituate [those senses attributed to the human] as only one sense among many in a more general—and not necessarily human—bodily sensorium. (3)

Even though Zo, unlike the dog, is capable of a degree of reason and language traditionally reserved for the human—she has the ability to respond via language, to enter and navigate the human language game in a way the dog cannot—she responds to Benjulia’s tickling in a way that actively privileges those senses that Wolfe explains are excluded from a normative vision of the human’s proper “sensorium” (3). Zo does not vocalize her experience in any significant or useful way, nor is she implicated in the utilization of language as a means of inventing a convincing fiction to account for or justify the automated physical and psychological responses she is experiencing. In fact, when Benjulia asks whether or not she is enjoying the sensation of

\textsuperscript{35} Although some scholars might be tempted to read such a moment as an opportunity to metonymically collapse Tinker and Zo through the force of the shared environmental stimulus and their reactions to it, I maintain that Collins is not so much interested in the humanist impulse to symbolically humanize nonhuman animals or animalize marginal subhuman figures as he is in taking these individuals on their own biological-organizational terms in an effort to lay the humanist narrative open to scrutiny as a precondition to articulating a distinctly other mode of ethical being-with nonhumans.
being tickled, she can only say she “do[esn’t] know” (96). Zo’s failure to “know,” in rational linguistic terms, the effect Benjulia’s touch has on her—her failure to identify her reaction as stemming from a reasoned feeling of pleasure or displeasure—is not an indication of her lack or inability to verbalize, but, instead, marks a “refusal to acknowledge a relationship…[and] a refusal to obey” the linguistic dictates structuring that relationship (Hearne 49). Zo’s refusal to obey Benjulia’s command that she speak, and her consequent refusal to enter into a traditional human-speaking relationship with him, demonstrates how strongly she embraces the automatic, instinctual nature of the event and how invested she is in extending her sensorium into avenues that cannot be fully contained within the confines of normative humanistic response. Indeed, she responds to the posing of the question almost as though she were the nonverbal (in a traditional human sense) dog Tinker, and for Collins there is nothing disconcerting or improper about this behavioral slippage out of the human sensorium and into a “not necessarily human” one (Wolfe 3).

Collins makes it quite clear that Zo, by reorienting her sensorium toward the physical rather than verbal, is offering Benjulia a meaningful, if unrecognized, form of response: any sort of reasoned account of the event via language would be irrelevant, or at best ancillary, to her observed, compulsory physical response. Her body, as it reacts to Benjulia’s stick, speaks for itself in a language of embodiment that is intimately tied to her form—literally, her physical, significantly animal and fleshly form. Much in the same vein as Wittgenstein’s remark that, “To imagine a language is to imagine a form of life,”36 Collins uses Zo to move us away from a higher-order system of abstracted symbolic language and back into the body itself, which exhibits a more immanent language that is the function of fleshly construction (Wittgenstein

36 In his *Investigations*, Wittgenstein makes the argument that language is not just a phenomenon characterized by words, but a far more complicated language-game in which the form of language is fundamentally tied to the embodied being of the individual and the activities of that individual in its environment.
Aphorism 19). Although Collins describes Zo as “one of the unsuccessful products of the age we live in” due to her failure to perform the role of the civilized, formally educated, linguistically competent, British child, it is clear that he employs no small amount of irony when offering this estimation of her character. Indeed, throughout *Heart and Science* it is precisely Zo’s failure to embody the image of the perfectly “humanized human”—her ability to embrace, without apology or excuse, her full creaturely sensorium—that makes her a far more successful character than those around her who have achieved the ideological dream of the pure and extra-animal human identity, the “humanized-human” (Wolfe 101-2).

In fact, it is Zo’s severely humanized sister Maria, who “had never wetted her shoes or dirtied her face since the day she was born,” whom Collins characterizes as a “poor wretch” (64). Maria’s “wretch[ed]” state is significant, as it is held in tension with the fact that Zo, and not Maria, is viewed by her peers as “curiously slow, quaint, stupid, or incurably perverse” (Collins 64). To take a liberty with Heideggerian terminology, it is as if Maria’s severe humanistic orientation to herself and the world around her leaves her “poor in world” in an actual state of “wretched[ness]” in which a whole set of behaviors and experiences with herself, the world, and other living beings is closed to her as a product of her inability to expand her bodily sensorium into the realm of the non-human (64). Although Maria is undoubtedly the more rationally intelligent, reasoned, and cultured sister, she accomplishes this great feat of becoming perfectly human at the expense of transforming herself into a seeming automaton. Maria displays her complete abstraction from her own animal body by playing the language game with eager calculation, manipulating and employing prefabricated modes of language, emptied of all physical meaning, in order to signal the erasure of the latent animality written into her

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37 Heidegger’s term for the animal which Derrida discusses at length in *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*.
38 According to Derrida in “The Force of Law” any dependence on calculation and formula erases actual choice or the capacity for decision making in the realm of ethics.
physiological construction and biological heritage. When addressing her father, Mr. Gallilee, Maria performs her “perfect[ion]” as a human daughter by dutifully issuing forth an unfelt (and therefore deceptive), but “appropriate sentiment”: “‘I do love you, dear papa!’” (Collins 656).

By way of contrast, when Mr. Gallilee subsequently asks Zo, “‘Well, Zo, what do you say?’” she responds in a way decidedly antagonistic to the “‘enigmatic’” and “‘dreamed’” vision of perfect humanity void of all semblance of the embodied animal (Collins 656; Ferry qtd. in Wolfe 43). Zo’s response is, in fact, a refusal of Maria’s perfect humanity and a shifting of her allegiance—through immediate sensory (visual) reorientation—from the site of the humanized human in the act of performing her humanity to that of the family dog, Tinker.

Zo does not replicate or value the “smooth conventionalities [which] trickl[e] over [Maria’s]…lips” (Collins 202). Instead, these human conventionalities propel Zo into a series of automated responses, causing her to “frow[n]” and shift her gaze so that she can “loo[k] gloomily at the dog on the rug,” with “the deepest interest” (202). She yearns to erase her affiliation with Maria and the vision of humanity she represents and transfer it instead to the dog. Choosing to align herself with Tinker, Zo accordingly chooses to respond to her father’s question—“‘what do you say?’”—by not saying anything at all. Instead, she responds with an act of embodied contact that unites her father, herself, and Tinker into a new sensory community for which communication through and across individual bodies is key: “‘Zo took her father’s hand once more, and rubbed her head against it like a cat…’” (Collins 65). When questioned by her father and governess why she behaves this way, Zo smiles “sly[ly]” and replies that she doesn’t know, effectively vocalizing her lack of control over the act (65). Zo is defunct of the rational humanist subject’s egoism as she admits that she cannot and does not definitively
“know” the complexities of herself and her body any more than she fully knows the complexities of her human and animal others.

Although Zo’s decision to respond to her Father’s request that she “say” her love for him with embodied contact rather than speech is viewed by other human characters as more cat-like than human, it is Zo’s impulsive, animalistic response that Mr. Gallilee chooses to reward rather than Maria’s linguistic one. That Zo’s behavior breeds favor with her father in a way that Maria’s behavior does not serves to undercut an over-easy evaluation of Zo as one of those defunct human individuals which, through the structures of speciesism, become animalized. Instead, Collins is able to use the community of embodiment forged between Zo, her father, and Tinker the dog to recuperate so-called animalistic sensory experiences into the proper realm of humanity, and illustrates how this behavior might open on to new ways of being more responsive to individuals across a series of divides, including age, species, sex, and gender, as well as across hierarchical relationships. Zo’s father actively participates in and consolidates this new cross-species community originated by Zo, as he responds to her not with words, but with reciprocated physical contact in the form of a kiss. There is something more immediately honest and intimate about this exchange of loving-ness between Zo and her father compared to the prior exchange with Maria. The primatologist Barbara Smuts has observed that “closely interacting bodies,” like that of Zo and her father, “tend to tell the truth,” to which Haraway in *When Species Meet* adds:

> The truth or honesty of nonlinguistic embodied communication [e.g., touch] depends on…greeting significant others…this sort of truth or honesty is not some…kind of natural authenticity that only animals can have…Rather, this truth-telling is about co-constitutive natural cultural dancing, holding in esteem, and regard…this kind of truth has a multispecies future. (36)
Touch has this multispecies future precisely because, as Haraway notes, it “ramifies and shapes accountability” in a more compelling and immediate way than language or the other tools of rational humanism can—our bodies give away more readily our truths and lies, lies which our symbolic language is especially well calculated to keep\(^\text{39}\) (36). This sentiment is echoed by the philosopher qua dog and horse trainer, Hearne, who in *Adam’s Task: Calling Animals by Name*, offers up what she describes as a theology of cross-species activity that foregrounds subtle bodily cues such as changes in breathing, angles of the eyebrows, and refusal to obey as the most integral, yet most profoundly uncelebrated, activities constituting productive cross-species relationships.\(^\text{40}\)

Like the forms of cross-species, embodied relationships that Hearne identifies as uncelebrated, Zo herself goes uncelebrated—much like Collins’ beetle—in scholarship on the novel. Steve Farmer, for example, characterizes Zo as the novel’s “comic relief” and “the agent who…by unwittingly saving the day…reinforces the notion that the simple love of a simple child is powerful enough to conquer the dark and cold world of modern science” (10). Yet, Zo is no “simple” and “unwitting” child—her behavior is not comic relief, but stands at the center of Collins’ radical critique of a vision of the human predicated upon an outright disavowal of the human as an animal: as a human-animal. Zo does, indeed, do the work of resolving the novel’s conflict by “conquer[ing] the dark and cold world of modern science,” but she does so with a

\(^{39}\) What I mean by our language being especially calculated to keep, rather than reveal, our lies is that built into symbolic human language are various forms of deceptive practices that, as a linguistic community, we have come to assign truth value to. As Nietzsche notes in “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense,” our linguistic capacity for symbol and metaphor is deceptive. It is deceptive to anyone who has been excluded from the linguistic community that has invented linguistic concepts and agreed to confer upon them the weight of truth.

\(^{40}\) Hearne, for example, discusses the case of the horse, Clever Hands, who was thought to be inordinately smarter than normal horses. His owner taught Hans “to respond to questions either by tapping with a hoof a certain number of times or else by indicating one of a number of blocks on which the alphabet was written”. However, it was discovered the Hans could not answer the questions posed to him unless his questioner was in his line of sight, as he used subtle bodily cues to discern which of the answers the questioner thought was correct (Hearne 4). Although Hearne’s focus on such bodily cues as integral to cross-species communication and activity is useful, her larger argument has been widely critiqued for her valorization of anthropomorphism and reliance on problematic terms such as morality and love, as well as the relationship of dominance toward domestic animals she expresses.
radical agency that critics like Farmer deny her. Zo actively rewrites and resists; she is an active agent, and her agency is palpable in the text. She refuses the gazes and commands of perfectly humanized individuals, such as Maria and Benjulia, while alternatively welcoming and meeting the gazes and bodies of nonhumans such as Tinker and humans such as her father. At the heart of Zo’s activity is the establishment of affective communities whose very existence depends upon her re-imagination and renegotiation of the narrative of the human. She achieves this renegotiation by expanding the human sensorium and by refusing to reify a disingenuous dichotomy between animal reaction and human response. Moreover, Zo’s model of humanity has a particular ability to replicate by fascination throughout the text, with characters like Zo’s father finding themselves jolted outside of once familiar human communities and into new cross-species communities as they, like Zo, enter into a new narrative of what it means to be a human in affective and ethical relationship to animality: to the nonhuman animals who constitute our world, and to our own latent animalities—our animal bodies, our animal remainders.

Carmina, Ovid’s fiancé and ward of Ovid’s scientific mother, Mrs. Galillee, also gets dislodged from a rationalist humanist community and inserted into an embodied affective community shared by Zo, Ovid, and a host of nonhuman animals. For Carmina this transition begins at the start of the novel when she, like Ovid, feels a disorienting affective response to a seemingly mundane, because common and unremarkable, cross-species encounter—she witnesses the death of a stray dog in the street. This encounter lays bare to her the violence and the difficulty of a reality in which nonhumans, like the dog, are viewed as sacrificial rather than ethical subjects: their deaths and lives don’t matter in proportion to human ones or, even, in

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Derrida discusses the gaze in “The Animal That Therefore I am...More to Follow” as he stands naked before the gaze of his cat and is confronted with the problem of defining himself as ashamed of himself as a naked man in front of his cat or unashamed, like an animal, of his nudity. “Whom am I therefore?” he asks in this moment of uncertainty about his own subjective relation to his on naked self and to his cat—a real cat, he insists—who has prompted, via the gaze, this moment of uncertainty (374).
proportion to the lives and deaths of different kinds of animals, for example stray versus non-stray dogs. Carmina’s final passage into a new mode of humanity and a new ethical community with nonhuman others occurs through neurological illness, the symptoms of which illness mirror the physical symptoms that accompany and illustrate her affective response to the dog’s death: fainting. Ethically imbricated with the stray dog who is run over, as well as a whole host of other animals who are threatened by vivisection, the nonhuman animal suffering, vulnerability, and finitude she witnesses are, in fact, her own. Disease is (as it is for Ovid) an opportunity for Carmina to be made radically aware of her body and her relationship to it: a relationship of powerlessness as her body manifests a series of symptoms she has no control over. This powerlessness, however, becomes a source of ethical empowerment for her as she experiences what Derrida, in “The Animal That Therefore I Am” calls the “nonpower at the heart of power,” or the reconceptualization of power away from capability—the arena of the human—and toward vulnerability, passivity, and the capacity to suffer—the arena of the animal (396).

This experience of passivity, of “nonpower,” in relation to her own suffering body lays Carmina open not only to ethical expansion and rearticulation, but also subjects her to Benjulia’s wandering, non-species-specific experimental gaze. Benjulia’s gaze manifests in the novel most poignantly when he “loo[ks] (experimentally)” at “inferior” human beings such as women and children, just as he “look[s] (experimentally) at the other inferior creatures stretched under him on the [vivisection] table” (Collins 215; 214). The violence of Benjulia’s gaze is a specifically humanist violence and a consolidating violence, as he figures certain kinds of humans and nonhumans as symbolic equivalents. Benjulia manipulates the speciesism that undergirds his medical philosophy to lay particular human beings deemed “inferior creatures,” like his orphaned female cook, the orphaned Carmina, and even Zo open to “his own ends…just as he
pursued his own ends with a vivisected animal” (214-15). Through the force of Benjulia’s humanist, medical gaze nonhumans and certain humans (especially women, servants, children and orphans) are divorced from their ethical significances and species specificities to become a generalizable experimental body to be used for “progress,” knowledge, and the “greater good”:

The old anatomist stole dead bodies for Knowledge. In that sacred cause, if I steal a living man without being found out, I would tie him on my table, and grasp my grand discovery in days, instead of months…A man who can talk as I do…is a man set above you [“lower order creatures’”] by Knowledge. (190)

Benjulia forces Carmina to take the place of the “living man” he fantasizes about experimenting upon if he could do so “without being found out” (Collins 243). On some rationalistic level, Benjulia believes that by substituting a living woman for a “living man” he is justified in sacrificing a member of his own species to an “‘excellent end—…knowledge,’” just as he is justified in sacrificing a nonhuman animal instead of most human beings to the same cause (Collins 306). As the object of Benjulia’s experimental, animailizing gaze, Carmina becomes stripped of her inherent value as a living, world-creating and sharing entity, and gets co-opted back into the very humanistic speciesism that should exempt her from vivisection. Instead, she becomes no more than a body, no more than a conglomeration of interesting physiological symptoms—“a trifling inequality in the size of the pupils of the eyes,” facial twitching, the nervous movement of her lips (280). These symptoms have no affective or ethical impact on Benjulia, who views Carmina as an “interesting case” as his “merciless discoveries” combine to give Carmina an “unknown honor: she was to take her place, along with the other animals, in [Benjulia’s] note-book of experiments” (Collins 243; 280). Yet, members of Benjulia’s imagined, metaphorically unified experimental body challenge Benjulia’s relationship to them as symbolically interchangeable medical objects rather than as discreet ethical subjects and, in so
doing, question the very basis on which he defines and values these types of being as ethically defunct.

Zo refuses to answer verbally how she feels in response to Benjulia tickling her, his cook subjects Benjulia to her own “experimental gaze” and a potential rendezvous with a knife’s point, and even Carmina invalidates Benjulia’s attempt to turn her into an object for systematic knowledge production by not dying—thereby preventing him from tracking the complete progress of her disease (213). The failure of Carmina and Zo to lay bare to Benjulia the sorts of knowledge he seeks through experimenting on their bodies frustrates Benjulia, who not only fails to make medical progress, but is exposed to an awareness of the place of isolation he occupies in relationship to these individuals. Zo and Carmina, specifically, highlight Benjulia’s exclusion from their cross-species ethical community, but also identify the ways in which his rational humanistic knowledge fails to fully account for or explain the very community he cannot access. Zo signals Benjulia’s failure on this score when she proclaims that “the big man,” Benjulia, is actually “no wiser than herself” even though he purports to have a level of rational knowledge-based mastery over her and other human and nonhuman characters (244). When Zo explains that she doesn’t know if she likes Benjulia, his “puzzled” rejoinder that he doesn’t “know either,” exposes his perceived mastery over other living beings as a fantasy (244). Zo not only exposes the limitations of Benjulia’s masterful knowledge, but she proclaims him “miserable” because he is without “children,” “wife,” or “friend” (not necessarily human) (244). Zo’s invocation of Benjulia’s miserableness is joined by the hysterical manifestations of Carmina’s disease—“She laughed loudly and wildly” (244). In this moment, the very symptoms of disease Benjulia is interested in observing serve to mock him in stereo for his absence of an affective community. In fact, as Carmina’s symptoms of hysteria mount, she desires to kiss Zo “rough[ly]” and
“wild[ly]” to mark off a set of differences—both affective and embodied—that separate herself and Zo from Benjulia who, Carmina cries out, “‘do[esn’t] understand loving and kissing’” and “‘never loved anybody’” because these are embodied, affective activities existing outside the purviews of “proper” science (245).

Ultimately, Benjulia’s inability to navigate the embodied cross-species communities that Zo, Carmina and Ovid inhabit through kisses, hugs, and other forms of embodied and affective behaviors foreshadows his suicide and his inability to respond to—he has “positively no answer”—his brother’s, Lemule’s, arguments against vivisection:

The Law which forbids you to dissect a living man, allows you to dissect a living dog. Why?…Because a dog is an animal? Could he, as a physiologist deny that man is an animal too?…Because a dog is the inferior creature in intellect? The obvious answer to this would be, But the lower order of savage…or lunatic, compared with the dog, is the inferior creature…and, in these cases, the dog has, on your own showing, the better right to protection…If the Law…protects any living creatures, it is bound, in reason and in justice, to protect all. (188)

For Collins there is “a continuum along which we move gradually and with overlaps between the species, from simple capacities for enjoyment and satisfaction, or pain and suffering, to more complex ones” (Singer 165). All of these capacities and vulnerabilities must be justly recognized, considered, and protected by the law whether in relation to a nonhuman or a human, and without needing to imagine nonhumans as human symbolic equivalents: “the Law…is bound, in reason and in justice, to protect all” (Collins 188, my emphasis). There is no ethically useful “distinction between nonhumans and humans” in Heart and Science (Agamben 15). This insight is confirmed forcefully and finally not only through Benjulia’s lack of response to Lemule’s objections or, even, his suicide. Instead, Ovid delivers the final blow to Benjulia’s rational humanistic project of vivisection and the structures of inequality undergirding it, as he discovers a new professional community of foreign (Canadian) medical practitioners for whom
nonhuman animals are not ethically appropriate medical subjects. Moreover, it is this group of medics who accomplish the very breakthrough in neurological disease that Benjulia attempts, but fails, to accomplish himself through vivisection (244).

III. COMMON BEETLES AND CHIMERICAL ETHICS

Collins imagines a Victorian cross-species worldscape in which mundane encounters with an insect or a stray dog redescribe the human self and the formation of collaborative animal ethics. In this chapter the agency of the animal is perhaps made even more powerful than in my first chapter, as a common beetle that goes unnoticed in Collins’ text—and which I left unremarked through several readings of the novel—emerges as that text’s most productive ethical subject. The beetle’s significance is manifold. It not acts as a catalyst for the main character, Ovid’s, recognition of his own affinity with nonhumans and for his subsequent adoption of a professional and personal identity that is highly attune to the agency, specificity, and significance of non-human animal others. Moreover, the beetle, because non-domestic, serves to trouble imputations of affective extremity associated with Victorian ethical responses to nonhumans, as well as troubling the categories of domestic privilege that originated in Victorian middle- and upper- class pet-keeping practices and which were problematically reflected in period antivivisection literatures. He eschews the structures of privilege—based on an animal’s likeness to the human or special emotional significance—refusing to reorient the ethical problem of animal victimization as, really, a problem of potential human victimization.
Collins assembles the “common beetle” and the medical doctor Ovid, as well as Carmina and Zo, into dynamic and recursive collaborative relationships that destabilize the linear and progressive narrative of science and locate the ethical dilemma of the cross-species on a structural level operating beyond the more specific issues of late-century science or the specific practice of vivisection. In so doing, Collins forces a systematic and radical break even from period antivisecionist literatures and rights-based commitments, as he seeks not to ameliorate animal suffering, but to reconstitute the very core of ethics by first reconstituting the human through the traces of animal others who leave their marks on human bodies and beings, producing them not as the impossibly pure “‘auto’-biographical” humans of humanistic ethics that Derrida asks us to question but, instead, as inherently collaborative, patchwork, multi-species creatures with equally multi-species ethics: chimeras. Indeed, while it would be untenable to argue that Collins entirely extricates himself from the humanism undergirding animal rights discourse or even from implication in maintaining the idea that rights are the best or only way to approach animal ethics, Collins does productively re-write normative humanist ethical narratives.

_Heart and Science_ challenges, even if it cannot ultimately revoke, an overweening cultural and literary investment in humanism, and its focus is on forcing readers to question their moral certainty about this investment and the ethical permissibility of its consequences: namely, an attitude of moral ambiguity surrounding not only bodily violence perpetrated against nonhuman animals via vivisection, but also the other symbolic and actual violence perpetrated against nonhuman animals. Collins questions in _Heart and Science_ the deeply entrenched humanist philosophical ideal that the nonhuman animal is “something seen and not seeing,” something which is so other-than-human as to have no decipherable “gaze,” no ability for
response and, therefore, no valid and recognizable point of view, particular mode of being, decipherable agency, or rights to be acknowledged and protected apart from the rights they might be afforded by way of their metaphorization as human or their special significance to humans (Derrida 383; 377; 380-1). Indeed, Heart and Science hinges not only upon recognizing the animal as an ethical subject as an animal, but also on recognizing the human as a human-animal whose sensorial and other characteristics are shared across species divides rather than being “proper,” in all cases, only to humans.
CHAPTER THREE

ANIMALIZING AUTHORSHIP:
THE VICTORIAN ANIMAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND MICHAEL FIELD

While in the first two chapters of “Animal Remainers” I posit domestics and non-dомestics, including insects, as co-shapers of cross-species chimerical collaborations which reimagine the human and nonhuman as fundamentally co-constitutive, I shift here to authorial collaborations. These collaborations foreground animals who author their own lives and beings in the form of autobiography, as in the case of Victorian animal autobiographies such as Virginia Woolf’s *Flush* and Anna Sewell’s *Black Beauty*, or in the form of life writing, an autobiographical sub-type. Both autobiography and life writing are interested in capturing and recounting personal experience to facilitate reflection on and give wholeness to life narratives. However, in the atypical form of life writing I associate with Michael Field, the literary product is poetry rather than a more normative form of narrative biography. While Field’s literary *product* is less obviously conceptualized as life writing, at the level of literary *production* Field’s indebtedness to life writing is apparent. Indeed, Field’s human and nonhuman collaborators engage in what Donna Haraway calls “becoming with,” or a “dance of encounters” in which cross-species domestic collaborators shape each other and, in the case of Field, the literary products they produce (such as poetry), through “intra- and interaction” (*Species Meet* 4). This form of animal self-authorship, which “narrat[es]…an entangled self,” shares a basic impulse
with the more traditional Victorian animal autobiography—namely the impulse of writing alongside a real or symbolic animal co-author (Huff and Haefner 153).

Nineteenth-century animal autobiographies were a popular and sustained literary presence; although Sewell’s *Black Beauty* (1877) is the most famous animal autobiography of the Victorian period, “novels and stories ostensibly told from the point of view of the animal were published throughout the nineteenth century and earlier” (Flegel 89). Amongst a short list of animal autobiographies “predat[ing]” *Black Beauty* are Francis Coventry’s *The History of Pompey the Little* (1751), Mary Pilkington’s *Marvellous Adventures of a Cat* (1802), Arabella Argus’s *The Adventures of a Donkey* (1815), Emily Faithfull’s *Autobiography of a Cat* (1864), and Charlotte Maria Tucker’s *Rambles of a Rat* (1864) (Flegel 89). Numerous other animal autobiographies were published after *Black Beauty*, many of which were indebted to or sequels of that text, including the best-seller *Beautiful Joe* (1893), *Son of Black Beauty* (1950) and the popular children’s story *Moorland Mousie* (1929). Moreover, the genre expanded beyond *Black Beauty* and Black Beauty-esque equine characters to include, for example, Virginia Woolf’s *Flush* (1933). Such texts, especially those authored in the Victorian period, tap into an already longstanding (and continuing) debate regarding cross-species communication, but also into larger debates about the cultural, political, and legal status of nonhumans. Arising in reaction to certain cultural and legal trends at home in Britain and abroad, animal autobiographies “interv[ened]” into animal rights discourse with the goal of bolstering animal rights agendas (Milne 164). As such, the Victorian animal autobiography is a response to “anti-rights polemic[s]” such as “Thomas Taylor’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes* (1792),” as well as “William Windham’s parliamentary mockery of Sir William Pulteney’s proposed ‘Bill to Prevent the Practice of Bull-Baiting’ (1800)” (Milne 164).
Typically, “animal autobiographies were written as children’s literature by female authors,” although this characterization doesn’t hold true in all instances (Flegel 89). Children were a common target audience because the animal autobiographical text appropriated elements of the late eighteenth-century sentimental novel for the “pedagogical” goal of “creating kindness towards animals in young readers” by asking them to emotionally inhabit the perspective of the “animal protagonist” (Flegel 89). As Monica Flegel explains, animal autobiographies “tend to situate and employ the lives of cats, dogs, and other (primarily) domestic animals within the more expected conventions of nineteenth-century autobiography” with the purpose of “portray[ing] the injustice of [human] social hierarchy” (90). Much like conventional period autobiographies, the animal autobiographer “speak[s] of [its] birth, blood-lines, and upbringing, then focus[es] on” issues such as “education,” “adventures,” and “hard-earned wisdom” (Flegel 90).

Because the animal autobiographer is anthropomorphic, it has been tempting to understand the animal autobiography as purely symbolic for the human or, alternatively, as problematically eliding issues such as the barriers to cross-species communication and the human’s questionable authority to speak for the animal. Hence, traditional Victorian readings of these texts are by and large invested in the human-symbolic function of the animal autobiographer with little or no interest in the animal itself. Animal studies scholars, on the other hand, are frequently tempted to critically dismiss the animal autobiography as grossly

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42 The impulse to render the nonhuman animal through the biographical narrative is in itself a questionable one; as Michael Mascuch notes in The Origins of the Individualist Self: Autobiography & Self Identity in England, 1591-1791, “[w]riting, personal experience, and self-identity have no intrinsic affiliation; their meaning and maturation together depend on a relationship being created, codified, and enculturated” (72). The relationship of which Mascuch speaks exists for human beings, but does not seem to exist—and without negative implication—for nonhuman animals.
anthropomorphic. Both critical responses are inadequate. They obscure, specifically, how moments of the animal “author’s” embodied and verbalized communications as represented within the traditional animal autobiographical text are met with misunderstanding, missed-understanding, or are rejected. I insist that these communications, along with the spectrum of human responses to them, serve as moments of resistance to otherwise problematically anthropocentric collaborations. Indeed, animal communications and human responses to them are multiple and sometimes contradictory, revealing that there is something more complicated happening at the intersections of form and representation than can be accounted for by traditional anthropomorphic readings. I expand this discussion to Field’s nontraditional, poeticized form of life writing. I argue that Katherine Bradley, Edith Cooper and their dog, Whym Chow not only “become-with” each other as domestic partners, but also as poetic collaborators—a claim that runs counter to scholarly portrayals of Whym Chow either as a grossly sentimentalized pet or as a symbol or muse. I demonstrate that Whym Chow is a catalyst for changes to the Field identity itself, as well as to its poetic products, as he shifts from actual to symbolic animal co-author. In fact, I divide the latter Field into two distinct periods of collaborative activity and demonstrate that the efficacy of the Field collaboration is tied directly to Whym Chow’s power as a real, rather than symbolic, co-author. Whym Chow’s animal presence and embodied and verbal communications facilitate Bradley’s and Cooper’s formation of a unified, multi-species or hybrid poetic voice capable of renegotiating identity, animal authorship, representational practices, and communication across species boundaries.

I conceptualize both the traditional Victorian animal autobiography and Field’s less traditional life writing as instances of cross-species collaborative authorship. While descriptions of collaborative authorship often elude even those engaged in it because it is not a "static,
austerely classifiable" activity, I define chimerical collaborations in this chapter as the symbolic or actual co-authorship of a piece of literature by two or more (non)human authors who may be fictional or real (York 5). Additionally, I make a distinction between forms of collaborative authorship in the chapter on the basis of three criteria: whether the collaborative product is (1) signed using a co-signature, (2) resists division into individual contributions, and (3) challenges societal expectations about identity, communication or authorship through collaborative structure, literary form, or content. These three criteria are at the heart of a distinction I make in the chapter’s conclusion between speaking or writing as and for an animal co-author, versus writing or speaking with that animal.

The criteria through which I define collaboration are tailored to the situations of animal collaborative authorship I discuss here rather than being representative of a critical standard. Hence, although Wayne Koestenbaum suggests that the "most satisfying" collaborations have the signatures of both authors on the title page, like York in Rethinking Women’s Collaboration, per my definition of chimerical collaborative authorship having two names on the title page versus one (real or assumed) does not make for a more legitimate or more interesting collaboration (York 4). Moreover, while my definition of cross-species collaborative authorship is certainly not exhaustive, it is exemplary of the kinds of obvious and non-obvious authorship activities exemplified in Victorian animal autobiographies, including Virginia Woolf’s Flush and Anna Sewell’s Black Beauty, as well as the collaborations of Katherine Bradley, Edith Cooper, and their dog Whym Chow under the shared authorial identity of Field. My definition of chimerical collaborative authorship is especially well suited to these instances of animal authorship because it foregrounds the inherent productivity that “difference and disagreement” between collaborators produces as, in the words of poet and critic Kenneth Koch, “[t]he act of
collaborating on a literary work...jars the mind into strange new positions” that lead collaborators to explore and write “‘the unknown’” (York 5; 12). The characterization of co-authorship as most effective when the individual units of the collaboration are most different has particular resonance when applied to situations of implied or explicit cross-species authorship. Moreover, it speaks to why both sets of texts—the animal autobiography and the poetic life writing of Michael Field—meet my final criterion of challenging normative expectations surrounding authorship, communication, and species either through actual co-authorship with a nonhuman (Field), or representations of an implied animal co-author’s animal communication (Flush and Black Beauty).

I. TALK TO ME...LIKE HUMANS DO

As Richard Serjeantson explains in “The Passions and Animal Language,” questions about human and animal language ability, as well as the ability to communicate across species barriers, have been matters of concern since the early modern period:

Language was a subject of absorbing interest to numerous early modern philosophers. They investigated its origin, its production, its signification, and its use. But behind almost all of these investigations lay one of the most profound suppositions in early modern anthropology: the uniqueness of the human capacity for language...Harsh judgments were passed on those who thought that animals might be able to speak. Lawyers held that belief in animal language was sufficient evidence of idiocy...[and] the seventeenth-century English writer in the passions, Edward Reynolds, thought that only ‘melancholy men’ believed ‘that Elephants and Birds and other Creatures have a language whereby they discourse with one another.’ (425-6)

While the early moderns were demonstrably skeptical that animals communicated amongst each other, let alone with human beings, most contemporary scholarship accepts that nonhuman
animals do, indeed, speak: it “seems like no question at all” (Huff and Haefner 154). However, as Cynthia Huff and Joel Haefner are quick to point out, “Dogs, cats, and the other species we call companions don’t speak or write language in the same way we do” but, instead, “have unique and species-specific modes of communication to which we have no definitive access” (154). “There’s two-way communication between humans and companion species,” they insist, “but it is not the full-fledged abstract sign system that humans privilege” (154). Yet, the human imaginary has long held fast—even prior to early modern musings—to the possibility that nonhuman animals might speak to us humans—not in the “unique and species-specific” ways that Huff and Haefner note, but in our own, human ways.

Citing the novel Dogs of Babel by Carolyn Parkhurst as a particularly poignant example, Jill Morstad notes “a burning and inescapable need” on the part of human beings “for dogs [and other nonhuman animals] to talk, to speak human language comprehensibly and precisely, and the lengths to which we human beings will go (including vivisection) to make it happen” (194). In Parkhurst’s novel, “Dog J” undergoes vivisection to “reshape the dog’s lips, face and larynx” so that it might speak through the same physical apparatuses as a human being and, consequently, speak as a dog and like a human (195). At the heart of this desire in the novel is, Morstad explains, the notion that “[s]urely…this dog clearly ‘wants’ to communicate… if only she had better means of doing so” (197). Of course, this very assumption lies not only at the heart of Parkhurst’s novel, but at the heart of the animal autobiography writ large. Surely, if animals could tell us their autobiographies they would, and if they were physically endowed like us, their stories would (and should) take the conventional linguistic and generic forms that we are comfortable with and expect as participants in the human symbolic language system.
Marc Shell notes that, lacking the ability to vivisect a dog for the purposes of endowing it with the appropriate organs of human speech, “many human beings talk to animals and also treat their supposedly dumb animals—their pets—as flesh-and-blood ventriloquists’ dummies that seem to speak back to them” (86). Shell cites the impressive statistic that “[n]ine-tenths of American pet-owners talk to their beloved ‘pet animals’ as though they were human” (as of the article’s 2004 publication), and “half of these also put words into the mouths of their animals, just as if they were God opening the mouth of Balaam’s mule” (86). Karla Armbruster cites a similar contemporary trend in her chapter, “What Do We Want from Talking Animals?” It turns out, she explains, that we want love—unconditional love being the preference:

In 2007, CBS News featured a short segment on ‘dogs who talk’…The dogs in the segment, when cued by their human companions, all produce sounds—howls, yowls, yips, and even something close [to] the voice of the Wookie in Star Wars—that ever-so-slightly resemble the English words ‘I love you.’ (17)

Understandably, for Armburster the news segment is “grotesque” and “painful” precisely because she is “critical of anthropomorphism” and “concerned about respecting canine difference” (17). The segment, she explains, “crystallizes some of the worst tendencies within our culture” which might be summed up in one word—anthropocentrism:

when it comes to the desire to hear what other animals might have to tell us: we only recognize communication when it comes in the form of human speech, and the only message we want to hear is that we are inherently lovable…We are left with the image of the slavishly devoted, imperfect versions of ourselves rather than capable beings with their own lives, perspectives, and abilities. (17)

The problems Armbruster articulates about the news segment are problems which plague representations of animals, including the animal autobiography: the dog is either a symbol for or mirror to the human being (reflecting a positive human image), or the dog is a communicator via “signals” with the human. In the latter scenario, the dog is at the mercy of the human’s interpretive system such that animal speech is often perverted into human language: “I love you”
(Morstad 190; Armbruster 17). Morstad suggests that the “duality” of the nonhuman promotes the “illusory possibility of free transition between these two states,” serving to conflate the symbolic animal and the signaling animal such that the animal and its communicative acts are “lost in translation” (191). Gillian Beer weighs in on this issue, too, as she considers whether texts which foreground talking animals are really interested in “‘the whole animal’” or, instead, are functional only as a “pointer to or satire on human behavior” (311). Her conclusion is that most of the time, the latter is true. Anne Milne, in consensus with Beer, explains that

> conflating animal subjectivities with those of humans ultimately evades the focused attention on the relationship between animal representations and animal rights and encourages the tendency to contain animal representations in the symbolic realm. This pull of symbolism toward emblem and stereotype constructs and attributes ‘characters’ to common animals eliminating anomaly, singularity, and self-hood in a historical moment during which individualism in the human realm [was] rising. (168)

For Milne, symbolic exchange between human subjects and animal autobiographers prevents us from asking necessary questions about the difference between the symbolic function of animals in human culture and the reality of animal being. If any given animal autobiographical subject “becomes for criticism merely symbolic (say, of the ‘common man’, French revolutionary, colonial slave, or oppressed woman as several critics have suggested)” the animal “necessarily but involuntarily embodies a specific and agreed-upon exchange value and sacrifices its being-in-itself” (Milne 168).

II. TALKING BACK:

ANIMAL COMMUNICATION IN THE VICTORIAN ANIMAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY
The question of whether cross-species communication is fundamentally an act of animal sacrifice that goes lost in translation is a question which, “since the mid-nineteenth century, dogs talking from the laps, rugs, beds, couches, chairs and ever-evolving passenger seats of our fictional worlds” have responded to (Anglin 132). The “inherent value of the animal” in the Victorian autobiography has, however, been conceptualized as “reduced to what Tom Regan describes as ‘mere receptacles of those experiences which, as receptacles they have to undergo’” (qtd. in Milne 161). As Milne and others explain, the author of the animal autobiography assumes the function of a “frame” through which the animal’s communication of its being in speech is “riterate[d]” as “impossib[le]” while, simultaneously, the human reader is assured through the animal’s anthropomorphism that “humans still have direct, clear access to animal elocutions” and, hence, animal experience (Milne 161). In this way, traditional animal autobiography leaves the animal “open, like a text, for easy human reconstruction and reading” as and through the human rather than recognizing and presenting the nonhuman as productively “opaque[]” (Milne 161; Beer 317). This is precisely why, “until recently… most literary and cultural critics didn’t listen at all” to such narratives, whether animal autobiography or more generally animal-oriented (Armbruster 20).

According to Armbruster, critics either “ignored representations of animals in literature (talking or otherwise), or they approached them in ways completely uninterested in the animals as animals” (20). The latter critical strategy, of complacently reading Victorian literary animals as human metaphors, has been the most frequently employed in relation to Victorian animal autobiographies and animal-centric texts of the period more generally. This form of critical response has been challenged, however, by the advent of posthumanism and animal studies. Both critical modes propose that not only is ignoring literary animality in favor of more familiar
human characters problematic but so, too, is the critical tendency to automatically place literary animals into a system of symbolic exchange in which the animal is never itself, but always and only a figure for the human. At the same time, however, representatives of critical animal studies and posthumanist camps caution that “works that use animals purely as symbols or other reflections and projections of human concerns erase animal lives,” a statement that suggests that some texts might, because of their authors’ formal and representational choices, “exploit other animals” in ways not conducive to productive critical discussion (Armbruster 21).

The fundamental problem of “eras[ing] animal lives” is at stake in both Sewell’s *Black Beauty* and Woolf’s *Flush*. However so, too, is the danger of dismissing these texts on the basis of their historically-contingent reliance on an anthropocentric form of portraying animal existence: the animal autobiography. Such easy critical dismissal forecloses the possibility that these Victorian texts, however problematic in some respects, might actually surprise us. Indeed, I insist that such texts are worth critical scrutiny precisely because their animal authors exceed their symbolic and anthropomorphic functions. Critically productive tensions and uncertainties arise when the anthropocentric form of the animal autobiography is considered alongside forms of verbal and nonverbal animal communication represented in the text itself. I explore this phenomenon in Woolf’s *Flush* (1933) and Sewell’s *Black Beauty*, and demonstrate that represented moments of embodied or verbal animal communication in these texts resist the anthropomorphic form of the animal autobiography itself as well as resisting traditional critical appraisals.

According to Armbruster, “With just a few exceptions, the critics who have examined Woolf’s *Flush* read it as a critique of the social positioning of women in Victorian society, in which the dog functions merely to comment on the situation of Barrett Browning” herself (20).
Armbruster does, however, offer one notable example of a critic, Craig Smith, who interprets the novel differently “as a serious attempt to ‘map canine subjectivity’” (Smith qtd. in Armbruster 20). Smith rejects the commonly held “assumption” that “Flush can be accepted as a legitimate ‘object of study only to the extent that it may be represented as being not really about a dog’” (qtd. in Armbruster 20). Smith, in fact, isn’t alone in this assertion. David Herman argues in his recent article, “Modernist Life Writing and Nonhuman Lives: Ecologies of Experience in Virginia Woolf’s *Flush,*” that

Woolf drew on the resources of modernist narration to broaden the scope of life-writing—in part by grafting onto biographical discourse modes of consciousness presentation conventionally associated with fictional narratives, and in part by moving once marginalized experiences to the forefront of biographical attention—whether the experiences in question are those of women categorized as invalids, members of the servant class, or nonhuman animals like Flush. (547)

Hence, for Herman, Woolf’s privileging of marginalized characters—including invalids, servants and animals—lends her text critical purchase, as each perspective is foregrounded in interesting and interconnected ways. Herman argues that Woolf’s is a “metabiographical text” that exposes “an inextricable entanglement not just of male, female, upper-and lower-class life histories,” but also of distinctly “human and nonhuman ways of encountering the world” (547).

While Herman presents Woolf’s text as embodying an “entanglement” of Flush and his narrative with humans and human narratives, he elides the problem of his own terminology. Herman relies on terms and concepts, such as “entanglement,” often used by posthumanist and animal-theoretical scholars, banking on the power and familiarity of this terminology without conscientiously addressing the serious problems with applying it to Woolf’s text. Namely, that the discourse of interconnection as discussed by Haraway, Derrida, Wolfe and numerous others fundamentally resists narrating these interconnections as Woolf does in *Flush.* Hence, Herman models one of the fundamental fears at stake in the sub-field of Victorian animal studies by
eliding, through recourse to animal-critical concepts, many historically-contingent realities of the novel’s form and content. Woolf, like many writers-about-animals in the nineteenth, twentieth and even twenty-first centuries assumes for herself, via an omniscient narrator the animal voice, speaking as Flush and for him: an act that continues to be highly suspect in the minds of conscientious posthumanist and animal studies scholars. Further complicating Herman’s appraisal of the text are Woolf’s all-too-human ‘evidence’ for constructing Flush’s perspective (“the Browning’s correspondence”), her intention for *Flush* to be a “spoof or parody” of popular notions of period biography, and her adoption of the bildungsroman—a narrative of *human* social maturation and utility—as the text’s sub-genre (Herman 550; 548). Hence, Herman’s recourse to the critical animal studies concept of entanglement proves problematic, as any historically and theoretically responsible critical reading of *Flush* has to acknowledge historically-contingent questions about the ethics and stakes of the animal autobiographical form and Flush’s representation within it.

Yet, Herman’s and Smith’s conceptualization of *Flush* as more complicated than its standard metaphoric reading is insightful: *Flush* is more complicated than its traditional critical receptions make it out to be. Indeed, I argue that the novel raises a set of critical tensions surrounding represented acts of cross-species authorship, animal communication, and reception of animal communication. Accordingly, Flush as animal communicator combined with the

43 Indeed, *Flush* is often—although not entirely—as much or more in the service of explicating human social hierarchies and conditions as it is in the service of explicating Flush’s own positioning relative to his environment. Herman tellingly, in the quotation above, lists the novel’s interest in relationships between various human groups (male, female, upper and lower class) first and in the greatest detail, while subordinating its interest in animal perspective: we’ll clearly learn something instructive about the human condition through the third-party, Flush, but whether we’ll learn much of significance about Flush’s animal condition is questionable. When Herman says that the novel is one of “interconnections,” the implication is that it is an atypical example of the traditionally anthropocentric animal autobiography. Yet, Herman’s explanation of the term “interconnections” in relation to the novel marks it as quite typical; he uses the term merely to express that Flush’s narrative converges and comments upon the human world through a host of differently situated perspectives, including his anthropomorphic animal one, that can more adeptly bear witness to and interpret the characters and action of the novel.
difficulty of representing Flush’s voice, create moments of textual difficulty or resistance identifiable on the level of syntax and representation. Flush’s represented embodied and verbal communications, human responses to these communications, as well as instances in which the acts of authoring the animal—by way of naming and writing—break down conceptually or syntactically serve to challenge the form of the autobiography itself, as well as the authority of the human to speak as and for the animal autobiographer.

*Flush* opens with a history of the spaniel breed, including a selection of origin stories for its breed name. From this early point in the novel, a critical tension erupts which begs questions: what actually is a spaniel, per whose authority is it named as such, and does the word we use to name it have any significant relationship to its own way of living and being in the world? A site of fierce contestation and uncertainty, the term “spaniel” is explained as the product of one of three vastly divergent narratives. First, the term may have been given because the breed was observed hunting rabbits when first seen by Carthaginians, whose word for rabbit was “span” (3). Second, spaniel may originate from the “Basque word” for an “edge or boundary” used in the naming of the continent, Hispania (4). Thus, the breed is simply named after the continent on which it was discovered. The final narrative insists that a derogatory Spanish term was applied as a pet name (no pun intended) to the canine breed, “just as a lover calls his mistress monster or monkey” (4). Human authority over the animal is already a problem in the novel as each origin narrative Woolf tells posits one group of humans or another as Adam figures in the garden, some of which Adams name in ways responsive to the lived experience of the animal itself (as in the first origin narrative in which spaniels are named for their propensity to hunt rabbits), while others name in ways that have no resonance with the animal being at stake. This authoritative, human act of naming is uncertain, arbitrary, and artificial, ultimately providing a false sense of
concretion and understanding, even as the named animal continues to be understood in multiple and conflicting ways, as in the spaniel’s case. A similar problem is implicit in the novel’s narrative form. Just as a human group puts a linguistic term to the breed in each of the spaniel’s origin narratives, the form of the novel itself necessitates that a human put a string of linguistic terms together into a story which names and defines the spaniel, Flush. The human omniscient narrator uses Flush as a focalizing point throughout the novel, but the dog’s role in narrative production is passive, and made doubly so by the fact that his story is both appropriated by the human narrator and told in his literal absence—after Flush’s death. The agency of production is singularly human, as the human omniscient narrator puts words to Flush’s animal’s existence in accordance with a humanistic fantasy in which human beings are masterfully able to fluidly inhabit and communicate the species beings of nonhumans from their space of absolute and total human authority. At several points in the novel this humanist fantasy breaks down, however, as human intrusion into a narrative that is explicitly labeled canine leads to syntactical problems that make discerning whose point(s) of view is(are) being articulated quite difficult; a problem unresolvable except by closely rereading such passages. These syntactical issues make it difficult to determine when the narrator is speaking as him or herself, versus for Barrett Browning or Flush. Although such instances abound, I’ll focus here on one instance which occurs across two paragraphs of the novel’s text. In the first paragraph of the passage, the narrator explains that “truth compels us to say that in the year 1842-43 Miss Barrett was not a nymph but an invalid; Flush was not a poet but a red cocker spaniel; and Wimple Street was not Arcady but Wimple street” (39). Immediately transitioning to a new paragraph, Woolf continues: 

So the long hours went by in the back bedroom with nothing to mark them but the sound of steps passing on the stairs; and the distant sound of the front door
shutting, and the sound of a broom tapping, and the sound of the postman knocking. In the room coals clicked; the lights and shadows shifted themselves... The [door] handle was seen to spin round; the door actually opened; somebody came in... What extraordinary eddies of sound and smell were at once set in circulation! (39)

In the first section of the quoted passage the narrator’s perspective is obvious. However, as the passage transitions into a new paragraph it becomes increasingly unclear whose perspective on the home at Wimple street is being communicated—still the narrator’s? Flush’s?

Although there are no explicit signals that we are transitioning from the omniscient perspective of the narrator as him or herself to an omniscient narrative focalized through Flush, there are some indications that this transition takes place. First, the sensory experiences which receive privilege throughout the passage appear traditionally animalistic in nature, specifically toward the end where sound and smell are given predominance. Perhaps less obvious is the sense of passivity captured in the second part of the passage as compared with the first. In the first part, the omniscient narrator as him or herself is an agent whose agency is captured in the “compelled” ability to “say” (39). The omniscient narrator not only has the power to speak as a human, but this speech is literally a “compelled” and necessary act which solidifies the narrator’s fundamental humanity and agency by way of active re-describing of the environment through language (39). In the succeeding paragraph the perspective is distinctly not that of an active agent, as the subject fails to directly affect or speak the surroundings described. Instead, the subject is a passive recipient of sensory information and external forces: a sort of domestic prisoner who must endure the passage of time as the “hours” go by and who must hear rather than elicit himself the sounds of distinctly human activity—the “sound of steps passing on the stairs,” of the “front door shutting” as a human member of the household returns or leaves, “of a broom tapping,” of the “postman knocking,” and, of course, the sounds of human language itself
That we are, in fact, getting the narrator’s expression of Flush’s perspective on (or narrative of) the room is confirmed many sentences later in the paragraph. However, such initial and even extended confusion as to who is speaking and for whom, on the very level of sentence structure, calls into question the author’s and narrator’s authority to speak the animal co-author in addition to deconstructing—if only partially—the text’s anthropomorphic form. *Flush* enacts a struggle between human and nonhuman on the registers of human authority, authenticity, and authorship as the human intrudes itself upon animals both in the acts of naming and writing the animal but, however productive these tensions are, Woolf goes on to quickly ameliorate them.

Woolf alleviates important tensions surrounding human authority over the cross-species through recourse to human metaphors. Whereas authority over the animal and its being is challenged in the spaniel’s origin stories as well as on the level of the novel’s syntax, Woolf lends concretion to Flush’s narrative and his breed by way of anthropocentric descriptions which reflect human being and sociality to a greater degree than spaniels’. The spaniel is first pinned down as a commodity with an agreed upon price in the human economic market, as in “A.D. 948” their monetary value is high (5). Not only do spaniels have high monetary worth, they are equitable to other purchasable beings, including human “wives and slaves” (5). Hence, whatever questions we may have about the spaniel in the wake of the story of its naming, we now know that spaniels (1) have a set price by which we might value them, and (2) are equivalent in value—perhaps equivalent in kind—to certain kinds of human beings. Next, the spaniel is figured within a human system of social hierarchy and ranking, in which the spaniel is made equivalent no longer to wives and slaves, but “Gentlemen” (6). As a gentleman, of course, the spaniel is a member of a club, the “Spaniel Club,” except this club is regulated and eugenic—entry is fully dependent on achievement of physical perfection as dictated by breed standards. In
fact, the Spaniel Club is celebrated for its exclusivity and ability to police conferral of status, as compared with examples of hierarchies and clubs in human society, which are in “chaos” and “confusion” as “[e]ven our linendrapers mount the Royal Arms above their doors” and “[e]verywhere rank is claimed” (6-8). Though we start off the novel with an origin narrative (of three possibilities) in which the spaniel’s innate desire to hunt rabbits serves as one possible basis for its name, we end up—only a few pages later—very far away from naming or understanding the spaniel through its own species experience. Instead, the spaniel has been given a commodity value, a social ranking, and a place of prominence in something like the period’s human social hierarchy—a hierarchy which the spaniel enforces and embodies, according to the text, in a superior (because more stringently regulated) way to human beings. Clearly, the human world should be taking notes from these excellently human Spaniels.

Enter Flush, who “[w]e cannot doubt…was a pure-bred Cocker…marked by all the characteristic excellences of his kind” (10). Flush has clearly been set up to embody and be understood through the types of human social concepts and values discussed above. Yet, the illusion of Flush as understood through these attributed qualities breaks down when he first introduces himself to Barrett Browning with a “howl[]” (22). Flush’s despairing howl as his former mistress abandons him to his new home brings Barrett Browning and Flush into contact for the first time. They come together in an expression of almost total affinity—“There was a likeness between them. As they gazed at each other each felt: Here am I” (23). Moving from an initial recognition of likeness, Flush and Barrett Browning progress to near total conflation of their separate, differently speciated selves. They become a temporarily unified “I” that is overwhelmingly human in nature, as Flush’s animal identity gets forcibly coopted by Barrett Browning’s human one. Indeed, Flush proceeds in the novel from dog, to gentleman, and finally
to gentlewoman (Barrett Browning) in this moment as real differences in identity and being are erased in an anthropocentric fantasy of total sameness. Yet, almost as soon as this fantasy begins to take shape, it ends. As Barrett Browning and Flush stare at one another their unification slips back into likeness and finally to an extreme form of dissimilitude: “But no. Between them lay the widest gulf that can separate one being from another. She spoke. He was dumb. She was woman; he was dog. Thus closely united, thus immensely divided, they gazed at each other” (23). Ultimately, the very thing that brings Flush and Barrett Browning into interaction—his voice, in the form of a howl—separates them in productive and unproductive ways.

Recognition of Flush’s animal difference is productive in the sense that it forecloses the fantasy that dog and woman are indeed a unified human “I” by way of Flush’s transformation into a symbolic human. Throughout the novel this recognition of difference by way of distinctions between animal and human communication is a source of interesting cross-species commentary, as Barrett Browning is forced to wonder what Flush is saying. She is represented as feeling “blank bewilderment” as she observes Flush “tremble suddenly, and whimper and start and listen” (36). Such moments of extreme “bewilderment” brought on through a combination of Flush’s verbal and embodied communication are significant in the sense that Barrett Browning admits that even her “poet’s imagination,” indicative of the pinnacle of human symbolic language facility, fails her in her attempts to “divine” what Flush thinks and says (36). In other moments, Flush and Barrett Browning appear to most profoundly understand one another on the heels of the narrator’s and the narrator-as-Barrett Browning’s commentaries on the inadequacy of human language: do words say everything? Can words say anything? Do not words destroy the symbol that lies beyond the reach of words?” (38). Siding against the power of human language, the narrator slips between the omniscient viewpoint and Barrett Browning’s
own to cite how the communicative boundary between Barrett Browning and Flush is the grounds for their “peculiar intimacy” (37). Flush embodies the power of his own embodied form of language over and against Barrett Browning’s and the narrator’s shared verbal and written human language. In one example he “press[es] against” Barrett Browning his “hairy head,” a form of embodied communication which “start[s]” her out of a fit of depression and “transform[s]” her (38). In such moments, Flush’s ability to affect Barrett Browning’s mood through physical means indicates that communication can happen on many levels—human and nonhuman, audible and embodied—and lends an immediate and superior power to Flush’s nonverbal forms of communication. These more productive human responses to Flush and his specifically animal forms of communication are inconsistent, however, even on the level of Barrett Browning’s response to him in the novel. Not only is Flush ultimately described as “dumb” in the text, but attempts at verbal and embodied communication which begin successfully often turn into miscommunications, missed-communications, or understood but rejected communications.

While Barrett Browning initially responds to embodied communication, namely to the touch of Flush’s “hairy head” in a productive, cross-species fashion, she ultimately rejects Flush’s embodied communication in favor of imaging what he might say if he could speak using human language. Ignoring what Flush is saying, she imagines what Flush would say to her if he could speak—“something sensible about the potato disease in Ireland!” (38). What “people like Flush” (as Barrett Browning terms him)—or, more aptly, anthropomorphized animals like Flush—have to say in human language is clearly more mundane than what the touch of his body tells her. Flush’s embodied communication makes Barrett Browning feel that “[f]or a moment she was transformed; she was a nymph and Flush was Pan. The sun burnt and love blazed” (38).
His imagined human voice, however, says nothing quite so affecting. Whereas Flush’s body communicates a depth of feeling and poetic quality that is initially registered as full of agency and transformative power, Barrett Browning chooses to resort to privileging first, human verbal language and, then, written language. In so doing, Barrett Browning’s character sets Flush up for total failure. By insisting that Flush be and speak as a human, rather than accepting the effectiveness of the embodied communication he can offer her as a dog, she can only imagine him a disappointment: capable only of fulfilling the bare minimum of human language ability.

Just as Flush’s embodied communications are rejected, so are his verbal communications. Howls, whimpers and the like solidify Flush’s capacity for communicative ability, but also highlight the inherent difference between his language and Barrett Browning’s. Flush is verbally communicative, but is ultimately described as “dumb” because he does not know the “right names” with which to “call” the world around him from a human point of view (23; 27). In disavowing Flush’s howls and whimpers as forms of nonhuman speech and representing him as dumb instead, Woolf (like Barrett Browning’s character in the example above) enters him back into a human ideological system in which being incapable of human speech is a sign of inferiority within and beyond the confines of the human species. The problem of cross-species communication between Flush and Barrett Browning is no longer a shared problem, but a problem created by lack: namely, a linguistic lack in nonhuman animals that further entrenches anthropocentrism and anthropocentric ways of thinking about the cross-species. Flush is represented as expressing his communicative lack or inferiority through an act of extreme domestication and subservience, as he “laid himself where he was to lie for ever after—on the rug at Miss Barrett’s feet,” and subsequently feels the “pain[ful]” need “to resign, to control, to suppress the most violent instincts of his nature” for her (23; 34-5). Whereas Flush’s embodied
communication offers Barrett Browning’s character positive transformation, the narrator’s and Barrett Browning’s privileging of human communication as the seat of power and agency serves to domesticate, discipline, and subordinate him.

Interestingly, Flush resists his own subordination and domestication by way of the human’s linguistic authority. Flush’s failures to control his nature to meet Barrett Browning’s expectations for him as a domestic are often accompanied by verbal and embodied forms of communication that the humans around him understand fully but reject. However successfully these communicative acts are interpreted across species lines, they are rejected by Flush’s human contingent on account of their expression of undomesticated responses to humans and human overtures. In a useful example, Flush “forgot what was most essential—silence,” barking loudly as he bites through Robert Browning’s pants (67). Here Flush’s communicative ability, rather than serving as a boon to him or going unobserved or misunderstood by the human household, puts him at risk. Strangely, silence or the “dumbness” Flush is wrongly credited with, is situated as something that he can, but fails to, manipulate and use to his advantage to accomplish otherwise policed forms of animal activity in the home. Flush’s voice—suddenly a threat—“alarm[s] the household” and he is “beat…soundly” for mistakenly expressing his rejection of Robert Browning’s own form of embodied communication: a “well-meant attempt to caress” (67). In other instances of rejected but understood communication, Barrett Browning’s character insists that Flush wrongfully barks the household “distracted” when he wants out, earning him the appellation of “monarch” (sardonically applied) (113). He irritates Barrett Browning to an even greater extent by “boldly summon[ing]” Robert Browning for a walk, an activity which she characterizes as “imperious” (117). The boldness and cogency of Flush’s communication—both verbal and not—goes unrewarded: his “dumb” speech is irritating, imperious, and punishable
because it demands forms of human response which Barrett Browning and others do not want to give. Whatever cross-species arrangement exists between Barrett Browning and Flush in the novel, it is clear that when Flush assumes the agency to speak, there are consequences including “misunderstandings,” missed-understandings, and understandings of things that are best left unspoken—all of which lead to various instantiations of subservience on Flush’s part or disciplinary action (37). No longer capable of gazing at and speaking to one another on a foot of equality—face to face—Flush must avert his gaze from Barrett Browning’s and save his speech for those willing to listen—other dogs—and for moments when speaking won’t compromise him.

Yet, for all that, *Flush* ends with the (actual) Barrett Browning’s poem about her (actual) dog Flush, the poem focused not on moments in which she misunderstands him, misses opportunities to understand him, or rejects what he has to say to her. Instead, the poem returns to the moment of shared, embodied communication illustrated earlier in the novel. In the poem Flush “thrust[s]” his head against Barrett Browning’s face, this sudden, embodied communication inducing her to “start[,]” feel “amazed” and emerge from her depression in the wake of Flush’s “love” which, though that of a “low creature[,]” is “height[ened]” like that of the “true Pan” (160). Putting the larger issues of authorship and authenticity aside, it is clear at the close of the novel that Flush’s embodied communication is both understood and powerful, transcending the original experience to become the subject of Barrett Browning’s poem and, finally, the closing piece for Woolf’s novel. Finally, Flush has his say.

*Black Beauty* and *Flush* have garnered similar critical receptions. The similarity between the arguments made about both texts by critics is instructional, pointing to fundamental tensions in the ways animal autobiographers, as well as animal characters more broadly, are evaluated on
the basis of more and less philosophically humanistic modes of discourse. Representing one facet of the critical discussion surrounding *Black Beauty*, Natalie Hansen explains in “Horse Talk: Horses and Human(e) Discourses” that Sewell’s text “remains circumscribed within the ontological differences” that create the very “inequalities and injustices” on which the text comments, whether these inequalities occur within the realm of the cross-species or amongst different human social groups (208). For Hansen, the anthropomorphized horse conveniently repositions intra-human struggle as cross-species struggle and, in so doing, “masks class differences” through “figurative distancing” (209). Moreover, she insists that the anthropomorphic animal “functions to naturalize narratives of difference” and inequality by way of the animal’s imbrication in a Victorian species hierarchy whose cultural acceptation, even by writers of “animal rights” texts such as Frances Power Cobbe, lent implicit (if not always intended) validity to forms of class, gender, and race-based hierarchy in the human world by way of the animal’s metaphorical or metonymic relationship to subordinate human groups (Hansen 209).

Hansen’s critique of the novel as serving to naturalize and excuse various inequalities between human groups and across species groups, while simultaneously inculcating compassionate acceptance of this marginalization, has been challenged by critics such as Marion Copeland. Copeland argues in “‘Straight from the Horse’s Mouth’: Equine Memoirs and Autobiographies,” that evaluating *Black Beauty* as primarily about human society and as a

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44 *Black Beauty*, much like *Flush*, is a “didactic narrative” or “instructional discourse meant to guide individual self-improvement” with roots in the moralistic eighteenth-century “culture of sensibility” (Hansen 207-8). Moreover, like *Flush*, *Black Beauty*’s central critical “tension” is that it “upholds social and species hierarchies” on the level of form and representation even as it “call[s] for change” (208).

45 For example, Cobbe’s animal autobiographical text, *Confessions of a Lost Dog*, is told from the animal perspective but foregrounds the authority of the owner or master of the animal pet. The master-domestic/ human-animal hierarchy is maintained and reified, such that the issue at stake is not the arbitrary or disingenuous character of the hierarchy itself, but perceived abuses of the terms of that hierarchy (which, for Cobbe, would entail physical violence to or neglect of nonhuman subordinates). This same notion is captured in many of her non-fictional writings about domestic animals.
sentimentalized entrenchment of social inequality is predicated upon a false assumption. Namely, “the assumption that it is impossible for a horse to have a biography or communicate the details of his or her life to another animal of the same or different species” (176). Copeland asserts that even though horses “lack the manual dexterity to write anything other than hoofprints” they can communicate with human beings so long as we recognize and validate their forms of “interspecies exchange” (176). Copeland necessarily concedes that Sewell’s animal autobiography is not so much a factual portrayal of how a horse might experience or express its existence—in other words, it’s not actually a transcription as Sewell maintained. However, she insists that it is an exercise of applying real-life relationships with animals to the foregrounding of animal experience in literature in order to explore the “sentience of the other-than-human animal” and its capacity for “self-awareness” (177). There is tangible merit to the notion that companion animals and their human companions learn to communicate with one another—if not altogether fully—and that this communication might be captured in literature, as I will discuss later in this section. However, Copeland puts under erasure, much like Herman in the instance of Flush, the historically-contingent formal and representational issues at stake in the novel. If, as Copland suggests, the animal autobiography’s redeeming value is not so much in its realistic depiction of animal being, as in its absolute foregrounding of “sentien[t]” and “self-aware[]” animal narrative subjects, why are these animal subjects so often invested with speech as autobiographers only for certain types of speech to be represented as policed, disciplined, and even foreclosed (177)?

Adding critically and historically necessary nuance to Copeland’s claim, I argue that cross-species miscommunications and rejected communications represented in Black Beauty highlight the problems of authenticity and authorship which accrue to the animal autobiography.
Indeed, the novel articulates a strangely contradictory relationship to Beauty as symbolic co-author of the autobiography itself, as compared with Beauty as a represented communicator within the text. Beauty is celebrated for becoming a speaking biographical subject and implicit co-author even though, in doing so, he violates the proper role of the domestic animal: to be a responder to human communicative demands, rather than issuer of demands on the human. Yet, Beauty’s communications within the text are extremely limited and fail to challenge human communicative authority over him or require human response.

Black Beauty poses similar problems to animal voice as Flush, as animal communication is rendered, at moments, a policed and punishable activity. In addition to “learn[ing] to wear a collar, a crupper and a breeching,” and “never start[ing] at what he sees,” a properly broken-in horse must never “speak to other horses” or display expressions of embodied communication such as biting and kicking (11). In essence, explains Beauty, a horse is to have no “will of his own,” especially when that will and its embodied or audible expression interferes with human activity and human ways of valuing and using the horse. Indeed, the horse’s optimized domestic utility is measured by its silence—its refusal to speak itself in a verbal or embodied way that challenges human authority over the horse and its narrative. The only kind of speech that Beauty and other horses are permitted to have are the forms which reinscribe the stories told about them by human owners: they can’t speak to other horses and they can’t physically communicate resistance to humans and their desires. They can only communicate acceptance. A great favorite of his original master, Black Beauty retains his favored status even as he rejects one mandatory quality of a properly broken-in horse: he speaks. Unlike Flush, which utilizes an omniscient (human) narrator, Black Beauty is told as a more traditional animal (auto)biography. As such, the horse ostensibly speaks for itself directly without need for an omniscient or other explicit
human narrator to act as intermediary (although we know that, for all intents and purposes, Sewell herself serves this function outside of the text). The very fact that Beauty tells his story is an interesting instance of communications-based animal agency within the text. Beauty—a favorite and an expertly broken-in horse—rejects some forms of silencing imposed upon him by humans and, instead, chooses to speak himself and his experience in ways that challenge human mastery over him. Like Flush who speaks out when he should be silent and is physically or verbally punished as a result, Beauty assumes the role of a communicative agent at the risk of punishment, which may take the form of violence or his negative evaluation by the humans he is dependent on in the text. Beauty, like Flush, does not go “quietly”—or at least not always (11).

Despite the fact that Beauty breaks one of the cardinal rules of a properly domesticated horse by becoming a speaking animal capable of authoring his own being in the text, in various other moments his embodied communication is problematically silenced. Whereas Beauty is required and expected to pick up on his rider’s “tone of…voice” and every “touch of the reign” and appropriately respond to these embodied and verbal communications, he holds his rider to no obligation to reciprocate (27). Stating that he “hated the crupper,” Beauty goes on to explain that he “never felt more like kicking” than in the moments he is subjected to this device (13). Kicking, in this instance, would serve as a form of embodied communication expressive of how the device, which “doubled up” his tail, is a human technology that infringes upon the natural state of his body and being (13). Yet, Beauty “of course…could not kick such a good master” and he stays still and quiet, ultimately getting “used to everything” even though he is, literally, being bent out of his proper species shape (13). Here, as in other instances in the text, communication is a one-way street: humans do most of the communicating while Beauty’s role is predominantly to listen and respond as instructed. Beauty’s mandate as a domestic horse is
not only to curb his natural responses of fear and dislike of the crupper, but to also curb similar responses to the trains he counters early in his life. While his first impulse is to flee—“I turned and galloped to the further side of the meadow…there I stood snorting”—this embodied response is rejected and labeled a sign of a lesser (because less domesticated) horse, and it is subsequently trained out of him through his “master’s care” (15). Indeed, Beauty sees himself and other horses on a continuum of exceptionality. He achieves “peace” in response to the train’s passing by subordinating his own desired communications to his master’s, while other horses are critiqued for communicating their response of being “much alarmed and restive” instead of giving singular privilege to the communicative demands of their masters (13).

This continuum of exceptionality, founded on the horse’s proper silencing of embodied responses in favor of accommodating human demands, is consistent throughout the novel. It emerges again when Beauty later hears the story of the disgraced horse, Ginger. Ginger is described by the horse Merrylegs as having “‘a bad habit of biting and snapping,’” even drawing blood, in response to unwanted or inappropriate forms of human interaction with her (19). Merrylegs is clearly on the same side of the spectrum as Beauty, as he not only describes Ginger as “‘bad’” for failing to silence these communications, but he further impugns Ginger by stating that “‘it is all Ginger’s own fault’” (20). Ginger’s problem, according to Merrylegs, is that she, unlike himself and Beauty, hasn’t subordinated her own embodied communication to a great enough extent; she is so busy expressing herself that she fails to adequately attend to human communicative demands like tone of voice and touch of reign. Hence, Ginger, although “courage[ous] at…work” like Beauty, is figured as having rightly been moved into a less prominent stable box, while Beauty is inserted into Ginger’s old box next to none other than Merrylegs himself (20; 24).
From Ginger’s perspective, however, speaking out in embodied and non-embodied ways against certain forms of human activity practiced upon her makes the difference between being a specific type of living being—a horse named Ginger—and being mere “flesh” (31). As Ginger explains to Beauty, “what he wanted was to wear all the spirit out of me, and just make me into a quiet, humble, obedient piece of horse-flesh. ‘Horse-flesh!’ Yes, that is all he thought about’” (31). In this instance, Ginger’s reinscription as flesh marks a linguistic process through which an actual living animal is turned into an absent referent.46 By understanding her as flesh, rather than as the horse Ginger, Ginger’s master is no longer forced to respond to a nonhuman animal capable of communicating herself and her being. Instead, he linguistically manipulates himself into the position of uncontested master of a body of flesh, to which he has no obligation to listen or respond. Significantly, Ginger responds to the telling of her own story by “stamp[ing] her foot,” as she continues to insist that she is not the malleable flesh her former master wants her to be but is, instead, an author of herself and her desires through embodied communication (31).

Clearly the stakes of Beauty’s and other horses’ roles as speaking agents in the text are unclear, as are Flush’s in Woolf’s text. Though Beauty becomes a radical speaking agent in the text by assuming the agency of speech in spite of its prohibition, certain forms of his speech—such as embodied communication of fear, dislike, or anger—remain unexplored and foreclosed. He is valued not for what he says, but what he doesn’t say, and his primary role in communication is as receiver, not producer. Whereas Ginger concedes to suppress her bites only “while they are good to me,” and leaves open the possibility that she will bite and give “a good kick” to teach her human counterparts a lesson, Beauty suppresses such communicative acts (39;

46 Carol J. Adams uses the term “absent referent” to refer, specifically, to the way in which the specific species names of living animals, such as pig and cow, are supplanted by new linguistic terms—bacon, steak, or more generally “meat”—in the wake of the animal’s slaughter. These new terms are absent referents in that they do not directly invoke the name or being of the animal, suggesting that there is practical and ethical difference between the cow in life and the steak we consume.
He places no conditions on, and provides no consequences for, his human owners, and consequently exculpates them from having to learn to recognize, listen to, and respond to his voice.

In both the case of *Flush* and *Black Beauty*, exploring authorship and authenticity through textually represented verbal and nonverbal-embodied animal communications moves us beyond normative critical responses: either that the animal autobiography and the animal voice in it should be dismissed as grossly anthropomorphic, or that they should be celebrated and interpreted only as depictions of symbolic animality. *Flush* and *Black Beauty* are anthropomorphic; however, they are more complicated than this label acknowledges. In fact, both texts move beyond mere anthropomorphism to problematize the authenticity of the animal autobiographical form, particularly through representations of intra-textual animal communications which challenge human authority over the animal and animal voice. Hence, my reading of *Black Beauty* and *Flush* suggests an answer to the central critical question surrounding these texts: whether the undeniable sacrifice of the animal in the service of the human in traditional animal autobiography is not just problematic, but so much so that these texts should be viewed as critically and ethically unproductive? The answer, I suggest, is “no” or, at the very least, “not always.”

The question of the animal-anthropomorphic texts’ critical productivity is a significant one because, as Milne points out, understanding the “whole animal” in Beer’s terms or, alternatively, admitting the limitations of how much of that animal we can know, has high stakes—and not only for Victorian scholarship and the future of Victorian animal studies (311). Answering this question is imperative for critically engaging these texts in productive ways, but also for defining responsible individual, disciplinary, and institutional understandings of and
relationships to the cross-species. As Beer explains, the “central paradox for literature concerning itself with animals” is how “to be true to animal experience…if your medium of description is written in human language?” (313). Beer wonders if “empathy [is]…possible” under such circumstances and whether it is “more honest to avoid claiming understanding” of the animal given the consequences of this understanding, institutional and otherwise, for nonhumans (313). Beer’s question is both a difficult and necessary one, particularly given the “very real differences between human and nonhuman communications,” as well as human and nonhuman ways of being in and experiencing the world (Milne 165).

In the wake of Thomas Nagel’s essay “What is it Like to be a Bat?” many critics, including Erica Fudge as well as authors, including J.M. Coetzee, have accepted the notion that “imaginatively inhabiting the consciousness” of a nonhuman animal is perhaps impossible and, at the very least, highly suspect (Armbruster 21). Suspect, of course, because of our tendency to project human qualities and desires onto animals, as well as our tendency to more favorably regard certain groups of nonhumans, such as dogs (Armbruster 21). Other scholars, such as Mary Midgley, however, have cited this mind-the-gap interpretation of the distinction between human and nonhuman consciousness as reaffirming in problematic ways notions of “human uniqueness and superiority,” while, I would add, exculpating some proponents of the gap from the necessity of recognizing and learning to adapt to nonhuman forms of communication and behavior (such as embodied forms) where possible (Armbruster 21). For those who don’t believe in the “insurmountable” gap that Nagel hypothesizes, “there are potential benefits to giving animals voice in literature,” namely, the benefit of “remind[ing] us…that other modes of being exist” and making us accountable for contemplating and recognizing the significance of

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47 Milne, for example, cites the “unnaturalness of writing as a kinesthetic practice and form of expression” (165).
48 Of course, this favoritism of dogs is a Western, rather than global phenomenon.
other kinds of beings (Armbruster 22). In fact, Derrida explains in “Eating Well” that “animal languages, genetic coding, and all forms of ‘marking’ should be taken as part of the ‘network of possibilities’ that also includes human language” (qtd. in Armbruster 27). Derrida’s “view of language,” contends Armbruster, “moves us beyond the notion that human language marks an impenetrable boundary” since nonhuman animals “participate in the larger network of language” (27-8). That being the case, “imagining and writing the perspective of other animals still presents significant dangers and challenges,” both to human author and animal narrator. First and foremost because

Any text that gives voice to a nonhuman animal is a case of speaking for others, a mode of discourse that has been extensively examined and debated with feminist (and postcolonial) theory and criticism. The practice of speaking for others, even when undertaken with the best of intentions, carries a real danger of misrepresentation and, in particular, of erasing the difference, of turning the other into the same. (Armbruster 23)

Armbruster highlights the problem of respecting the difference voices and beings of various human and nonhuman animals, while still finding a way to gain access to the part of the cross-species-communication-gap over which there is a tenuous bridge of marks and signs.

According to Armbruster, the overarching issue at stake in these discussions is agency, as agency must be “reconceptualiz[ed]” and extended beyond the human or “a small group of other species that we recognize as possessing similar abilities” (29). Specifically, Armbruster intervenes in the discussion by asking “how we might usefully think about stories of talking animals, especially those inspired by animals who were part of a writer’s life, as conveying at least a trace of the ‘perspective of the dog’” or other nonhuman animal (28). Beer and others weigh in on this question. Beer herself suggests that human authors of animal biography who choose to maintain the animal autobiographical subject have to “warp language” to signify the “the sheer difficulty of the move” across species (319). She explains that by “drawing attention”
to how “difficult[]” it is for human language to capture animal voice and experience the writer “pays respect to the ways of being that lie beyond [the human and its] language” (321):

Human beings, within the wider range of species, are language-rich and sense-poor. How to reach or record the capacities of other species? Dogs, bats, and pigeons are familiar examples of inhabitants of sense-zones beyond human capacities. The special human sense may indeed be language. (313)

By representing animal voices as strange, unsettling, and difficult to comprehend in a way that more traditionally presented human language is not, authors might force the consumers of text to evacuate their human positioning, if only for a moment, as their normal practices of and assumptions about being and language become insufficient. By refusing to “accommodate the originating language to the translation, smoothing the joints so that it lies level and familiar to the reader” and, instead, opting to “keep the sense of the alien, of the clotted strangeness in experience,” authors of animal autobiography might call into question human perspective and human mastery, and productively so (Beer 319). Armbruster explains that “this notion of gesturing outside of language, somehow acknowledging the limits of human discourse to represent nonhuman voices and minds, is an extremely important aspect of responsible approaches to the talking animal story—and, indeed, to any representation of nonhuman animals or nature” (25).

As an alternative to the approach above, namely “contort[ing]” language to better respond to and respect animal difference, Beer proposes abandoning the animal autobiographer altogether. Doing so, she suggests, may best serve animal subjects because rejection of the spoken-for animal entails the very productive act of accepting the limits of the human author’s ability to access and communicate animal experience. Huff and Haefner, in “His Master’s Voice: Animalographies, Life Writing, and the Posthuman,” suggest that the natural counterpoint to the traditional animal biography, such as Black Beauty, may be a text like Donna Haraway’s
When Species Meet, which communicates the profoundly intimate forms of communication and relationship between (especially co-evolved) species without falsely assuming animal voice (153). In essence, Huff and Haefner propose that a “narration of an ‘entangled self’” in fiction, biography, memoir and other written forms, has a distinct advantage over traditional animal autobiographies in which a human speaks for the animal subject (153). Better to speak as a human about the inherent rewards and difficulties of human-nonhuman relations than to speak for individual nonhuman beings. In the next section, I discuss such an alternative form of cross-species collaborative authorship through the late-Victorian poet Michael Field. The collaboration undergirding Field represents the possibility of a direct, real (not fictionally represented) animal co-author. Moreover, this historically contiguous example of cross-species collaborative authorship does not take the form of animal autobiography but, instead, more closely resembles the animal-oriented life writing Huff and Haefner privilege, even as the final textual product takes the form of poetry.

III. WRITING HYBRIDS, WRITING CHIMERAS:
THE CROSS-SPECIES COLLABORATIVE AUTHORSHIP OF MICHAEL FIELD

The poetry of “Michael Field,” a pseudonym traditionally identified with Katherine Bradley and her niece and lover Edith Cooper, restages the problem of animal co-authorship in productive ways, foremostly by foregrounding a non-fictional animal collaborator. The animal co-author at stake is Bradley’s and Cooper’s domestic dog, Whym Chow, who is integral to Field’s poetry in ways that both reaffirm a Victorian tradition of metaphorical animal representation but also, and more significantly, frustrate this tradition. Whym Chow is
geographically and historically contemporary with his human co-authors and has a life and embodied animal “voice” of his own; this life and voice is triangulated with the voices of Bradley and Cooper, and begets a poetic form of life writing in which Bradley, Cooper, and Whym Chow become—with each other to, finally, become the poet Michael Field.

Field is many things at many different times, as testified to by the ways scholars have attempted to tame the wildness of Field by breaking Field up into clearly definable units of production and meaning. Distinctions have been made between Field the poet versus Field the dramatist; based on distinct periods of literary production, the Field of 1889-1898 and the Field of 1906-1914; as well as based on religious affiliation, the pagan, Sapphic Field and the post-conversion Field. In what follows, I contribute a further distinction: one between the Field whose collaborations are cross-species, intimate, and undivided, and a later Field—after Whym Chow’s death—that collaborates by aid of a “strap” that binds two autonomously created volumes of poetry together (Thain and Vadillo 36; 32). The first period I denote, occurring between 1898-1906, originates with Whym Chow’s introduction to Bradley’s and Cooper’s domestic space and authorship, as he becomes a co-creator with the women. The Field identity during this period is not only collaborative, but collaborative across species lines, while the poetic texts produced are intimate and undivided: a true collaborative mosaic. The second period, occurring between 1906-1913/14, is inaugurated by Whym Chow’s death in 1906 and his subsequent “resurrection” into symbolic animal co-authorship by way of Bradley’s and Cooper’s recourse to Catholicism and the Catholic Trinity. The Field identity during this period is cross-species only in a symbolic sense, and the poetic texts produced are only loosely collaborative: Bradley and Cooper author individual poems and collections or collaborate only loosely. This loose collaboration comes to an end with Cooper’s and Bradley’s deaths from cancer in 1913 and
1914, respectively. Hence, Whym Chow’s animal authorship is a catalyst for substantive transformations of the Field identity and Field’s collaborative nature.

The difficulty scholars have had in defining Field is due, at least in part, to the fact that the Field pseudonym morphs as Bradley and Cooper strove over their lifetimes not only for a lesbian poetics, but to renegotiate their own identities as working and domestic partners with and without Whym Chow. Bradley and Cooper adopted Field as a pseudonym as early as 1884 in conjunction with the publication of two verse dramas, *Callirrhoe* and *Fair Rosamond*, but the “Michael Field” to whom the dramas are attributed is only in his(her) nascent stages of existence. Field, as pseudonym, continued to develop over Bradley’s and Cooper’s lives as domestic and working partners. The more generically disbursed author of poetry and verse drama invoked by the name early in the women’s career transformed into my object of study here—“the poet Michael Field”—as Bradley and Cooper settled on poetry as the preferred medium for their collaborative authorship (Laird 115). Bradley and Cooper credited other imagined authorly identities where different sets of working relations governed their work—relations in which one of the women or Whym Chow played lesser or different roles—or, later in their careers, when the literary product was not poetry. Cooper, for example, individually published poetry under the name of “Arran Leigh,” while the anonymous persona, the “author of Borgia,” was dredged up from the women’s past and credited with the plays Bradley and Cooper authored after they had designated Field a poet (not a dramatist) (Pionke 23-24). In their personal letters, diaries, and communications in the domestic space, the women had even other names. They referred to themselves simply as Michael (Bradley) and Henry (Cooper), or the “the Fields” (Pionke 25).

The women’s particularity regarding the Field identity is captured by the fact that Bradley’s and Cooper’s receptivity to Whym Chow as a shared partner in their quasi husband-
and wife domestic identities as the Fields, as well as in their authorship as Field, starkly contrasts with their desire to exclude others from the name—even the ability to call them by it. Though Whynm Chow is asked to share in the Field persona and others are allowed to refer to the women by it, the women police access to it. In one instance, Bradley denies a Mrs. Chandler Moulton the right to call the women by Field rather than their Christian names because she has not earned the privilege to do so and does not understand the appropriate context for the name (Hughes 117). In an entry included in *Works and Days*, Bradley ruminates upon the at home she and Cooper attend at Moulton’s. She writes:

> Mrs. Moulton introduced us as a poet, as Michael Field, & we stood, our wings vibrating in revolt, while hollow, fashionable women lisped their enchantment at meeting with us. A moment came when this could be borne no longer, I laid a master-hand on the hostess, & told her to introduce us by our Christian names. (Thain and Vadillo 239)

The language of the entry is strange, and tellingly so. In “Reluctant Lions: Michael Field and the Transatlantic Literary Salon of Louise Chandler Moulton,” Linda Hughes argues that this incident is significant: first, because it expresses Bradley and Cooper’s hostility generally to other women, and secondly, she speculates that it marks Bradley’s reticence to assume literary greatness out of fear of drawing too much attention to the couple’s lesbianism (117). Regardless of the particular reasons motivating Bradley, it is clear that Field is not her preferred identity in the context of Moulton’s at home, and that Moulton’s invocation of Field forces her and Cooper to occupy an uneasy, disempowered state on account of their mis-naming. The act of mis-naming, particularly the act of misnaming animal beings, is discussed by Derrida in “The Animal that Therefore I Am,” as he states that

> Animal is a word that men have given themselves the right to give,…reserving for them, for humans, the right to the word, the name, the verb, the attribute, to a language of words, in short to the very thing that the others in question would be
deprived of, those that are corralled within the grand territory of the beasts: the Animal. (392)

To name another being or to name it incorrectly is to force a multiplicitous, unique individual to inhabit whatever singular, static subjectivity accrues to that name. The violence of naming can be great—as in the human’s reductive description of the world’s very diverse nonhuman beings as the singular “the animal,” or it can be more mundane, as in an instance of calling an individual human being by a name that constrains and disempowers it. To re-name oneself, to be named by another only with permission, and to welcome some and not others to use one’s name are all what Vicky Hearne, in *Adam’s Task: Calling Animals by Name*, characterizes as a refusal to “recognize” the “command” upon the individual when it is named by an outside entity rather than naming itself (48).49 Hearne describes this refusal to respond to those who name without the privilege to do so in the register of non-human animals and, specifically, animal training. She suggests that commanding through the use of a name is an entrance into an implied contract in which naming someone or something, particularly when the name is joined with a command, requires “imagining the natures of the commitments involved” and recognizing that the right to name and command must be “earned” (44; 46).

The link between animality and the violence of mis-naming articulated by Derrida and Hearne is captured in Bradley’s retelling of the incidents at Moulton’s at home. Bradley and Cooper are imaginatively transformed, through their mis-naming as Field, into birds who can only passively “vibrat[e] in revolt,” a subtle clue that in naming them as Field, Moulton taps into a specifically animal component of the co-identity (Thain and Vadillo 239). It is only by trading

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49 Hearne writes from the perspective of an animal, especially dog and horse, trainer. The activities of animal training that underlie her philosophy on cross-species relations make her particularly, and problematically, celebratory of human beings giving names not just to one another, but to nonhuman animals. She describes the act of name-giving as “giv[ing] the soul” of the named entity “room for expansion” and “projecting the creature named into more glorious contexts” through a set of relations, commands, and structures that follow from the act of naming and being named (169).
her “vibrating” wings (animal) for a “master-hand” (human) as she asserts their proper names—Edith and Katherine—that Bradley is able to assume the traditional role of the human being. Bradley equates the power to name with the physical and symbolic power of the human hand (which writes), while being named, or in this case being mis-named, is equated with animality. Their flitting between animalized and humanized positions via the acts of naming and being named suggests that the women are straddling two supposedly mutually exclusive categories of being: the human that names and the animal that is named. And, moreover, it is significant that within the context of Moulton and her “fashionable women,” there is something immediately foreign, disempowering, and animalistic about Field, while Bradley’s and Cooper’s Christian names seem more fitting. Edith Cooper and Katherine Bradley, names reassuringly singular, “fashionable,” female, and human are literally at home at Moulton’s in a way that Field as a pluralistic, cross-species, gender-bending, and lesbian identity can never be. Indeed, regardless of whether the name in question is a gender-name, species-name, birth-name, pet-name, or family-name, and whether or not it is joined with a command, naming and the right to call a human or non-human animal by a name is a privilege rather than a right. As Katharine Pionke (JJ) explains in “Michael Field: Gender Knot”

I imagine that for Katharine and Edith, the use of Michael…was similar to what the function of ‘JJ’ is for me. JJ is a person who is talkative, friendly, and a bit outgoing; Katharine [my given name], on the other hand, is shy, quiet, and more introverted…Naming oneself, or assuming a name that has been bestowed upon oneself, allows one to claim ownership of one’s own identity. The names with which we are born have a host of meanings and memories…some of us…take on a name that is uniquely ours… (25-26)

50 Much of the same language of disempowered animality is found in a later entry by Bradley from 18 July 1892. Invited as Michael and Field (indicated in an entry by Cooper on 22 June 1892) to Paris by Mary Costelloe and Bernard Berenson, they return “plucked” after being impugned as living, dressing, and writing in an unfashionable mode. Bradley states that, back from Paris, “every feather [has been] plucked from our wings, [after being] convinced of folly in dress, of poverty & affectation in English, of false method in art…of ‘taking things personally, of being Anglo Saxon, of living away from Life’” (Thain and Vadillo 256).
Pionke stresses the importance of the names we assume for ourselves and the names others project on to us, noting that each name—self-given or given by another—contains a set of characteristics and expectations, possibilities opened or foreclosed.

Bradley and Cooper are not just Field, but employ a whole host of other names that they go by individually or share with one another throughout their lives. Each of these names accrues its own set of possibilities and its own significance. In some of their early letters, recorded in *Works and Days*, Bradley names herself “Fowl” and “Wise Fowl” and Cooper refers to herself as “your Persian Puss” (Thain and Vadillo 17). Later, Cooper becomes “Heinrich,” “Henry,” and “Field,” and Bradley adopts “Michael” (Thain and Vadillo 17). For Bradley and Cooper, names are specific and not interchangeable. Acts of naming, re-naming, and policing access to their many names are incredibly important and allow Bradley and Cooper to make distinctions between their individual selves and versions of their collaborative authorial (or domestic) selves.

One poignant example of the power of the women’s names is showcased when Cooper becomes the gender-bending Heinrich (or Henry) in 1891. Her hair sheared after a treatment for Scarlet Fever, Cooper is called “Heinrich” by a female nurse who “shower[s] her with mad kisses and hungry embraces” that provoke Bradley to “‘jealous[y]’” (Thain and Vadillo 29). For Bradley, Cooper’s re-naming by the nurse is tantamount to the birth of a new person: “Heinrich has been born” Bradley writes in her journal (Thain and Vadillo 251). Re-named and re-gendered, Cooper becomes—on the strength of her new name—an object of pseudo-heterosexual desire for her nurse, who seems to entirely forget *Edith* Cooper upon Cooper’s rebirth as Heinrich. Afterwards, on 26 September 1891, Cooper reports:

I must fight nurse’s unreasonableness. She comes when I am resting, throws herself about me & kisses with the persistency of madness. I manage to make her understand she grieves & fatigues me—instantly with repentance she retires to the arm-chair, & slumber. I pretend deep sleep with anxious ears. She is called away
& I slumber. She strives with herself & scarcely ever breaks out after—but the strain makes me dull by the time my love returns. (Thain and Vadillo 250)

Cooper-as-Heinrich not only enflames the nurses’ desires, s/he also facilitates multiple desires for Bradley, for whom Cooper becomes a subject of lesbian desire as Edith and heterosexual desire as Henry or Heinrich. That the name sticks—Bradley calls Cooper “Henry” for the rest of the women’s lives—combined with the erotic power Cooper has over the nurse as Heinrich, suggests that Edith and Heinrich (or Henry) are not quite the same people and do not affect those around them in quite the same manner.

There is something meaningful and specific about each of women’s shared or individual names—their ability to capture and signal a quality not captured otherwise and which risks being lost with the loss of the name itself. The retention and application of the name “Henry” confers possibilities and qualities upon Cooper that her given name, Edith, does not. The Field pseudonym, in its instantiation both pre- and post- Whym Chow’s death, shares this level of specificity. Pionke stresses that “Katharine and Edith…were known by [Michael Field] everywhere that it mattered,” to which I would add that they made sure they were known by names other than “Michael Field” everywhere it mattered, too (26). Where Field is an unfitting and disempowering identity at Moulton’s, it is elsewhere—in the domestic space and in the space of authorship—a source of empowerment, experimentation, and self-expansion. The birds whose wings flutter silently in protest at Moulton’s at home are, elsewhere, full of more potent agency as they boldly renegotiate, as Field, issues that normative Victorian society had already ruled on: authorship, sexuality, gender and species. Indeed, Field is a radicalized identity who doesn’t appear to be quite as “complicit” with social norms regarding species, identity, and authorship as scholars have made Bradley and Cooper themselves out to be (Laird 111).
Some feminist scholars have seen Bradley’s and Cooper’s adoption of the singular male pseudonym, Field, as “merely a phenomenon of the past, explicitly disassociated from ‘women and women’s work’ [and] a regrettable instance of writers succumbing to their society’s prohibitions” (Laird 115). Other scholars, however, have argued that female-collaborations are innately feminist or, at the very least represent a “challeng[e] to the status quo” (York 3). Still others, including Donna Haraway, have made the claim that “dog writing”—a genre which Field participates in at the level of animal collaborative authorship and content—is also a distinct “branch of feminist theory, or the other way around” (Haraway Manifesto 3). Living and working in collaboration with companions, particularly animal companions, is one expression of feminist theory’s larger goal to “refus[e] typological thinking, [and] binary dualisms” as well as “relativisms and universalisms of many flavors” (Haraway Manifesto 6). Moreover, collaboration within and across species contributes a rich array of approaches to emergence, process, historicity, difference, specificity, co-habitation, co-constitution, and contingency…Feminist inquiry is about understanding how things work, who is in the action, what might be possible, and how worldly actors might somehow be accountable to and love each other less violently. (Haraway, Manifesto 6-7)

These feminist interpretations of women’s collaboration and dog-writing suggest that something complicated and, perhaps, even radical is facilitated by and through the Field identity—something decidedly more interesting than the adoption of a male pronoun by two women writing in a male-dominated society.

I propose that Field be viewed as a feminist, cross-species collaborative authorship on the account of it being, if not a “human-canine hybrid” then, at least, a “contaminated, impure” identity in a positive, rather than negative sense (Kuzniar 9). As Alice Kuzniar points out in Melancholia’s Dog, “female artists, in particular, use this bastardized [imagined cross-species]
creature to flaunt indecorousness and counteract the humiliation women can be made to experience…at the hands of a judging Other” (9). Indeed, Field accrues feminist significance because the pseudonym is “endowed with the power to transfigure the world through the primacy of language, of poetry” in a way that the women, as Edith Cooper and Katherine Bradley, could not (Thain and Vadillo 23). As Bradley and Cooper explain in a letter to Robert Browning in 1884, as women they would be subjected to and “‘stifled in drawing-room conventionalities’” (Thain and Vadillo 23). The adoption of the Field persona, on the other hand, frees them from the impositions of gender (at least until their female authorship is leaked by Browning) so that they might roam across and penetrate through the gender and other boundaries, including species boundaries, otherwise restraining them (Thain and Vadillo 23). Marjorie Garber notes in *Dog Love* that accounts of fictional and real dogs often involve multiple kinds of boundary transgressions—essentially the same phenomena that Kuzniar articulates as moments of “contamination” or “hybridity” (Garber 129; Kuzinar 9). Many instances of the dog-writing genre not only involve the development of hybrid identities through cross-species collaboration, but also moments of “cross-naming” that disrupt traditional gender conventions. Garber cites instances in which a female dog is called by a male name and referred to using the pronoun “him” or vice versa and muses on this strange trend (129). She notes that this act of naming and referring to dogs in a way that contradicts normative sex and gender conventions is especially puzzling because “[m]ale and female puppies are clearly distinguishable at birth” in way that other domestic animals, like cats, are not (or not as clearly) (Garber 129).51 “If there’s a reason,” for this tendency to cross-name dogs, she suggests, “it’s probably that human love for dogs is

51 One example of this cited by Garber is that the novelist John Cheever re-names his female golden retriever from Tara to Edgar and subsequently refers to the biologically-female dog as a he (129).
bisexual—that dogs occupy an emotional place that is not determined by sex, or gender” (Garber 129).

Characterizing the human’s love for dogs as “bisexual” is not quite so insightful or unproblematic a claim as Garber’s subsequent insight into the potentially sex- and gender-neutral quality of the human-animal relationship. Cross-species relations manifest as one avenue through which we might imagine ways of being and relating that do not so strongly—or at all—foreground culturally constructed ideas about what is proper to a specific gender, even, what behaviors (or names) are proper to or between individuals of the same or different sexes or species. As Garber describes it, the human-dog relationship is one where gender and gendered designations (like gender-specific names) are no longer predictable or predicting qualities; gender is seemingly emptied of its socio-cultural significance. If gender is integral at all to cross-species relationships, the stakes of gender are far less socially and politically meaningful, presenting as arbitrary, malleable, free-floating, and taken on or put off at will. In the context of Field, “to be[come] ‘Michael Field’ was to be reborn” through hybridity, “into language, into poetry,” such that gender, authorship, and other period constructions might fall away, allowing Bradley, Cooper and Whym Chow to construct a shared poetic voice operating outside of normative gender, sexual, and humanistic constraints. Indeed, Whym Chow’s arrival a month after Bradley and Cooper’s move from their family home at Durdans to a new home of their own coincides with the full realization not only of their poetic unity, but their domestic unity as well. Bradley describes the move as a “great chance” for “a new life, a resurrection”—a total

52 Although Bradley and Cooper themselves (and as Field) are able to renegotiate and even abandon normative sexual categories through their lesbianism and incest, it is important to note that their relationship was not unfraught. Prior to establishing a joint home in Richmond in 1899, at which time Whym Chow Chow was introduced into their domesticity and authorship, the women “were clouded by guilts,” particularly in that Cooper perceived her father’s death in 1897 as “a punishment” (Blain). The women, as I discuss later in the chapter, return to this state of guilt after Whym Chow’s death and post-conversion.
re-birth of identity by way of hybridity—that would enable her and Cooper to live “a married life & make our own associations & weave our modes of enjoymont, & be our Best Each to Each in newness” (Thain and Vadillo 265). Although Bradley admits that “[t]he courage we shall need will be gigantic,” her and Cooper find this large stock of domestic and authorial courage in companionship with Whym Chow, with the help of whom they can “penetrate into another kingdom,” one of animals, where they might find a companionship that would not “defeat or mislead” (Thain and Vadillo 264-265). Field’s hybrid, cross-species authorship re-shapes ideas about identity and desire, as well as reciprocity and respect, such that speaking for the other, as well as speaking about the self as a coherent, autonomous, purely human “I,” are shown to be impossibly flawed activities. Instead, the only productive activity possible is to speak with—alongside—others in a recognition that “I” is never truly extricable from the communities of response it inhabits. The “I” of Field’s lyrical poetry embodies the understanding that “I” is not possible without, also, a “you” and “us”.

Field’s collaborative hybridity demystifies authorship in ways troubling to nineteenth-century ideals of the “innate, semi-divine genius” of the solitary, usually male, author (Laird 116). In addition, the Field collaboration challenges deeply entrenched conceptions of animal communication and animal authorship as possible only in symbolic form (an issue foregrounded in the chapter’s first section). Modeling nineteenth-century ideas of authorship, readers and fellow writers, such as the poet Robert Browning, attempted to “divide up [Bradley’s and Cooper’s individual] attributions” to the poetry, only to find that the poetry itself reflects “one person”—one human-animal called Field—with “one voice” (Laird 116). Field poses a challenge not only to those who attempt to assign individual contributions, but also to those who write about them (or him?). Should Field be referred to in the singular? The plural? As he or
she? It’s a seemingly impossible task to write about Field without getting tongue-tied or bogged down in parsing out the complexities of the identity. Field is a knotted cross-species identity and it actively—and productively—resists untangling. The knottiness and entanglement of the Field collaborative identity reflects what Thain and Vadillo characterize as Field’s “seamless whole” (25-26). Interestingly, this seamlessness and wholeness of the Field identity is possible even though there are “pronounced” individual “differences” between the women as well as between them and Whym Chow:

Cooper was passionate about philosophy, Bradley about Greek language and literature…Bradley was robust, forthright, and plumper while Cooper was less confident in public and more fragile and feminine in appearance. (Thain and Vadillo 25-26)

These differences, inter- and intra- species, are preserved in spite of the seamlessness of the collaborative authorship itself and across the full span of the collaboration. As Koestenbaum explains in *Double Talk*, Field’s poetry models freedom from the borders between the individual and the other and, also, from individual possession: “Michael Field frees the love lyric, long a genre of possession, into an ownerless, borderless ‘field’” (174). This freedom, although powerful, comes with potential costs. As Laird explains, the “radically free play,” or the borderless field, of collaboration achieved by Field, is productive precisely because it comes about through an encounter with possible destruction: destruction of the individual personalities at play—even their species and gender identities—but also the potential for the collaboration itself to implode or undergo drastic change due to external factors (e.g., death) (Laird 118). Koestenbaum further articulates the risk inherent to the collaborative authorship as he explains that “Bradley and Cooper…describe collaboration as a murderous contest for possession…but also] thrill at the loss of separate identity” (53). Hence, there is a struggle in the collaborative act as individual members seek power in the relationship while, simultaneously, undergoing a
productive unification with the other members. Rather than one activity superseding the other, both activities happen in simultaneity and with constancy. Individual selves and the collaborative self (Field) engage in a continuous act of transformative exchange that produces “mosaic” poetry through a “plurality of ways of interacting, which add up to something more than” the individuals involved without abolishing the specificities of the individuals themselves in the act (Laird 118).

Responding to the sexologist Havelock Ellis’ inquiry as to “which of the two women had written a certain piece,” the women explain:

As to our work, let no man think he can put asunder what God has joined…the work is perfect mosaic: we cross and interlace like a company of dancing summer flies; if one begins a character, his companion seizes and possesses it; if one conceives a scene or situation, the other corrects, completes, or murderously cuts away. (qtd. in Koestenbaum 53)

In the passage, collaboration is described as a process involving several steps, both harmonious and disharmonious in nature. Collaboration begins with a collaborative form of embodied communication, a “danc[e],” but as Laird and Koestenbaum both independently point out, the dance is followed subsequently by embodied acts of violence, including “seiz[ure],” “possess[ion]” and even “murder[.],” that occur before a literary work that is a “perfect mosaic” can be achieved (Koestenbaum 53; Laird 118). Individual differences between collaborators cause frictions that must be mollified as the collaborators abandon themselves and transform, via authorship, into the persona of Field: a unified authorial voice that is specifically not the voice of the individuals themselves, and whose poetry has the power to transform, if not murder, the individuality of its constituents (Laird 118). As Yopie Prins argues, citing Luce Irigaray’s essay “When Our Lips Speak Together,” Field’s poetry “allows ‘I’ and ‘you’ to come together in a ‘we’ that is neither one nor two [nor three]; it is a relation of ‘unceasing mobility’ like ‘streams
without fixed banks...[a] body without fixed boundaries” (qtd. in Prins 140). It is a body even without fixed species boundaries. Whym Chow, as the final member of the women’s collaborative unit, solidifies Field as a unique identity whose voice is significantly distinct from the voices of the women themselves and whose persona is different from the other names and identities—assumed and given—the women (and Whym Chow) possessed.

Yet, such claims—that animals can be functional non-symbolic collaborators in the kind of “mosaic” and “seamless” collaborative authorships I cite here—are often met with resistance. More often than not, the possibility of non-symbolic cross-species collaboration is dismissed on account of the fact that an animal must necessarily be instrumentalized by its humans within the collaboration itself. Hence, the animal is a passive rather than active agent who is understood as a collaborator only insofar as it acts as a tool or prop for its human collaborators and the predominantly human activity of authorship. Yet, Kuzniar remarks that the instrumentalization of the animal is not a necessary or inherent characteristic of women’s dog-writing. She states that the dog promises not just physical intimacy but the sense that one is recognized in one’s very being; one becomes close to oneself or collectedly calm in the canine presence. Perhaps this tranquility—this peaceful state of integration and reparation—is what defines intimacy and trust, and perhaps it can be best attained not with another human being [but with an animal other]. (108)

The intimate relationship between dog and person, specifically woman, is not necessarily an egotistic or narcissistic relationship in which the animal is a tool or prop to the human, female ego. Instead, dog and woman are in a relationship which respects the boundaries between different subjectivities and which values the animal in and of itself. Such a relationship goes “beyond identification to appreciate the other subject as a being outside the self” and recognizes the animal as having significance beyond reflecting or bolstering the human (Kuzinar 124-5). The cross-species subjects who achieve this arrangement “may alternate in expressing and
receiving” communications and, through this give and take, “cocreates[e] a mutuality that allows for and presumes separateness” (Kuzniar 124-125). The possibility for communication and co-creation across species barriers with a “recognizing other” testifies to the possibility for human-nonhuman authorial collaborations that are mutually beneficial and empowering, rather than narcissistically human-centric (Kuzniar 124-125). Haraway, too, stresses the mutually shaping and empowering relationship of humans and dogs, but does so outside of the psychoanalytic framework employed by Kuzniar:

We have forbidden conversation; we have had oral intercourse; we are bound in telling story upon story with nothing but the facts. We are training each other in acts of communication we barely understand. We are, constitutively, companion species. We make each other up, in the flesh. Significantly to each other, in specific difference, we signify in the flesh a nasty developmental infection called love. This love is an historical aberration and a natural-cultural legacy. (Manifesto 2-3, italics removed)

For Haraway, the human-animal relationship is not static or pre-determined, nor does it—in its best forms—serve the needs and desires of one partner (the human) at the cost of denying the needs and desires of the other partner(s). “There are no pre-constituted subjects and objects,” she remarks, “no single sources, unitary actors, or final ends” (Haraway Manifesto 6). Instead, humans and nonhuman animals, specifically dogs, are companion species defined through a “bestiary of agencies, [and] kinds of relatings” across “scores of time”—single life times as well as the larger space of evolutionary time (Haraway Manifesto 6). Whym Chow, as an embodied being imbued with a distinctively non-human agency, language, and power, is essential to Field as a “companion species” as well as to the alternative stories—the poetry—that Field can tell about the world, about themselves, and their nonhuman others. As Frances Bartkowski explains in Kissing Cousins: A New Kinship Bestiary,

I am perennially caught up by the stories we have been learning to tell, retell, and untell about all our kin. Our kind. We women. We humans. Those we call our
next of kin. Those we claim through ties of blood, flesh, bone...I think we might all agree that we are living through a transition of relatedness, connection, proximity, permeability, and resemblances. Where some delight in the confusion of boundaries, some patrol the borders. (9)

We must attend not only to the narratives and borders that as a society—past and present—we’ve proliferated to explain and define ourselves and our nonhuman others, but also to attempts to “remap our connectedness, our relatedness” (Bartkowski 9). “Bestiaries,” Bartkowski explains, although among “the oldest of literary genres, are ever ready to be made new again. They are fables of the human-animal borderlands,” and these fables often fail to take into account the way that our relationships with nonhuman animals leave a (sometimes scientifically measurable) trace on our bodies and beings (Bartkowski 59). The “stories” we can tell about our nonhuman others and about ourselves radically transform as we begin to recognize and really “speak” about our own multi-species nature, our cross-species kinship, and the power of intimate “[c]onnections across species boundaries” (Bartkowski 19; 59).

Haraway, in When Species Meet, attempts something along the lines of re-writing the traditional “bestiary.” She works, in part, to redefine what it means to be in a relationship of domestication with nonhuman animals, ultimately proposing that we move toward a “more historically accurate and also more powerful” vision of human-animal relations that recognizes that domesticating influences move back and forth across species boundaries to “nurtur[e] better ways to live in a multispecies sociality” (Species Meet 207). Drawing on the work of Belgian Philosopher and psychologist, Vinciane Desperet, she explains:

Despert introduces the notion of ‘anthropo-zoo-genetic practice,’ which constructs both animals and humans in historically situated interrelationships. Emphasizing that articulating bodies to each other is always a political question about collective lives, Desperet studies those practices in which animals and people become available to each other, become attuned to each other, in such a way that both parties become more interesting to each other, more open to surprises, smarter, more ‘polite,’ more inventive. The kind of ‘domestication’
that Desperet explores adds new identities; partners learn to be ‘affected’; they become ‘available to events’; they engage in a relationship that ‘discloses perplexity.’ (*Species Meet* 207)

This notion of domestication, which holds that embodied interaction with nonhuman animals is an essential part of forming a more productive and fruitful identity (or identities), divorces the “personal pronoun who” from “derivative, Western, ethnocentric, humanist personhood for either people or animals” (*Haraway, Species Meet* 208). Instead, the multi- and cross-species “who” at the heart of this kind of domestication is merely a “query proper to serious relationships among…companion species…The question between animals and humans here is, Who are you? and so, Who are we?” (*Haraway, Species Meet* 208). Haraway’s definition of domestication makes it imperative to understand Field as a multi-species identity forged through the cross-species collaborations of Bradley, Cooper, and Whym Chow. Indeed, Bradley, Cooper, and Whym Chow are what Haraway calls “partners-in-the-making” who “coshap[e]” one another rather than being, as many scholars have imagined them, “possessive human or animal individuals whose boundaries and natures are set in advance” (*Species Meet* 208). The Life Sciences article “Cohabiting Family Members Share Microbiota with One Another and with their Dogs,” speaks strongly to Bartkowski’s and Haraway’s insights that the boundaries between kin and non-kin, animal and human, might be more permeable than many of our more traditional species-narratives acknowledge. The article’s authors explain that “the communities of microorganisms found in the intestines of genetically related people” and “non-related adults living in the same household” are more similar,” and, additionally, that “humans tend to share more microbes with individuals, *including pets*, with which they are in frequent contact” (Song et al. 2, my emphasis). This narrative of microbiotic community suggests that traditional ideas about cross-species kinship, interrelatedness, and connectedness need to be reimagined, perhaps
through the concept of “contact zones” (Haraway, *Species Meet* 36). Contact zones, also referenced in my first chapter, are zones of cross-species proximity through which species individuals become radically altered physically—as in the case microbial convergence—and ethically as the presence of the animal other “shapes accountability” (36). Whym Chow shares several contact zones with Cooper and Bradley, zones of domesticity and zones of authorship, a fact suggestive of his convergence with the women and the potential for the kinds of transformative (physically and otherwise) cross-species “accountability” Haraway discusses.

However, as David Banash explains in “To the Other: The Animal and Desire in Michael Field’s *Whym Chow: Flame of Love,*” Whym Chow is regularly read not as an agent of co-creation, but as a grossly over-“sentimentalized pet” (196). Although Banash appears to defend Whym Chow’s meaningfulness to Bradley and Cooper as something more than a pet, he only partially fulfils this impulse. Banash problematically de-subjectivizes Whym Chow by describing him as a passive vehicle which Bradley and Cooper employ for their own ends—a “condition of possibility” that “transform[s] them” (196). Indeed, channeling Deleuze and Guattari’s popular (and popularly misunderstood) concept of becoming-animal, Banash argues that, for Bradley and Cooper, Whym Chow is never recognized as anything other than a symbolic co-author. Banash acknowledges that the “mediating body” of the dog enables the women to “enact” their relationships as authorial and sexual collaborators, but only insofar as the dog as a literal animal can be reduced to an abstract set of “physical and emotional intensit[ies]” which the women can proceed to instrumentalize (196; 198). For Banash, Whym Chow is almost a non-entity a he is posited as so far co-opted by the women that his real, animal presence in their lives appears negligible at best. The desire to view Whym Chow as abstracted—as a mere condition, or possibility existing passively in the service of Bradley and Cooper— is,
ultimately, merely the flipside of the critical perspective that reads Whym Chow only as an overly-sentimentalized pet. Neither rendering of Whym Chow’s relationship to the women acknowledges him as an active and meaningful animal collaborator, while both interpretations disembodied Whym Chow and his animal otherness in order to reinterpret him only as an affective instrument for human beings: Bradley and Cooper. The desire to disarticulate Whym Chow from his own animal body and agency and reinterpret him as a predictably sexual set of affective possibilities precludes an understanding of Whym Chow’s incorporation as un-abstracted animal partner into the ostensibly human, male name of Field.

What such traditional interpretations of Whym Chow fail to register is that Whym Chow’s co-authorship with Bradley and Cooper after 1898 marks the difference between a multitude of names the couple used and policed access to over the years, and even marks a particular moment of literary and personal developmental undergone by the women as collaborators and as the Field persona. The post-1898, almost exclusively poetic, Michael Field and the earlier poet and verse dramatist, Michael Field, hardly seem to be the same “person” at all, and yet the name undergoes change rather than abandonment. “Michael Field” is, significantly, the identity Bradley and Cooper work hardest to protect and sustain as many of the writers’ other pseudonyms are voluntarily retired—they claimed that the “author of Borgia,” for example, was a friend who had died, while the women responded to a late-Victorian literary marketplace that devalued collaboration by retiring their husband-and-wife pseudonyms “Arran and Isla Leigh” (Laird 30; Pionke 24). Even more significantly for my argument, the name is not

53 Animals in the Western cultural imaginary have always been imbued with the possibility for sexual excess and transgression. In the Victorian period many colonized and “primitive” peoples were characterized as rapacious and analogized to non-human animals for this reason. Women, too, have been sexually consolidated with animals in a similar fashion. Hence, for Banash to argue that Whym Chow is distilled into affective intensities of a sexual nature that Bradley and Cooper then use to negotiate their lesbian desire reinscribes a particularly Victorian set of assumptions about sexuality in animals and human-others undergirded by racism, sexism and speciesism.
retired even upon Whym Chow’s death. However, the retention of the Field identity after Whym Chow’s death has radical implications for the collaboration, which deteriorates as Whym Chow is transformed from embodied animal co-author into symbolic animal co-author.

The nature of the imagined authorly persona, Field, becomes so entrenched as a tripartite, cross-species assemblage of Bradley, Cooper, and Whym Chow that the women convert to Catholicism to allow the name to persist after the dog’s death. According to Thain, Bradley and Cooper were inspired to turn to Catholicism for reasons similar to those which led John Gray to turn Catholic priest. Michael Field, she explains,

was an 1890s poet, and like [Gray,] Michael Field was involved in the expression of homoerotic desire. Moreover, when both Gray and Michael Field converted to Catholicism they shared an anxiety to leave behind, cover up or transform a past of which they were ashamed. It might be said that the outcome of the Wilde trials in 1895, which prompted Gray to turn to Rome, was an equivalent moment to the death of Whym Chow that set Bradley and Cooper on their path to Catholic faith.

(170)

It is significant that Whym Chow’s death, in Thain’s estimation, instigates Bradley and Cooper’s turn to Catholicism. Various critics have, using Bradley and Cooper’s letters as evidence, honed in on how, through Catholic conversion, the women were able to imagine a spiritual reunion with Whym Chow in the form of a holy trinity (Laird 33). While the women describe their collaboration with Whym Chow as a “little earthly trinity” during his life, they reinterpolate this relationship as spiritual and symbolic through the concept of the Catholic trinity in the wake of his death (Cauti 183 my emphasis). Accordingly, Bradley celebrates how Catholicism enables an extension of her’s and Cooper’s relationship to the deceased Whym Chow through its inclusion of the “Dead” in its “services” (Cauti 183). Through Catholicism and through the spiritual or symbolic maintenance of Whym Chow’s co-authorship, Bradley and Cooper hope to retain “Field” by transforming their individual “will[s]” into “a creative sufficiency” once
more—this time, however, Whym participates in the Field collaboration only as symbol and metaphor (Cauti 183). Indeed, Whym Chow as a present, living author turns out to be quite a different kind of animal collaborator than the deceased Whym Chow who is co-author only symbolically.

The materiality of the posthumous collection of poetry *Whym Chow Chow: Flame of Love*, authored in Whym Chow’s memory through Field’s spiritual trinity, highlights the tension between Whym Chow as actual co-author versus symbolic co-author and represented metaphor. As though sensing the inadequacy and danger to their collaborative activity of relying on Whym Chow as symbol rather than embodied being, the collection is bound in “russet suede to mimic the dog’s coat” (Thain and Vadillo 184). Critical receptions of the collection are significant because it is typically characterized as parody, while the metaphorization of Whym Chow in the collection inspires responses similar to those associated with Victorian autobiography and its related genres, specifically the Victorian pet elegy. Thain and Vadillo observe that the binding and the poems in the collection are frequently charged with “campness,” and they “le[ave] out” of their own scholarly text some poems in the collection because of “their ludicrous sentimentality” (184). Moreover, they argue that the cover of the collection, the russet colored suede, communicates “a certain whimsicality” and that it serves the purposes of mourning and “aestheti[sizing] the loss” of Whym Chow, rather than recognizing the cover as a serious effort at re-embodying a now disembodied and metaphorized being (184). In such terms, they characterize the literary and material merits of *Whym Chow* as “treading a fine line between genuine sentiment and a self-conscious, quasi-postmodern parody of a long tradition of Victorian pet elegies” (184).

54 See Theresa Mangum’s “Animal Angst: Victorian’s Memorialize their Pets.”
That Bradley and Cooper brought some level of “humorousness” to *Whym Chow* seems somehow essential to critics who view this humorousness as, specifically, a tongue-in-cheek replication of the aesthetic and formal qualities of other critically-dismissed genres of Victorian animal writing (Thain 198). We are faced, according to Thain, who two possibilities: “we are [either] seeing Michael Field gently laughing at Bradley and Cooper’s seriousness, or Bradley and Cooper [are] having a wry smile at Michael Field’s effusions” (Thain 198). Either way—whether it’s Field laughing at Bradley and Cooper or vice versa—for Thain and other scholars it is impossible to view the poetry as worthy of serious consideration if the intentionality behind its production is not, at least in part, a conscious attempt at camp or parody. Clearly, this interpretation suggests, the pet elegy and related Victorian animal literary forms are suspect; ripe for humor and critique and largely “inappropriate” material for “serious consideration” (Thain 197). As Kuzniar articulates in *Melancholia’s Dog*, the sense that animals, and dogs in particular, are not serious or scholarly subjects is a claim waged against fictions like *Whym Chow* in addition to contemporary scholarship on the topic. Indeed, the “subject of dogs is presumed to be unfit for serious scholarly investigation: it is held to be sentimental, popular, and trivial, both by the academic and by the general lay population” (Kuzinar1). As in the case of the Victorian animal autobiography, I insist here that we shift our appraisal of the materiality and poetic merits of *Whym Chow* away from critical dismissals and take the collection—the poetry and its furry-materiality—seriously as staging a tension between symbolic and non-symbolic animal co-authorship. *Whym Chow* in its material form (the suede cover) and its gesture toward Victorian pet elegy, I argue, is clearly a function of Bradley and Cooper’s profound and disturbing uncertainty, captured most prominently in “Trinity,” regarding Whym Chow’s status as a present or symbolic, active or passive, co-author.
Whym Chow’s russet suede cover is a visual and tactile reminder of Whym Chow’s animal body, and the appeal of the cover to the senses suggests that his symbolic resurrection is not enough. It must be accompanied by some approximation of his physical body and some capacity for physical or other forms of embodied, rather than metaphorical, significance and interaction. It is as though Bradley and Cooper, as they look at the cover, want desperately to be gazing at—and even touching—the fiery red face of Whym Chow and want, in turn, for him to be gazing at and touching them back. And, it is as though in holding the collection in their arms, Bradley and Cooper want to feel in the coarse, animal skin resting against their own human flesh something approximating Whym Chow’s body: his “coat a web of treasure manifold!” (“VII” line 6). Indeed, several of the poems in the Whym Chow Chow collection stress the ability of the speaker to interact with Whym Chow as a physically embodied presence. In some of the most frequently discussed and anthologized poems from the Whym Chow Chow collection, poems “IV,” “VI,” “VIII. Out of the East,” “IX,” and “XII,” the images of Whym Chow’s eyes are invoked as the speaker yearns to gaze at and be, in return, gazed back at by Whym Chow (“IV” 4). Whym Chow’s eyes are situated as a powerful and dynamic source of cross-species communication as, at different moments, they speak joy (“IV” 14-15), fierceness (“VI” 36), and lust (“VIII” 7). It is only by gazing at and capturing Whym Chow’s gaze that these states of being and emotion are caught by and communicated to his human others, including the speaker, a possibility that his literal absence in death forecloses. Death forecloses, too, Whym Chow’s ability to exercise his voice. The speaker in poem “VI” begs Whym Chow, “O Answer! (15), while in poem “IX” the speaker reflects that Whym Chow must “watch” seemingly in silence from “above” rather than “sigh[]” alongside her as she waits for her absent domestic partner to return (46; 25).
Whym Chow is more than his gaze or voice, however. In poems “IV,” “IX,” “VI,” and “XXI” the speaker forcibly embodies Whym Chow Chow as a being “so often touched” (“IV” 4) and “caress[ed]” (“XXI” 13), focusing on tactile qualities such as his “furred ears” (“IX” line 5) and “gold-furred state” (“VI” 42) which communicate a desire to touch Whym Chow in his absence. Moreover, in poems “XXI,” “VI,” and “IX,” the speaker provides a meticulous account of various activities Whym Chow, as an embodied living being, is capable of performing—all of which are, ostensibly, impossible activities for the symbolic Whym Chow of the women’s Trinity. In poem “XXI” the speaker begins each stanza with a domestic activity that Whym Chow plays an intimate and integral part in before his death. Some of the activities appear mundane—“Sleeping together” (1) and “Eating together” (15)—some are entirely autonomic—“Breathing together” (27)—and absolutely none of the activities inherently requires the presence or collaboration of a nonhuman animal. That each activity listed at the start of each stanza is followed by the term “together,” however, points to the importance of Whym Chow to all aspects—mundane and exceptional—of the speaker’s existence. In Whym Chow’s absence, in the lack of togetherness, even the most automatic activities, like breathing, become strained and require profound, conscious effort. And, in some way, each of the activities once performed with Whym Chow become, in his absence, both lacking, and strangely new: for the speaker, sleep becomes strangely stagnant, still and silent as Whym Chow is no longer there to “re-cur[l]” his body on the bed, nor proffer up sleepy “sigh[s],” nor “snuffl[e] by the bed” (9) in the hopes of a “caress” (13). Whym Chow’s death imparts a profound sense of loss and uncertainty as the speaker longs not only to touch an embodied being that is no more, but also attempts to re-learn how to live in the absence of the intimate animal companion whose every embodied gesture,
habit, and activity has become integral to how the speaker defines the most basic units of life: sleeping, eating, breathing, and even love.

Whym Chow’s limitations as a symbolic animal being versus an embodied, interacting life-companion are further highlighted in poem “VI” by the fact that his body is the primary medium through which he and the speaker communicate. The speaker of the poem invokes a series of Whym Chow’s bodily attributes and activities to reveal them as units of an embodied language that speak a greeting. The “beating” of Whym Chow’s “fine, little feet” (25) as they “danc[e] round and round” (19) communicate a “rage of welcome” (17) as an absent member of the domestic returns. Whym Chow’s form of greeting and welcoming entails a series of bodily manipulations—“slouch[ed]” ears (26), beating tail (28), and “stretched paws” (31)—in addition to the production of certain sounds—“sea-bird” like cries (30)—accompanied by a desire to “touch and smell” (33) the source of his “ecstasy” (34). Whym Chow’s body and its behaviors are consistent and legible to the speaker who has learned, through intimate and constant contact with Whym Chow, how to read his body. The speaker is so attuned to Whym Chow’s body and the different ways it communicates information that s/he can discern and describe how Whym Chow manipulates his body and activity to communicate vastly different messages. In poem “VI,” which details Whym Chow’s use of his body to greet his returning domestic companion, his embodied communicative behavior is quite different than in poem “IX.” In this poem, Whym Chow and the speaker are waiting for the uncertain return of their domestic companion, the difference in situations—greeting versus waiting for a domestic companion—ensures that his behavior is quite different. Here, Whym Chow’s ears are at attention, “straining” (line 6) and “intent…with such emotion” (5). He “sighs” (25) pathetically and with longing as his paws no
longer dance and stretch, but “questio[n]” the companion’s return by an impatient pawing or pacing (12).

Significantly, Whym Chow’s mode of bodily communicating his anxiety and distress at his domestic companion’s absence and his long for her return is mirrored by the speaker who mimics the actions of Whym Chow’s feet as well as his sighs: “My feet, thine eager paws, questioning whether / The loved One would come back to us” (12-13) and “O Chow, the sighs, our sighs!” (25). In these moments, Whym Chow’s language of embodiment not only makes itself legible to the speaker, but even penetrates across the species barrier to manifest in his human companion: Whym Chow Chow’s sighs become “our sighs!” (25). This convergence of the speaker and Whym Chow both toward a shared embodied language points to the power of Whym Chow’s body: it cannot only be read and interpreted by the human gaze, but is a model human beings, like the speaker, use to learn and practice the language of embodiment alongside Whym Chow.

In the poem “Trinity,” Whym Chow is situated as integral to romantic relations, becoming rescripted not as embodied facilitator of domestic harmony, but as love’s symbol. Whym Chow not only loves and is loved by the women, the poem states, but their love exists as a product of a collective, cross-species “trinity” (4). The love expressed in the poem is colored as a spiritual, transcendent love through religious imagery, speaking to the deep and intimate communion necessary between the human and nonhuman members for producing love in its fullest, most complete form. The multiplicity, rather than individuality, at the heart of the love shared by Bradley, Cooper, and Whym Chow is stressed when the “I” of the poem states in the first line, “I did not love him for myself alone” (1). Love is not an individual act, but a product of a collective group agency which is initiated by Whym Chow, “An animal—with aim” (15)
that comes to possess and, subsequently, propel the speaker’s heart toward a perfect spousal union with her same-sex domestic partner. Whym Chow, in the trappings of the dove—an important religious image—is situated by the speaker as the agent that makes the trinity’s love possible: Whym Chow unconsciously assumes the seat of the triad’s agency by being an “animal—with aim” as well as being the individual through whom love is “interchange[d]” and shared across the members of the triad (18). Whym Chow is a “strange / Unconscious Bearer of Love’s interchange” (17-18) as he becomes the agent responsible for transforming a more normative set of individual relations into a cross-species union. There is something unusual about the union the speaker invokes: it transcends the bounds of society and culture and is both “strange” and more “perfect” (17) because, through Whym Chow, it becomes less beholden to the strictures of the so-called “properly” human. Even as the lyrics extol Whym Chow’s power to consolidate and transform the love of the speaker into something greater than itself, however, the problem of his absence as an embodied being is dwelled upon. He is referred to, first, in the past tense as having been “loved,” while the speaker and the third partner in the trinity both occupy the present tense. As the poem continues into its second stanza, the speaker attempts to remedy the problem of time and space plaguing the relationship with Whym Chow and the third unnamed subject of the poem’s trinity. To do this, the speaker invokes Whym Chow as a spirit or “symbol” (17) so that he might be made to occupy the present alongside the other members of the trinity. Yet, even as Whym Chow is transported into the present tense as metaphor, a “creature of Love’s flame” (10), there is a nagging sense that something about the quality of love he can receive and give has been lost. As in the poems discussed above, the first stanza of “Trinity” presents Whym Chow at the height of his power: he is a present corporeal being who participates and nurtures love which has “no blasphemy” (3) through activity—“comfort[ing] the
moan” (7) and instilling “tenderest calm” through his “Presence” (9). In the second stanza, by contrast, Whym Chow’s capacity for this quality of activity and agency is invoked only to be negated as the speaker comes to terms with Whym Chow’s shift from living animal agent to “thing of fire” (12), “Unconscious Bearer” (18), and “symbol” (17).

It is almost as if, in losing Whym Chow’s embodied presence, the women lose the key to understanding and navigating their own authorship and desire. As Haraway notes in *When Species Meet*,

> The flow of entangled meaningful bodies in time—whether jerky and nervous or flaming and flowing, whether both partners move in harmony or painfully out of synch or something else altogether—is communication about relationship, the relationship itself, and the means of reshaping relationship and so its enacters. (26)

 Whereas Whym Chow’s presence was once the key to Bradley and Cooper’s experimentation with and openness to the permeability of boundaries and otherness, Whym Chow’s death forecloses their ability to continue to “reshape” themselves through interaction with him. As a result, Bradley and Cooper’s relationship is unalterably changed—both their working relationship as collaborators and their living relationship as spouses. Whym Chow’s death, and a doomed desire to recapture his animal form, forces the women to find a new ledger, a new kind of relationship—the Catholic church—through which to interpret themselves and to interpret him as metaphor. Cooper, in *Works and Days*, writes in February 1911—years after Whym Chow’s death—that “We cannot gain any ring of cheer unless we all speak to a dog” (Thain and Vadillo 290). Faced with cancer and with the knowledge that she and Bradley are living very different, perhaps less easy, lives than during Whym Chow’s lifetime, Cooper invokes the introduction of another dog to “speak to” as potentially transformative. Animal otherness—the otherness of Whym Chow but, also, the otherness of the dog Cooper imagines but never sees realized—has
the ability to open the women up to exploring and rewriting the boundaries that have snuck back into their lives. Cooper recognizes what Haraway claims “is what most of us don’t know we don’t know how to do”: namely, to “see who the dogs are and hear what they are telling us, not in bloodless abstraction, but in one-on-one relationship, in otherness-in-connection” (Haraway *Manifesto* 45).

If “the Trinitarian theology,” allowed Whym Chow to be spiritually reunited with the women, and “provided…the must fully developed point of reconciliation or assimilation between their old life and their new faith,” then it’s clear that Whym Chow’s assimilation into the “bloodless abstraction” of which Haraway speaks alters the Field collaboration significantly (Thain 186; Haraway *Manifesto* 45). As Thain explains, loss of Whym Chow and the women’s subsequent turn to Catholicism (meant to retain spiritual union with Whym Chow) precipitates drastic alterations in the women’s living and working lives. This link between Whym Chow’s death, the women’s conversion, and their increasing inability to reconcile their authorship and sexuality points to the otherwise often ignored importance of Whym Chow as something more than a grossly sentimentalized domestic pet or symbolic marker: he is an animal co-author. In fact, even as they attempt to metaphorically and materially capture Whym Chow in their collection *Whym Chow: Flame of Love*, neither the red suede cover of the collection—meant to mirror the color and feel of Whym Chow’s body—nor the use of Whym Chow as a symbolic co-author proves sufficiently powerful at capturing and reproducing the experience of collaborating with Whym Chow as a living, corporeal, and communicative being. This has profound repercussions for Field as a collaborative venture. “Although both [Bradley and Cooper] published under the Michael Field signature,” after Whym Chow’s death, it is clear that the collaborative unit forged with and through Whym Chow has undergone drastic change (Thain
Poems of Adoration was written mostly by Cooper, and Mystic Trees by Bradley” (Thain 173). These two largely single-author works “were designed as counterparts, which would form a complete whole when united with the specially made black leather strap” (Thain 173). No longer one substance, one author, the women have clearly forged a new mode of collaboration that, lacking internal binding, requires external binding—by a black strap. “This new kind of collaboration clearly still entailed close involvement with each other’s work, including shared proof-reading and editing,” cites Thain, it “is not an abandoning of literary collaboration, but it certainly does seem to reflect the greater distance between the two women that religion, at least ostensibly, established” (173). Clearly, there is something particular, profound, and transformative about Whym Chow as a literal animal being—a being that can be touched and who touches, who gazes and returns the gaze, and who can communicate the positive power of intimacy across the boundaries of otherness and difference.

Moreover, as Catholic poets, they must, like Gray, burn the pagan, lesbian poetics of their past, or they must undergo the violence of over-writing that poetry with new, religiously-determined meaning and language. And, as lovers, they must be willing to reinterpret and sublimate their desire. Bradley and Cooper must learn to sublimate their lesbian desire through invocation of a more acceptable male, Christian homoerotics. Out of their poetic celebrations of the pagan, Sapphic lyric, the women must carve a new poetry that pays homage to a masculine poetic tradition of loving Christ, which “concentrate[s] on [his] sensual body”: “‘naked and bleeding, disfigured and transfigured, wounded and wounding’” (Thain 183). As Thain explains in Poetry, Aestheticism, and the Fin de Siècle, the kiss “‘softer than a Bridegroom ever knew,’” featured in the poem “Blessed Hands,” speaks to a transformation in the women’s spousal relations, as their love is first and foremost defined by the divine “touch of the holy
spirit” while, only secondarily, evoking an embrace between women (183). The women attempt to revise and rewrite their poetry, succeeding in turning *Wild Honey* into a church-approved, if rather confused, tribute to the “same symbols and images that used to signify their pagan desire” only written “over with a new religious significance” (Thain 172).

If Thain is correct—if there is any reconciliation between the women’s domestic and authorial past and their turn to Catholicism after Whym Chow’s death—it is only a partial reconciliation at best. Bradley and Cooper as Field can only inadequately recall a past shared as spouses and collaborators authoring and living alongside Whym Chow.  “There is no doubt,” Thain argues, “that the death of Whym Chow Chow acquired a much greater significance for the two women than it might initially seem to merit because it came to symbolise a crisis of identity” (187).  Thain and others are tempted to articulate this “crisis of identity” as, really, about how late-century medicine was beginning to conceptualize homosexuality as disease or disorder.  As such, Bradley and Cooper are imagined as sublimating the crisis of medical intervention into their sexuality through Whym Chow’s death and their turn to Catholicism.  However, what this interpretation neglects is understanding Whym Chow’s loss as a legitimate and transformative crisis in and of itself.  Field, post-Whym Chow, no longer knows how to “talk to” and with animals.  Instead, Michael Field, as first Whym Chow, then Cooper and, finally, Bradley decease, knows, instead, only how to talk *about* animals as metaphors and disembodied spirits.

**IV. EXCEEDING THE SYMBOLIC:**

**COLLABORATIVE ANIMAL AUTHORSHIP**
In the introduction to this chapter I made a distinction between forms of chimerical collaborative authorship on the basis of three criteria: whether the collaborative product is (1) signed using a co-signature, (2) resists division into individual contributions, and (3) challenges societal expectations about identity, communication or authorship through collaborative structure, literary form, or content. These three criteria are at the heart of a distinction I make between speaking or writing as and for an animal co-author, as in the Victorian animal autobiography, versus writing or speaking with that animal, as in the case of the poetry of Michael Field.

Per my definition of chimerical collaborative authorship above, the Victorian animal autobiography meets some but not all criteria for speaking with rather than for or as the animal. One criterion that is not met is the cross-species co-signature, as animal voice is represented in ways that trouble the anthropomorphic form of the Victorian animal autobiography, but this problematization occurs only at the level of animal representation. The animal itself is never acknowledged as an actual co-author and collaborator, a reality implicit in the categorization of such texts as animal biography rather than autobiography, even as the animal subject is positioned within the text as an autobiographer. Katherine Bradley, Edith Cooper and their dog, Whym Chow, more fully embody the collaborative criteria expressed above, including the use of a co-signature: the Field pseudonym. Whym Chow is integral to the Field identity and the Field collaboration in ways that both reaffirm a Victorian tradition of metaphorical and anthropomorphic animal representation after his death, but more significantly frustrate this tradition. As demonstrated, Whym Chow’s saliency as an animal author is dependent on his function as a living, non-symbolic and non-anthropomorphic co-author engaged in an act of “becoming-with” Bradley and Cooper as domestics and as poets; his saliency and the
collaboration itself degrades upon his death as he is refigured more traditionally as a symbolic author and represented metaphorical animal subject.

While the traditional Victorian animal autobiography and the life-writing poetics of Field are differently positioned in relation to my definition of collaboration, above, I insist that the animal autobiography’s propensity for representing animal voice—speaking for the animal—rather than speaking with an actual animal collaborator should not be interpreted as a judgment value about the “goodness” or “badness” of the individual texts I discuss, or the genre more generally. Instead, throughout the chapter I have insisted that differences in the way animal co-authorship and voice are executed in the animal autobiography and Field’s poetic life writing speak not only to the challenges of animal authorship, but also to the potential benefits of seeing past these challenges to explore moments of represented or actual animal voice. I argue that actual or represented moments of animal voice in *Black Beauty* and *Flush*, as well as in the poetry of Field, productively problematize anthropomorphism and human communicative authority over the animal and, in so doing, fulfill the third and perhaps most important characteristic of the chimerical authorial collaboration: challenging societal expectations about identity, communication or authorship through collaborative structure, literary form, or content.

Hence, in this chapter I depart from two dominant critical interpretations these texts, first the trend of interpreting these texts metaphorically and, second, the trend of critically dismissing such texts on the basis of anthropomorphism. I demonstrate that both critical responses are inadequate through close readings of Woolf’s *Flush* and Sewell’s *Black Beauty*, both of which texts foreground crucial tensions between the literary form of the animal autobiography and its sub-types and the forms of animal communication and reception occurring intra- and extra-textually.
In order to explore the concept of an animal audiobiographer who speaks for itself through audiorecordings, I depart from the Victorian to discuss two contemporary texts, the novel *Animal’s People* by Indra Sinha, and the experimental music album *One Pig* by Matthew Herbert. Both contemporary texts feature textually and non-textually mediated animal audiobiographers. This animal auto- or audio-biographer has non-metaphoric agency, like Bull’s-eye, Grip, and the beetle discussed in my first two chapters, while still being a co-author, like Flush and Black Beauty. Although technologies of sound allow productive new expressions of the animal and animal authorship, I explore how they are also potentially technologies of animal suppression; first, because the trace of the human co-author is in some ways made less apparent while, in addition, the technology of recording risks disembobying and distancing the animal in ways that reduce the likelihood of human ethical responses to that animal.

While the audiobiographer risks being abstracted by the very technologies of sound that facilitate the animal author’s non-anthropomorphic self-expression, I argue that the favorable climate for work in the digital humanities dovetails with, in particular, the idea of a digital humanist project in which many representational technologies—including sound, text, moving and static image—may be combined into one digital textual space to create what I call a “chimeric animal autobiography.” I speculate that the multi-media, rather than purely text or
sound–based, animal autobiographer produced through the chimeric animal autobiography is capable of capturing and communicating animal voice and embodiment in a way more likely to produce the forms of ethical response desired from Animal’s People and One Pig.

I. TAPE ONE: AUDIO-BIOGRAPHY IN ANIMAL’S PEOPLE

In “The Victorian Aura of the Recorded Voice,” John Picker notes that Mark Twain was no fan of committing his narrative voice to audio record. He “confessed to William Dean Howells in April 1891 that he had given up trying to dictate his latest novel…into a phonograph” on account of the fact that this early medium for audio recording was impossible to “‘write literature with’” (Picker 769). Impossible to write with because, according to Twain, “‘it hasn’t any ideas & it hasn’t any gift for elaboration, or smartness of talk, or vigor of action, or felicity of expression, but is just matter-of-fact, compressive, unornamental, & as grave & unsmiling as the devil’” (Picker 769). Twain was one of many authors and laypersons during the period who saw the phonograph and its recordings as more pernicious than beneficial: the recorded audio might “delight and affirm those recording their voices, [but] it could also mock and betray them. Endless repetition of a disembodied voice had the potential to distort even the most benign speech into a monotonous rant that sounded diabolical, perhaps even terrifying” (Picker 769).

Picker cites one audience member at an early demonstration of the phonograph as saying that “‘It sounds more like the devil every time,’” a notion that anyone who has heard an original phonograph recording can sympathize with due to their quality (Picker 769). Although perhaps a failed venture for Twain and others of his literary generation due to technological constraints,
with ever improving recording technologies the possibility of capturing human and nonhuman
self-narrative in the form of audio (rather than text) is an appealing option for consideration.

In fact, sound is an increasingly popular area of intellectual work for experimental artists,
social scientists (anthropologists, for example), and humanists (Literature and Film Studies
scholars, for example). As Jonathon Sterne explains in his chapter “Sonic Imaginations,”

Today, there is a boom in writings on sound by authors in the humanities and
social sciences… Major interdisciplinary journals…have devoted special issues to
sound. Professional associations in almost every field of the human sciences have
devoted panels to sound in one form or another and some now have sound-related
divisions or interest groups. (1-2)

Employing the term “Sound studies,” Sterne broadly defines this area of study as an
“interdisciplinary” endeavor that takes sound as its “analytical point of departure or arrival” (2).
Sound studies scholars “analyz[e] both sonic practices and the discourses and institutions that
describe them” in order to perform the function of “redescrib[ing] what sound does in the
human”—and, I would add, the nonhuman—“world” (Sterne 2). This involves “reach[ing]
across registers, moments and spaces,” as well as “think[ing] across disciplines and traditions”
(Sterne 2). Sound studies as an analytical focus has broad relevance, as it “explores cities; tarries
with the history of philosophy, literature or ideas; or critiques relations of power, property or
intersubjectivity. It is a global phenomenon as well” (Sterne 2). In this section I focus on a sub-
field of sound studies, acoustemology, associated with the discipline of anthropology and
referred to as acoustic ecology in other disciplines.

Acoustemology is anthropologist Steve Feld’s term for the study of “every day” ways of
“sonic[ally]… knowing and being in the world” (Feld and Brenneis 462). Feld notes in an
interview that traditional anthropological texts are not only less well-equipped to explore the
“space between language and music,” but they also tend to omit so-called background noises
occurring alongside more formal interactions with human research participants (462-3). Both the poetic, even musical, sounds of language and the background noises which cannot find full expression in traditional textual anthropology enrich understanding of the “everyday lived experience” of the group being researched, especially in the case of “people who live in intensely rich aural environments” (461). By capturing the sounds of language and local environments with a greater degree of robustness, anthropological recordings not only differently capture local human experience, but also capture something beyond the human component of the original research: whole ecologies.

In one example, Feld is able to “[s]imultaneously and in sequence” record the “layering of speaking voices, the birds and ambience, the overlapping of axes, trees falling, and the whooping, whistling, yodeling, and singing [of] different snatches of song” (464). The example significantly captures what Feld calls “sociality in sound” or “acoustic copresence,” with the “relationship between people, the forest, voice, and sound” captured in only twelve minutes of recording (464-5). The overlap or copresence of human, animal, and other environmental sounds is audible and “sensuous,” Feld explains, culminating in something “considerably more abstract and difficult to convey in a written ethnography” (465). For Feld, acoustemology is a necessary companion to more traditional ethnography because it not only adds a new dimension to anthropological methodology, but also changes the possible forms that the final product of the ethnography can take, as Feld asserts that text-based ethnography can be complemented by or substituted with recorded audio ethnographies (462-3).

Sinha’s Animal’s People lends itself forcefully and immediately to the analytic of sound (sound studies) and, in particular, the sub-discipline of acoustemology. Prior even to page one,

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55 Another more well-known example is the “World Soundscape Project” which “collects sounds from around the world and compiles them in geography-based sound files...[adding] greater depth to that relatively untouched third dimension of the classic sound taxonomy: music, voice, and sound effects” (Hilmes 116).
Sinha instructs readers in the proper way to consume the text by explaining the method of story collection and telling enacted in its pages:

This story was recorded in Hindi on a series of tapes by a nineteen-year-old boy in the Indian city of Khaufpur. True to the agreement between the boy and the journalist who befriended him, the story is told entirely in the boy’s words as recorded on the tapes. Apart from translating to English, nothing has been changed. Difficult expressions which turned out to be French are rendered in correct spelling for ease of comprehension. Places where a recording was stopped and later recommenced on the same tape are indicated by gaps. The recordings are of various lengths, and the tapes are presented in the order of numbering. Some tapes contain long sections in which there is no speech, only sounds such as bicycle bells, birds, snatches of music and in one case several minutes of sustained and inexplicable laughter. (Editor’s Note)

The text, then, is implicated as being something other than it appears: it is not actually or only a textually based novel or autobiography, but is a technologically evolved (because recorded) embodiment of a much older tradition. Indeed, Animal’s oral narrative appears to harken back to an unsophisticated, largely pre-textual era in which the transmission of ideas had not yet evolved from the primacy of verbal communion into what we imagine to be a more reliable and permanent form of transmission: print.\(^{56}\) However, Animal’s absolute insistence on oral communication is actually an indicator of his sophistication and savviness as an autobiographer. Animal, “[t]rue to the agreement between the boy and the journalist who befriended him,” is able to retain an increased level of control over his spoken story, as well as achieving the upper-hand over the journalist who desires it—both of which would be impossible if the story were immediately translated into English (the journalist’s native language) and put into print. As

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\(^{56}\) Put in the simplest terms, Derrida explains in *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* that a letter or postcard at the point and place of its creation is both the same (materially) and not the same (semiotically) as it passes through a series of postal stages. Throughout these postal stages, the I who writes becomes divided into multiple selves, including the self at the time the letter was written (which is always already a past self when the letters is read) in addition to the actual self at the time of reading versus the self perceived by the reader. Moreover, the letter is subject to several types of indeterminacy: the problem of uncertain delivery, as well as its openness to being read and subsequent re-read by any combination of intended or unintended recipients who read the postcard or letter not as a self-contained text or unity, but in relation to any number of internal or external glosses, for example the picture on the front of a postcard. Hence, writing does not accrue privilege over speech on the basis of its ability to fix meaning.
Animal crassly puts it, “If you want my story, you’ll have to put up with how I tell it,” and how Animal “tell[s] it” is as a critique (2). Animal’s mechanism for storytelling, oral recording, allows him to critique the form of storytelling and the kind of story the journalist, who “[s]peaks no Hindi,” expects (4). Without his translator, Chunaram, editing moments of critique, personal abuse, and profanity out to appease his client, Animal can and does “say anything,” including reciting a “filthy song,” regardless of whether it is part of the story the journalist wants to hear or not (5).

Given the methodologies, technologies, and practical ethics of Animal’s communication evoked as early as the editor’s note, perhaps the most proper way to read the novel would be to read it aloud complete with the pauses, breaks, and “tape” demarcations Sinha utilizes in place of the traditional organizational markers of a novel: volumes and chapters. The importance of listening to the text as constellations of voice and sound, rather than merely reading it as text, is stressed not only in the novel’s organization by tapes and pauses in narrative telling, but in the attention Sinha pays to non-linguistic sounds in the novel which occur within the speaking-environment of the narrator, Animal. The “bicycle bells, birds, snatches of music and in one case several minutes of sustained and inexplicable laughter” Sinha references in the “Editor’s Note” attest to the comprehensive benefits of capturing story and biography in their oral form. These extraneous, non-linguistic sounds represent a particular ecological community; a community of sound that is sometimes at the fore and sometimes at the background of the narrative. This ecological community of sound is populated by the inanimate (objects like “bicycles”), the animal (“birds”), the musical, isolated emotion (“inexplicable laughter”), and the more familiar languages of the narrator Animal and Animal’s people. While many of these sounds appear extraneous at first, they offer a vitally important insight made possible only
through Animal’s orally-transmitted, recorded text: Animal’s existence and the story he authors cannot be genuinely isolated from his environmental and ecological situatedness; his life is not truly communicable as just a single droning voice on a tape recorder any more than it can be communicated as just a string of interpreted print text. Animal is bound up in a series of reverberating relationships and interconnections—connections with other people, animals (such as his canine companion, Jara, or bed-fellow, the scorpion), and inanimate materials—all of which define him and the story he tells, even on the literal level of their interruption of, or accompaniment to, his voice on the tape recordings. Animal’s oral narrative, like his life, is inherently collaborative.

Animal resists becoming the spoken-for autobiographical subject whose identity of political and ideological subjugation might be appropriated by a more politically and ideologically stable other, as represented by the Western, English-speaking journalists. Journalists mine the stories of Animal and his people for material that will appeal to the values of their Western audience, including the values of “rights, law, justice” (3). Despite the lofty terms and concurrent aims undergirding the journalist’s impulse to capture Animal’s story, Animal recognizes that his story is in danger of doing what so many of his compatriots’ stories have done before when transformed into a “book” and disseminated through the Western world: delivering no “big things” and not “chang[ing] anything for the better” (3). The failure of these books to change anything is a problem of narrative method, translation, and the constraints of genre and audience. Animal both recognizes and addresses these problems in a masterful way through his insistence that his narrative be transmitted orally, via recording, and without initial translation. If Animal finds the journalists predictable, he is not, himself, a predictable Khaupuri storyteller. Indeed, what, to the unpredictable Animal, is a “filthy song: I may be just
a twisted runt / But I can sniff your mother’s cunt” is, to the trained and expectant interpretive gaze of the predictable journalist, “a poem, probably a traditional song of mourning” (5-6). Animal finds the predictability of the journalists laughable, as expressed by a “writhing agony” of “violent shudders” he displays as he explains that his journalist is “like all the others, come to suck our stories from us, so strangers in far off countries can marvel there’s so much pain in the world” (5). Animal remarks on the “greed” with which the journalist surveys himself and his home, stating that

I could feel your hunger. You’d devour everything. I watched you taking it in, the floor of earth, rough stone walls, dry dungcakes stacked near the hearth, smoke coiling in the air like a sardaji doing his hair. When you saw me your eyes lit up. Of course, you tried to hide it. Instantly you became all solemn. (4)

In this moment, the journalist’s desire to appropriate Animal and his story is both explicitly acknowledged and rejected by Animal, who speaks his outrage and denial as part of his story. In response to the appropriating gaze of the journalist, who looks at Animal “in a ghurr-ghurr kind of way, as if [his] eyes were buttons and [Animal’s] were button-holes,” Animal commands control through recourse to Hindi, a language which the journalist is excluded from, and by threatening not to speak (4). The journalist’s confident, encouraging response of a “thumbs-up” and subsequent smiling and nodding is rewarded by Animal’s silence: “silent, then I’m. After some time I’ve joined another silence to the first” (4). Animal self-consciously utilizes silence to invert the power dynamics of the situation, such that the journalist is no longer assured of his story and, instead, wonders (surmises Animal) why did “this boy stop[] talking” (4)?

That Animal provokes the journalist to transform from confidently greedy to anxious and questioning demonstrates a reality that the journalist doesn’t initially understand: the journalist is at Animal’s mercy; no amount of “devour[ing]” looks or intense “gazing” at Animal will prove an adequate substitute for Animal’s speech, which he gives and withholds with impunity, and
which often diverges from the journalist’s desired topic (4). Animal’s silence, perversity and personal attacks on the journalist are all recognitions that, given the opportunity, the journalist will communicate his “spun” version of Animal’s story in the service of meeting generic expectations as well as the journalist’s audience’s consumptive desires: whether entertainment, cultural voyeurism, some form of political protest, or a mix of all three. They are recognition, too, of the power of Animal’s words and his voice, which he realizes are in danger of being appropriated and replaced by those of a Western journalist for a Western audience. Even in the (seemingly rare) moments when Animal’s own words align with those of the journalist, he insists that they don’t mean the same thing: “Those words [rights, law, justice] sound the same in my mouth as in yours but they don’t mean the same” (3). Who says the words and how they are said matter as much, Animal maintains, as the strict definitions of the words themselves: words, rather than being simply and reliably definitional, aggregate some of their meaning from the situation, experience, and voice of the individual who speaks them.

Animal concludes his critique of the journalist’s trade of seeking native stories for the Western print market as he proclaims that, “On that night it was poison, now it’s words that are choking us” (3). That words, like the industrial poisons still emanating from the ruins of Khaupur’s abandoned (Western) industrial factory—the “Kampani’s factory”—are now “choking” Animal and his people is a poignant irony (3). The very proliferation of words and stories gathered and produced by the journalists for mass consumption by Western audiences do not serve their intended purposes: the implicit aim of inaugurating change, including making Western industrial outfits culpable on a global scale for their activity by giving voice to “small person[s]” (3). Instead, this genre of native testimony profoundly silences, as if by poison, the actual voices of the narrative subjects it intends to grant agency and voice to, as their own voices
get replaced by the generic constraints of journalism, the language of the West, and the language of Western democratic idealism: “rights, law, justice” (3). Although the journalists have, according to Animal, “turned us Khaufpuris into storytellers,” he insists that, when traditional journalistic conventions dictate the act of storytelling, the product amounts to very little (5). In fact, the product of such journalistic endeavor is “always the same story,” as though the only story worth Western exposure has been preordained and all other possible stories are redacted or violently excerpted to emulate a prefabricated narrative product (5). Animal refuses to be “chok[ed]” a second time in the act of self-expression by refusing to “tell those stories” over again to the journalist to no good effect (3; 5).

Although Chunaram chastises Animal for taking the liberty of telling a story quite different from the “same story” the journalist initially wants, both he and Animal are incorrect in assuming that taking this freedom means an end to the journalist’s interest (5). Chunaram’s, absence from Animal’s actual act of oral narration to the tape recorder creates an opportunity for Animal’s alternative narrative. Chunaram characterizes Animal’s story as monetarily worthless “‘foul-mouthed shit’” and a fit of “‘madness’” that, as a translator, he would resist and perhaps even alter, while Animal’s tape recorder enables the story’s telling (6-7). The story turns out to be worth the journalist’s interest and money: “‘I admit I was wrong’” Chunaram explains to Animal, “‘it has done the trick now I’m thinking it’s this journalis who’s cracked’” (6-7). Animal’s narrative, appealing to the journalist for the “‘honesty’” made possible by the method of oral recording without immediate translation, creates the opportunity for an entirely new story to circulate alongside that problematic “same story” Animal is expected to tell but refuses to (6-7). If the proliferation of words all adding up to a singular narrative has been a source of poison—of choking—for Animal and his people, then Animal has made a first step at clearing
the air through silence, “filthy song,” and personal abuse. As Chunaram apologetically tells the
journalist, “‘this boy says that if he talks…the book must contain only his story and nothing else.
Plus it must be his words only’” (9). Animal is so insistent about his exclusive right to narrate
his own story without interference by an outside party, especially a foreigner, that he violently
rejects the journalist’s counter argument; namely, that he has an obligation to meet the standard
requirements of his agent and editor. “‘Give me the address of this editor type,’” Animal
exclaims,

‘I’ll write a letter! I’ll say this Jarnalis should not be allowed to tell my
story…Extras we’re, in his movie. Well bollocks to that. Tell mister cunt big
shot that this is my movie he’s in and in my movie there is only one star and it’s
me.’ (9-10)

Ultimately, Animal gets to be the star of his own movie, achieving control over his story down to
the very last word and sound. Moments of profanity, pause, and noise—narrative idiosyncrasies
of Animal’s story—remain insistently intact via the tape recordings and the promise which
Animal exacts, such that the journalist’s (and his editor’s) normative power to decide which parts
of narrative to leave out and which to include, as well as what words to use to convey narrative,
is foreclosed. The journalist, Animal insists, is not equipped to “decide what’s to be said about
this place,” let alone to decide what is to be said about Animal himself (9).

While the story Animal tells is not the usual story, the story he does tell is, in fact, the
“‘usual for [him]’”—it’s a partial autobiography that captures his own uncertain positioning as
mired somewhere between human and animal (6). Animal reclaims the power of auto-biography
through recorded sound not only for a marginalized people, the Khaufpuri, but for a marginalized
group of living beings labeled “animal.” As such, Animal begins his narrative with the
pronouncement that he is no longer human: “I used to be human once…people who knew me
when I was small say I walked on two feet just like a human being” (1). Animal insists, too, that
he “‘no longer want[s] to be human,’” and that when he says he is an animal “it’s not just what [he] look[s] like but what [he] feel[s]” (2; 87). Animal’s expressed rejection of human status is not easily accepted by the more physiologically traditional humans around him, such as Animal’s mother-figure, the crazed, French speaking nun Ma Franci, or his friend Farouq who insists that Animal ought to identify as a “Langda” or lame man (2; 87). Pressed into choosing between being an imperfect man, or a perfectly good animal, Animal chooses the latter, stating:

if I agree to be a human being, I’ll also have to agree that I’m wrong-shaped and abnormal. But let me be a quatre pattes animal, four-footed and free, then I am whole, my own proper shape, just a different kind of animal… (208)

Froqu, Ma Franci and others are of course technically correct to insist on Animal’s human speciation in spite of his physical irregularities; however, Animal’s bid for animality is not without its own validity. He is a very “different kind of animal” from his fellow humans in profound ways, including his physiology and sensorial experience of the world around him.

Indeed, Animal’s physiological affinity with a non-human animal is illustrated poignantly by the fact that he is not bipedal but, in fact, walks on all fours. “The world of humans,” he explains,

is meant to be viewed from eye level. Your eyes. Lift my head I’m staring into someone’s crotch. Whole nother world it’s, below the waist. Believe me, I know which one hasn’t washed his balls, I can smell pissy gussets and shitty backsides whose faint stenches don’t carry to your nose, farts smell extra bad. (2, emphasis mine)

The “below the waist” smells Animal describes suggest the impact Animal’s altered physiology has on his ability to experience the world like the human being he claims not (to want) to be. In fact, according to Sigmund Freud in *Civilization and its Discontents*, one of the indices of human civilization is “man’s adoption of an erect posture,” which set off a “chain of events” including
the “devaluation of olfactory stimuli” (Freud 87). As Cary Wolfe explains in Animal Rites, Freud articulates a shift of privilege in the sensorium from smell to sight, the nose to the eye, whose relative separation from the physical environment thus paves the way for the ascendancy of sight as the sense associated with the aesthetic and with the contemplative distance of sensibility. (2)

Feeling abhorrence or lack thereof in response to “below the waist” smells becomes a distinguishing factor between the properly human and the animal, as olfactory disgust is posited as an “organic defence of the new form of life achieved with man’s erect gait against his earlier animal existence” (Freud 97). Although Animal clearly experiences and communicates the quality of olfactory disgust proper to Freud’s conception of the civilized human being, Animal’s experience of these olfactory realities is unmistakably animal in intensity and frequency: the “farts smell extra bad” (my emphasis 2). If olfactory disgust is an “organic defence…against his [man’s] earlier animal existence,” then Animal’s experience of this disgust is particularly troubling for its inability to convince anyone, let alone Animal himself, that he isn’t more animal than man in moments when his senses are assaulted in ways that the senses of the other human characters around him are not. In fact, Animal’s disgust is directed not only toward the animalistic olfactory realities he is forced to endure as a non-bipedal being, but toward his physical form—twisted, hunched, disproportionate, often naked and sexually activated—for which he “feel[s] raw disgust” on account of its divergence from what is considered normatively human (2).

Animal lives in and narrates his world in a particularly unique way not only because he experiences the “below the waist” world of the animal, but also because he is attuned to and “hears” non-human living and inanimate beings and includes them, however unintentionally, in his oral recordings (2). “Since I was small,” he explains,
I’d get en passant comments from all types of things, animals, birds, trees, rocks giving the time of day. ...a locust spread scarlet wings in the Nutcracker, it was crooning ‘I’m so gorgeous.’ I said aloud, ‘Yeah, till a bird sees you.’ (8)

Significantly, many beings and objects speak not only to Animal, but also into his tape recorder. These beings and objects become a part not only of his experience, but also a part of the oral narrative captured in the text. That these other entities enter Animal’s narrative through the medium, first, of recorded sound and are, later, notated in print, is a crucial point. Animal’s narrative, although he insists so vehemently that he is its one and only “one star,” is actually an explicitly collaborative one (9). Non-human and inanimate objects are not, for Animal, categories of beings removed from voice and autobiography and, instead, are at various moments metaphorical, and even literal, contributors to Animal’s narrative. In fact, he explains the (delayed) impetus for telling his narrative by resorting to animal metaphor, his “words want to fly out from between [his] teeth like a flock of birds making a break for it” and he likens the sounds of the words as they escape to “that sudden clap of wings when they take off in a hurry, it’s that sound, listen, clap, clap, clap” (12). Animal’s experience of his world and, consequently, the material of his narrative, are also profoundly impacted by his experience of language as a synesthetic event accompanied by visual images of the colors and beings—animate and inanimate, human and not—which comprise his narrative world. Every word Animal speaks conjures up a concomitant range of visual sensory experience, including “colours and shapes...pictures of things and of people,” associated with his community of sound and his narrative (13). His experience of his world primarily through a combination of smell and vision signals that he perceives his world in an unmistakably animal way, which means that he story he tapes is in some ways unmistakably animalistic in nature (13).57

57 In Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behavior, Temple Grandin explains that animals, like autistic individuals (such as herself), perceive the world through pictures whereas non-autistic
Animal’s insistence on sound rather than text, and his inclusion of a community of sound—comprised of animate and inanimate beings, really perceived and synesthetically associated—is further complicated by his associate Somraj, a famous Indian classical musician. Somraj defines song as the presence and absence of “silence,” and insists that song is not limited to the realm of the human or human intentionality (47). Although Animal, when prompted by Somraj to listen to his surroundings, uncharacteristically hears nothing but the “crikkk-crikkkk” of a frog, Somraj hears music: “Just a frog? Let me tell you, that frog contains more music than most pandits. This song of his is said to inspire the note of dha, which is the sixth note of our scale…I’m quoting…our earliest book on music” (48). Asking Animal to sing the note “ga” and himself assuming the note “pa,” the two join their voices to the frog’s own to produce a music that is significantly a collaboration between multiple cross-species partners: “ga pa dha ga dha” (49). Although in this instance music and song are produced by a cross-species grouping of animal beings, music and song do not reside purely in the realm of the animal world. Instead Somraj instructs Animal that, “if you know how to listen you can hear music in everything” from animals such as “peacocks, goats and…gray herons” to “bicycle wheels” and “rain” (49).

Somraj’s conception of song and music as arising from a combination of sounds—however unhuman or mundane—produced in any given ecological community has significant implications for Animal’s taped narrative. No longer just a record of sounds which communicate narrative, Animal’s tapes are transformed, according to Somraj’s definition, into music by their instances of silence as well as their ability to capture environmental sounds which join in harmony or disharmony with Animal’s voice. Not only are Animal’s tapes indicative of the music of which Somraj speaks, but it is a “new music, something completely fresh” which

human individuals tend to think the world as and through words. Hence, Animal’s synesthetic experience of the words as pictures foregrounds his experience as distinctly more animal.
expresses a fundamentally cross-species promise (216). The analogy made in the novel between music and promise is significant for, if Animal’s tapes are cross-species, collaborative, and ecologically representative, then they are surely music that promises something. But what exactly do his tapes promise?

For Animal, the words music and promise “fit together” (248). He explains to Zafar, leader of the Khaufpuri peoples’ efforts to gain retribution from the Western industrial complex, that music and its emotional force are the direct products of recognizing, and productively responding to, difference:

The first secret of music…is that the notes themselves are nothing, their only meaning is when they’re compared to the boss note of sa. ‘Don’t listen to the notes,’ Pandit-ji [Somraj] says, ‘listen to their fluctuations away from sa. This is what gives rise to rasa, or emotion. If you grasp this you have got the music.’ (249)

Animal goes on to explain the significance of his insight by stating that the promise of music lies in its constant measurability and ability for movement, such that every fluctuation perceived communicates to the hearer something imperative about the position of one note (or thing, or animal life) in relation to another:

Stuff can’t fluctuate without moving. Further, nearer, it’s a question of measure. So the notes of music are measures. Plus, see, you can’t know what a thing is if you don’t know what it isn’t. What makes a thing itself is it always keeps its difference from other things. The note of dha always stays the same distance from sa, isn’t that a kind of promise? (249).

Yet, Animal’s analysis of the issue of difference, measurement, and the promise inherent in music isn’t fully formulated yet and its incompleteness raises some conceptual problems for his theory: if music is about determining identity by difference alone, how can that deeply definitional difference be surmounted in order to make way for the type of collaborative, cross-species and ecologically sensitive promise desired? Somraj provides Animal the key to his
misunderstanding, stating that “The notes of the scale are all really one note, which is ‘sa’. The singer’s job is to sing ‘sa’, nothing else only ‘sa’, but ‘sa’ is bent and twisted by this world and what’s in it” (249). Hence, music—and Animal’s tapes as music—delivers the promise of sameness—the constancy of ‘sa’—while also recognizing the power of difference as the individual bends her or its voice to new versions of ‘sa’ in direct response to the changing complexities of local ecologies, including the rising and falling voices of other human, animal and inanimate vocalists.

The promise of music is being able to “tune[] the universe,” such that there is relationship, responsibility, respect and voice shared and expressed across a system of beings whose voices—simultaneously the same and different—are in the act of exchange constantly, but often without notice (250). Animal’s tapes deliver, in part, this promise of music, expressing “when all things were together, one and whole before humans set themselves apart and became clever and made cities and kampanis and factories” (352). In this imagined past time, but also possible future, ecological communities reverberate respect and reciprocity across a wide array of living beings and organic and inorganic materials, such that collaboration across spectrums of similarity and difference trumps the disingenuous posturing of anthropocentrism (352).

Despite the promise made possible by way of Animal’s verbal narrative and his uncertain species identity, however, the foregrounding of sound as a fundamentally superior way of expressing the animal condition is limited in the novel. One obvious limitation of reading *Animal’s People* as a successful contemporary interpretation of the Victorian animal autobiography genre is that, although some aspects of Animal’s physiology and experience are more closely aligned with those of nonhumans, he is clearly not a nonhuman animal in any biologically significant way. On another register, however, Animal’s more complicated status as biologically human and experientially (to some extent) nonhuman makes his animal
autobiography less subject to criticisms of outright appropriation of the nonhuman’s subjectivity and experience. Animal does assume a (partial) animal voice to attest to a (partial) animal experience—a choice often deemed deeply problematic, as explained in the previous chapter. However, his explanation of his experience as animal experience is predicated upon sensory information and privileging that arise as a result of physical abnormalities that position him—relative to the world—much more like certain kinds of animals than human beings. Moreover, it is important to note that Animal’s convergence with animal experience is only evident in certain conditions; he is never totally or unproblematically represented as absolutely nonhuman, nor is he represented as having free and total access to the being or identity of any particular kind of nonhuman animal species. Animal never claims to be equivalent to any particular nonhuman individual or animal group but, instead, imagines himself the only human-animal of his kind.

This is a significant distinction to make on the part of Animal’s narrative, especially in light of the work of Thomas Nagel in “What Is It Like to Be a Bat.” Nagel reminds us that we, as humans, cannot “experience or imagine” the “subjectivity” of a bat because our sensory equipment and sensory experiences of the world are drastically different from the bat’s (438). For example, Nagel explains that “bat sonar, though clearly a form of [visual] perception, is not [sufficiently] similar in its operation to any sense that we possess” as human beings for us to claim we “see” the world like a bat (438). Even if we and the bat gain similar types of information about the visual world through our divergent sensory methods, we are not achieving or processing this information in a way that makes our experience equivalent to that of the bat in question (Nagel 438). Animal’s People responds to this difficulty well by insisting that Animal isn’t so much nonhuman, as he is a human-animal, existing and verbally narrating his experience as simultaneously both. Ultimately, this more complicated rendering of Animal as both human
and animal not only more genuinely expresses the inherent contradiction of the human qua
humanism, but more ethically grapples with how human expressions and understandings of
animality in sound or print might foreground, rather than erase, the trace of the human.

Another problem of the text is that, although Animal performs a *partial* reclamation of
the autobiography not only for the Khaufpuri, but for the non-humans whose experiences of life
occur at such close juxtaposition to his own, the impact of his narrative is fundamentally altered
by the fact that his spoken text—his musical product and promise—will not retain its full
integrity. Animal recognizes that, because his oral recording ultimately undergoes translation
and textual transcription, the power of sound and the specificity of his and other voices caught in
the act of bending “sa” will still be partially lost:

I keep forgetting you do not hear me. The things I say, by the time they reach you
they’ll have been changed out of Hindi, made into Inglis…For you they’re just
words written on a page. Never can you hear my voice, nor can I know what
pictures you see. (21)

This problem, a problem of the genre of a print text which attempts to re-conceptualize its
narrative subject’s autobiography as sound, is unresolved at the end of the novel, as is the
problem of Animal speaking as and for the animal he both is and is not. These persistent
problematics beg the question of whether, if words truly do sound different in Animal’s mouth—
as he maintains—how much of Animal and his narrative are lost in the imagined conversion into
a translated, print text, as well as how truly “animal” is this narrative? Is Animal’s narrative,
finally, music; and does it keeps its promise?

II. TAPE TWO: TECHNOLOGIZING THE ANIMAL IN *ONE PIG*
In *Human Error: Species-Being and Media Machines* Dominic Pettman discusses a “harrowing” answering machine message included in a song by the band Aerogramme. He notes that upon hearing the message, embedded in the song, “it is immediately apparent that we are hearing a desperate SOS signal, broadcast from the core of the real, no matter how many degrees of digital separation” (111). The act of hearing the recorded voice profoundly confirms for the hearer the embodied reality of the author of the message, as well as the authenticity of the cry for help she articulates. While the voice on the answering machine is that of a human female, Pettman’s insight goes beyond this particularly human example and can readily be applied to Herbert’s *One Pig*. So, too, could the problems Pettman articulates regarding the message, namely that “though the voice feels acutely contemporaneous,” it is disembodied communication—a medium that we are bored with (115). Interestingly, while *One Pig*’s porcine speaker may suffer some of the problems Pettman articulates, problems which I will return to later, the album is anything but boring (115).

Listening to the first track of *One Pig*, “August 2009,” is a disorienting experience. Between waves of silence come brief bits of birdsong, lightly ruffled hay, the sound of some almost metronymically precise mechanical object and, finally, the very un-metronymically-precise sounds of rifling, snorting, and grunting that we associate with pigs. The abrupt and sometimes extended silence and proliferation of environmental background noise becomes overwhelming as you search for these sounds’ meaning and, sometimes, even their originating body. It is rather embarrassing and frustrating at moments to wonder—and to not have a definitive answer to—whether what you are hearing is *One Pig*’s pig versus some other domestic or wild animal caught in the recording. Moreover, it is equally, if not more, difficult to identify the originators of the various mechanical sounds captured on the record. In literally the first
minutes of the first track it becomes clear that we don’t know how to recognize the voices of nonhumans once those voices are abstracted from the embodied animal itself, and especially not when these actual animal voices diverge from our popular representations of them, for example in cartoons. Moreover, our difficulty identifying the mechanical sounds captured on the album clearly indicates that not only don’t we know how to recognize and listen to a pig’s voice, but also that we have no context for understanding (or even putting names to the components of) the pig’s industrialized farm ecology. A narrative or story to encapsulate the significance of the sounds captured on the album is wanting: there is no apparent narrative thread, no reassuringly familiar generic markers, not even the reassurance of a normal human voice until the final track, “May 2011.” Everything is alien. Then, the techno-music begins.

The best way for me to understand and communicate the experience of listening to the mix of pig squeals and snorts (and other forms of voice that it’s harder for me to put a name to) occurring over a background of techno-experimental music is to resort, however problematically, to an already existing narrative—J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*. The novel’s broken protagonist, David Lurie, increasingly views the concepts of language and literary scholarship he’s devoted his life to as “preposterous,” while song and sound succeed to a place of primacy over human language writ proper (Coetzee 2-3). Lurie, author of three scholarly texts and Professor of Communication, turns away from text to music—to opera—as a fundamentally superior mode of expression. Lurie’s refusal to adhere strictly to textual histories, textual poetics, and even the medium of text more generally enables the opera’s expansion beyond its original goal. The project morphs from an initial exploration of Lurie’s own masculine, sexual, racial, academic and human privilege via Byron’s poetry and Byronic textual histories into a more speculative, experimental product in which the female voice of Byron’s slighted lover, Teresa, emerges to
sing herself; her voice serving as both complication and musical complement to Lurie’s musical Byron. In many ways, Lurie’s representation of Teresa’s voice is analogous to the representation of animal voice in the Victorian animal autobiography, as the female and animal voice, in their respective mediums, expand the privilege of communication and authorship in productive ways, while the usurpation of female voice by males creates problems of authenticity. The project takes yet another turn to the speculative and experimental as Lurie finds himself not only open to representing others within his opera (i.e., Teresa), but also open to otherness in the form of animal co-authorship. Lurie considers the intellectual question of including in the opera the howls of a crippled dog that he later euthanizes, as he recognizes that the dog is “on the point of singing, too, or howling” along with the opera as Lurie performs it out loud to himself in the presence of the dog (Coetzee 125). The dog’s howls are a clear response to Lurie’s opera, a complement to the other represented voices—Byron’s and Teresa’s—as well as to the voice of Lurie himself as he inhabits and performs these voices. Lurie wonders whether he would “dare to do that: bring a dog into the piece, allow it to loose its lament to the heavens between the strophes of lovelorn Teresa’s?” and ultimately concludes, “Why not?” (Coetzee 215).

One Pig is, in some sense, a response to Lurie’s question, “Why not?” (Coetzee 215). While animal voices never do, finally, become part of Lurie’s opera, animals are the primary vocalists on One Pig, accompanied not by operatic scores, but by techno music and the sounds of the pig’s environment. Herbert, the album’s creator, acknowledges the pig as the “soloist” and his own musical contributions as “support,” citing personal frustration with how “‘we’ve built a society that’s so dependent upon something, and yet we rarely give it a voice of its own’” (Sisario). The album showcases, rather than downplays, a strangely oscillating accordance and discordance between its human and animal sound components, as drum beats, snorts and squeals
align seamlessly in one track, only to be at odds in another. This oscillation is reminiscent of the form of cross-species musical collaboration Lurie only partially recognizes in *Disgrace*, and which David Rothenberg discusses in “You Make My Heart Sing.”

In the article, Rothenberg uses his experience of “play[ing] music live with” nonhuman animals, specifically “waterbirds from all over the world” to comment on the opportunities of musically-mediated cross-species collaborative activities (112)\(^58\):

Wittgenstein had the nerve to warn us that if a lion could talk, we could not understand him. When a lion *roars*, we do understand him (or her). If a cat purrs, we understand her, too. If the voice of an animal is not heard as a message but as art, interesting things start to happen: Nature is no longer inscrutable, some alien puzzle, but instead immediately something beautiful, a source of exuberant song, a tune with some space for us to enter, at once a creative place for humanity to join in. (113)

Rothenberg champions that an “intuitive approach” to listening to animal voices is to hear them as music. On one hand, hearing animal voice as music is problematic in the sense that it risks abstracting the animal through very human forms of aestheticism and aesthetic appreciation: animal voice risks becoming “beautiful” at the cost of no longer being appreciated as animal. However, Rothenberg’s insight that animal voices, like human ones, contain “rhythms… tones…[and] melodies” that we can recognize across species lines is useful as one way we can hear and respond to animal voice as sound instead of doing what we most often do: either ignore it or surreptitiously attempt to translate it into human language (115). Not only is this approach more “intuitive” for Rothenberg, but it allows for improvisation and alteration in response to confrontations with alterity:

\(^{58}\) Rothenberg’s discussion in the article is at times quite problematic because he catches himself crediting birds with human voice, words and expressions (such as laughter), imagines that he can understand the birds’ perspectives as he makes music with them, and consigns birds’ songs to the realm of aesthetics and the beautiful. However, his insight into art, particularly music, as an impetus for cross-species collaboration remains useful in spite of these humanistic claims.
I kept playing, he responded. At first he came back at me with rising arpeggios, strong and tough. I played back. He cocked his head, leapt to join in. My notes changed. His notes changed. There seemed to be some real camaraderie here….Could we go somewhere together that we couldn’t go apart? (117)

For Rothenberg the answer to this question is “yes.”

Indeed, the cross-species “camaraderie” he speaks of “teaches us to strive for the collaborative creativity possible” with nonhumans, such that the nonhuman is “listening, reacting, singing perhaps what he has never sung before. And so am I” (122). The possibility of the song never sung before or, more generally, the cross-species artistic collaboration that is possible only as a series of interactions and reactions, is predicated upon “forget[ting] the name of the thing one hears” or collaborates with (117). As Rothenberg explains, naming “tend[s] to shut off speculation” in favor of resorting to preconceived definitions of the thing named; music and voice keep speculation active (117). However, if music or sound recordings more generally can de-familiarize us with the speaking subjects of those recordings in productive ways, it is also true that this de-familiarization produces its own set of challenges, especially in the case of the cross-species. Even Rothenberg himself admits that “[i]t’s hard to write about or describe any kind of music, much less that made by a species different from our own” (118).

The One Pig album foregrounds this challenge. It questions how and to what effect cross-species artistic collaborations might occur, as well as commenting on how we have traditionally imagined ourselves capable of speaking for beings whose real, ecologically-situated voices leave us confused and disoriented—feeling what one reviewer describes as “abject horror” (Soderberg). Listening to the album makes us want to stop listening precisely because understanding difference is difficult, and the album is cleverly constructed to highlight difference through, for example, moments where more familiar (because human) techno music takes over only to be interrupted violently by the pig’s voice. As the Pitchfork reviewer, Brandon
Soderberg, explains these moments of interruption “mak[e] it impossible to ignore the processes that lead to the record’s creation” (Soderberg). Soderberg constructs a compelling parallel between the scenario in which “those really sweet leather boots you bought let out a ‘moo’ every time you stuck them on your feet” and the album’s interrupted techno tracks. The point Soderberg and the album make is that animals and animal voices undergird even the most mundane human activities and objects, a reality which we are wholly unprepared to encounter and even horrified by. We become complacent when the more familiar techno music dominates, only to be startled all the more readily when the pig’s voice impedes this familiarity. As Soderberg suggests, the efficacy of the album is its ability to prompt us to bring our feelings of horror, startle and extreme uncertainty to bear on everyday products (like the leather boots) and situations under-girded by animal exploitation. Challenging our complacent attitudes is a goal that the album shares with Susan McHugh’s chapter, “The Fictions and Futures of Farm Animals: Semi-Living to ‘Animalacra’ Pig Tales.”

While McHugh’s interest in the chapter is, primarily, the increasing reality of mass produced real-artificial-meat products made not from soy, but engineered from animal stem-cell tissues in labs, her insight into the problem of farm animal agency has wider purchase. Specifically, in regards to her question: “What happens to representation itself when humans imagine animals as having their own stories, even as having history, in the broadest sense? And how do these representational processes relate to ideas about agency” (170)? McHugh insists that forms of animal representation, modes of animal communication, and animal histories may play primary roles in cultivating alternative human responses to pigs both as individuals and as a species group. She situates the pig’s complicated status, discussing a spectrum of responses to
the pig, including understanding the pig as human-metaphor, as a site of liminality used to
distinguish the human from the not, and as a historically co-evolutional species. She notes that

[t]he pig, as the consummate ‘creature of the threshold,’ traditionally inhabits an
assortment of gray areas, whether between barn and home, pet and pork, or
unclean and acceptable meats. The terrific significance of pig parts in modern
fiction—whether the chitterlings that ‘point to the fragility of the boundary that
divides food from not-food’…in Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man (1952), or the
pig’s bladder, ‘which turns up everywhere’ in Thomas Pynchon’s Gravity’s
Rainbow (1973)—indicates a continuing fascination with stories of this animal as
an exceptionally versatile symbol. (170)

Clearly the pig has a rich symbolic history, but McHugh urges that the pig’s co-evolutional
species-history is more important than its figuration as liminal or metaphoric. She explains that
the human-pig relationship “enable[d] the historic transition from rural self-sustaining agriculture
to urban industrialized meat production, maintaining a fragile connection across mixed
communities of animals and people” (170). Not only is this species-history of the pig more
important for McHugh, it is also the less acknowledged history as we turn time and again away
from responding to the pig in a way that acknowledges its difficult co-evolutional species history
(i.e., the problem of factory farming) and toward the anthropocentric and anthropomorphic.

In the case of One Pig, it appears, at least to me, that the medium of sound helps alienate
us from our own tendency to respond to the pig in the more popular, and less ethically fruitful,
ways McHugh discusses: as metaphor and liminal site. Instead One Pig pushes us toward
understanding the pig in the way she deems “[m]ost important”: within its ecological and
species-evolutional context of “industrialized meat production” by foregrounding the pig’s voice
and denuding it of its culturally over-determined body (“unclean”) and, even, of narrative (170).
Indeed, the album’s cover and insert comment sparsely on the body and narrative of One Pig’s
pig, and productively so. The cover itself, pictured below,\(^{59}\) represents the pig as almost entirely disembodied. The vague, washed-out image of the pig is so faint and indeterminate that it is only because it is over-lain with the word “PIG” that we realize that what lies behind the word is, in fact, a pig and not a blackboard eraser’s smudge. Trailing off into increasing invisibility and spectrality from the left to the right of the image, the pig’s corporeal self is most definitely conveyed on the left of the image by the jutting-out of the pig’s snout. While still indistinct, the pig’s face is clearly the feature being highlighted as both the source of the voice that we hear on the album as well as a preeminent site for cross- and intra-species ethical activity. As Emmanuel Levinas explains in *Totality and Infinity*,

The other person [or animal] as he comes before me in a face to face encounter is not an *alter ego*, another self with different properties and accidents but in all essential respects like me... The other may, indeed, turn out to be, on the surface at least, merely an analogue of myself. But not necessarily! I may find him to be inhabiting a world that is basically other than mine and to be essentially different from me. He is not a mere object to be subsumed under one of my categories and given a place in the world. (13)

Though the ethically-productive face may be the pig’s highlighted feature, the pig’s facial details, including its expression, in addition to the positioning and activity of its body (is it running?) and other bodily characteristics (does it have light and dark markings or are differences in coloration merely a product of the image’s own indeterminacy?) are entirely obscured. If, as McHugh suggests, the body of the pig is a site of over-determination as something potentially unclean, this isn’t a claim that we can lay easily at this pig’s feet.

\(^{59}\) One Pig’s cover, pictured above, borrowed from http://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/15930-matthew-herbert-one-pig/
Although the image has an uneasy likeness to a dirty smudge, the austere black and white coloration of the image, combined with its ephemeral, fleeting impression suggests not so much the unclean, but the spectral other who exists outside of the binary of the unclean-clean, as well as outside of the binary of the human-animal. Indeed, it is an image expressive of Derridean finitude by way of its sheer spectrality. A finitude that we, as humans, both subject the pig to—through industrial farming and meat consumption—as well as share with (and understand through) the pig as mortal beings ourselves—whether we like it or not.

The narrative details the album provides about the pig are as sparse as the image of the pig represented on the front cover, combining to make the album and its pig soloist resistant to being understood as liminal or metaphorical. Indeed, we are only told that the album records the life and voice of one pig (singularity or plurality would be nearly impossible to determine otherwise), that the album spans that pig’s lifetime (only twenty-six weeks from birth to death and consumption) and, finally, that each track is named after the month of the pig’s life during which that track was recorded. That’s it. The details provided are matter of fact and as hazy as the image of the pig itself, this haziness serving to foreground and heighten the significance of the pig’s individual animal being via its voice, as well as its environmental context: the sounds—mechanical and otherwise—of the factory farm. There is little material or impetus provided to make sense of the album through anything but the sound recorded and presented; little data through which to understand the pig on a traditionally anthropomorphic or anthropocentric register. The pig, the album insists, is not a liminal or “gray” area through which we define

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As Nathan Van Camp explains in “Negotiating the Anthropological Limit: Derrida, Stiegler, and the Question of the ‘Animal,’” Derrida explains “Human finitude...in The Animal That Therefore I am” as “not residing in man’s ability to run ahead towards death, but in the fact that man is not able to experience death as such, in a lack of power, in a not-having of the ‘as such.’” This brings the human in close proximity to the animal. The most important question, Derrida suggests, is therefore not whether animals do or do not have access to logos, speech, spirit, tekhe, death, and the like, but to know whether animals can suffer. Being able to suffer is precisely this possibility without power, this radical finitude that man shares with the animal” (66).
ourselves as human, nor is it rendered as a metaphorical “type” of pig. Instead, it is an actual pig—one pig—whose particular species history and species being entails that we—as listeners—get to hear it living, just as we later hear it being cooked, and consumed on the album as if it is being consumed by or in front of us at our own tables.

Perhaps this is the source of the “abject horror” we feel when listening to the album—why we want to turn the album off or, at the very least, turn the volume down: One Pig’s pig defies our expectations and our desires. We resist understanding the species-being and co-evolutional industrial ecology of the pig and, often, this resistance takes the form of turning back to metaphorizing it as being and meaning something other than itself—even though the album self-consciously lacks the kinds of narrative and imagistic details we require to do so. As listeners, we are frustrated that there are so few details to grasp at to ameliorate the alien-ness of the encounter with the voice of a pig: not a pig being spoken for by a human in human language, not a pig serving as human metaphor, but a pig speaking as and for itself as a pig ensconced within the rather un-idyllic reality of our meat culture and the factory farming system. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the impulse to flesh out this narrative to give the album a more human shape is overwhelming. So much so, in fact, that one reviewer begins his review of the album by harkening back to the nineteenth-century bildungsroman to, if I can be crass, describe the pig as a porcine version of Dickens’ David Copperfield.

The review by Slate’s Andy Battaglia reads less, at first, as an appraisal of the album itself than as a miniature biography of the album’s two stars—Herbert and, of course, the album’s pig-soloist. In a moment of anthropomorphism that runs contrary to the message of the album itself, namely to “give [the pig and its ecology] a voice of its own,” Battaglia constructs a
narrative for *One Pig*’s pig-soloist (stopping short only of naming the pig) (Sisario). Battaglia writes:

> First the subject had to be born, then brought up and put down as custom would prescribe. It had to be coddled, nursed, fattened, marched along in time, moved between a series of changing and increasingly confined pens. It had to be trucked off to a room where it would meet its end, enigmatically, then disassembled and later reconvened in the form of offerings like “dry cured streaky bacon” and “loin of pork with girolles.” So goes part of the story behind *One Pig*… (Battaglia)

Battaglia surreptitiously constructs a David Copperfield-esque “I was born…on a Friday at twelve o’clock at night” narrative for the pig before reviewing the album. The pig’s anthropomorphization serves to provide a familiar and palliative bildungsroman structure, lacking in the album itself, through which to understand the pig’s life, identity, and death. The pig’s trials as he matures involve “a series of changing and increasingly confined pens,” just as Copperfield’s, as discussed in my first chapter, involve a series of more and less confining domestic spaces (Battaglia). However, unlike in Copperfield’s case, “dry cured streaky bacon” and “loin of pork” are the results of the pig’s maturation and achievement of social productivity. The pig’s transformation from live animal to meat for consumption is posited as a form of maturation, as the pig is “enigmatically” “disassembled and later reconvened” (much as a Victorian dinner party might be) into a final, socially idealized form. Clearly, Battaglia would rather let the pig’s death be both “enigmatic[]” and a portent of maturation and social usefulness than perform the work the album actually insists he do: namely, acknowledge the ideological problem that allows one pig, a speaking animal, to become the very silent object of human consumption, bacon and loin, per social “custom.” Battaglia overwrites the pig’s individual, as well as species, history with a human developmental narrative, in the process overwriting imminent questions about the pig’s agency and being in the wake of the Western meat culture and factory farming industry, as well as our complicity in this industry.
Battaglia’s recasting of the pig as biographically human is particularly problematic on the level of the pig’s species history, as he blatantly obscures a history of coevolution in which pigs, because “they fatten so easily” and “theirs is an efficient, low-tech meat to process” become “appealing as industrial resources” (170). As McHugh explains,

[w]hile historians debate the exact time and place of the origins of commercial meatpacking, all point to the[ ]superior porcine qualities in pairing this species with the human at the center of [factoring farming] processes that have radically transformed other industrial processes as well. (170)

Hence, One Pig’s pig vocalist is testifier in his speaking life on the album, as well as in his death (not audibly captured) and consumption (which is audibly captured), to its own species history and the way that this history has taken shape alongside the human: human consumption practices, industrialization, and industrializing technologies. Recognition of the pig’s species history has implications not only for One Pig’s pig—who, it turns out, does not “enigmatically” become meat but is, instead, subjected to human consumptive demands and industrial technologies—but also for all human and nonhuman species. The “incredible, unprecedented numbers of animals raised to be killed for food threaten the health and environment of nearly ever species” in the form of “virus outbreaks,” “drug resistant strains of bacteria,” and global “climate change” (McHugh 163). Clearly, as we listen we should be hearing an oink (or a “moo,” as Soderberg suggests in his review) that has ramifications for how we understand the individual and species-life of the pig-vocalist, but also how we understand and agree or refuse to continue participating in the product of our species’ co-evolution. Namely, the meat industry and other forms of corporate-industrial activity that instrumentalize animal life on an increasingly global scale. Indeed, as The Independent’s reviewer April Welsh makes clear, Herbert’s intention for the project is to “convey a profound political message about the way we perceive and consume meat” as he “berates our own shirking of responsibility and the cowardly
way in which many of us eat meat but fail to question where it came from.” Our complacent “separateness” from the reality of the pig and factory farming practices is exactly what Herbert expects to problematize (Welsh).

Yet, despite the overt intentions of the album, this ethical response appears to be quite difficult to achieve. This is in part because the confrontation of the pig vocalist’s alienness is profoundly unsettling and difficult to comprehend. It is in part, too, because we are tempted to respond to the album’s alienness either by shutting it off or interpolating it and its pig vocalist into already extant cultural and metaphorical structures that, of course, are complacent with our “separation” from many animal species, “meat” (animals), and factory farming. But, part of the difficulty may also accrue to the medium of Herbert’s political intervention itself—sound—and to the problem of technologizing the animal.

As Eric Ames explains in “The Sound of Evolution,” sound recordings are particularly well suited to performing the work of forcing listeners out of responding to individuals based on over-determined physical markers, including those of species (or race, or gender), thereby keeping speculative interest in the individual alive. Ames’ article begins with a question posed in 1905 by Eric Moritz Van Hornbostel in his address on “The Problems of Comparative Musicology”: “What is to be gained…by having a Hottentot sing into the phonograph…?” (291). The question refers to Saartjie Baartman, more well-known as the “Hottentot Venus,” and to the fact that popular and scholarly responses to Baartman almost exclusively foregrounded physiological markers, such as race and racially-associated anatomical features (“a greatly enlarged rump”) and articulated these markers as indicative of a predictable set of racial and ethnic stereotypes (298). Hornbostel’s question, however, reconfigures discussions of Baartman away from her physical embodiment and away from physically-based stereotypes, as he proposes
“record[ing] her music” as “a means of hearing, examining, and representing the primitive in a new mode of disembodiment, as a sound recording” (298). Strangely, the act of disembodying Baartman appears critically beneficial rather than violent or depersonalizing, as her ability to be read through or as music exculpates her from being read, solely, as a set of racialized physical attributes.

While Barrtman’s disembodiment by way of musical recording is productive on some intellectual and ethical levels in Ames’ article, it’s less clear that similarly disembodying nonhuman animals into abstracted voices, as in One Pig, confers the same or equal benefits. Returning to the insights of Pettman and Rothenberg, there are clearly both benefits and significant consequences when we disembody human and nonhuman animals via recording technologies. While Rothenberg views disembodiment through music as productive because we forget the name of the animal and our preconceptions about it, Pettman articulates the pitfalls of such an approach. Using the example of the phone message sampled into a musical track, he notes that the voice captured on the message, rather than being immediately embodied in front of us, is mediated by digital technologies which are present in place of the speaking individual her- or its- self (115). The speaking individual, therefore, exists at technological, historical, and spatial distance from us as receivers of the message (115). Pettman explains that, “even if we were to later find out the identity” of the actual, embodied speaker and confront her, “this particular emergency” or moment of communication “has passed” and is, therefore, unrecoverable (115). Hence, the “phantom presence-absence” of the speaker serves to reduce responsivity and accountability to the voice, even as the medium of digital recording confronts us forcefully and undeniably with the reality of the voice’s message as well as the reality of the individual, human female that bodies forth the message in Pettman’s example (115). Yet another
problem that Pettman articulates surrounding the technology of recording is that, as a species, we have become “bor[ed]” with it, such that “a pleasant folk song” and a “heart-wrenching cry for help” are interchangeably mundane (122). This insight is borne out, in some respects, in Animal’s People as the journalist appears incapable of determining the difference between Animal’s dirty song and Khaufpuri poetics (122). While One Pig isn’t mundane, boring, or interchangeable it is easy to imagine a not-distant future in which it would be. Moreover, boredom and indistinction are, in large measure, a product of the problems articulated above—no matter which we hear—the folk song or cry for help, the dirty song or the Khaufpuri lyric—the original speech act and the embodied speaker are already at a digital, historical, and spatial distance from us, making our rapt attention and response optional (122).

Hence, even as the medium of recorded sound opens up the space for us as listeners to understand the animal anew through sound in the absence of over-determined forms of embodiment (as in Ames’ article), the forms of distancing that accrue to the recorded voice, whether the voice is human (as in Pettman’s example) or nonhuman (in the case of One Pig), appear to facilitate complacently unresponsive or unproductively responsive attitudes toward the speaker. These responses may take the form of eventual boredom or mere lack of critical thought or action—it hardly matters which. This is an obvious problem for an album like One Pig, which has overtly ethical and political aims that require listeners to respond in certain predetermined ways to the pig soloist as an immediately present and ethically salient being.

Jennifer Parker-Starbuck argues in “Animal Ontologies and Media Representations: Robotics, Puppets, and the Real of War Horse” that, “animal encounters through specifically techno-sites like film, animation, bio-art and so on have been increasingly visible sites of animality,” however, she cautions that “within these sites the animal, especially when
represented by the ‘real’ animals, is frequently conflated with human technological advances” (376). She goes on to explain that her research on “human-animal technological engagement” serves to

illuminat[e] how the technologization of animals—for meat, on video, in factories, in film, in laboratories, and in biosciences—shapes our understanding of and relationship to animality. As actual animals are pushed further from our sights, we accept their mediated stand-ins, forgetting the material conditions and lived lives of the innumerable animal bodies in human-service. (375)

In this sense, what she calls the “technologization” of animals has similar consequences for animal lives and our relationships to them as does the metaphorization of animals in literature, as discussed in previous chapters. In either instance, our primary engagement with the animals represented is an engagement with ourselves and our technologies of symbolic textual or digital (etc.) representation.

Parker-Starbuck’s claim that the real animal is subsumed by the technology used to capture it sonically or otherwise is borne out quite convincingly in One Pig. While Herbert credits the pig as a “soloist,” the pig lacks all control over the final product of its solo as this control accrues to the album’s human producers. As The Guardian reviewer, John Lewis explains,

[Herbert’s] quintet, wearing white butcher’s coats, turn[s] his farmyard recordings into sophisticated electronica. The precussionist’s drum, in a nice touch, is topped by the pig’s skin; centre stage, Yann Seznec activates samples by tugging the walls of his own invented instrument, the StyHarp—a small pigpen made of red wires connected to sound modules...

Lewis’s review points forcefully to the reality that while One Pig may begin as “farmyard recordings,” the final album is not the product of the farmyard or, even, particularly of the pig—it is “sophisticated electronica.” Indeed, in the album’s final form as it is being performed by Herbert’s notably all human “quintet,” the pig soloist that Herbert foregrounds in his interviews
is present only as “samples” of voice and “nice touch[es]” taking the form, for example, of a drum “topped by the pig’s skin.” The pig is not acknowledged as a member of the group—he’s not a member of Herbert’s quintet. Instead, the pig is reduced to voice, portions of its body (the skin), and even instrumental replications of its living conditions, the “StyHarp,” which are represented as passive objects which must be “activat[ed]” by Herbert and other humans.

Whatever kind of cross-species collaboration is happening here, the pig is not a primary agent and its contributions are static except for moments of technologically-mediated activation or acoustic transformation by human beings.

Unlike Rothenberg who plays “live” music and who is enmeshed in a cross-species collaboration in which each partner evolves his/its music in response to the other, One Pig’s musical collaboration is a product of meticulous editing, sampling, and performance practices that occur in the total absence of the pig and, in fact, after its death. Hence, any evolution occurring as a product of the cross-species musical collaboration is one-sided, as Herbert and his quintet dictate how the music of both partners—Herbert and the pig—respond to each other in each individual track and in any given live performance of the album. These forms of human- and technologically-mediated transformations of cross-species, ecological sound are certainly not a problem only of One Pig. They are characteristic of the practice of acoustemology (discussed in the first section of the chapter) as well, as Feld makes edits to his anthropological recordings: he compresses the time of his recordings to “intensify” or heighten certain aspects or aural relationships and, for the same effect, edits his recordings by overlapping independently captured sequences of sound recorded within the same 24-hour period (465). In both instances, post-recording editing techniques of time-compression and overlapping serve the purpose of
amplifying certain kinds of sounds and certain relationships between sounds that may have been less apparent or not apparent at all in the original recordings made.

In *One Pig* this post-recording editing appears even more transformative as the pig’s voice not only undergoes forms of compression and overlapping, but also sampling, dubbing, and mixing, all of which compromise the integrity and authenticity of the pig’s voice in the service of the human author’s musical aesthetic. As Lewis comments in his *Guardian* review, for all Herbert’s political aims, he can’t help but make the pig’s death sonically appealing…Dripping blood is sampled and turned into a compelling baseline. A chef appears, and cooks pork: the amplified sizzle becomes the backdrop for a pulsating dub track…a spectacle that is supposed to repel us has also made a lot of people hungry.

That an album that is meant to “repel” ends up being “sonically appealing” and making “a lot of people hungry” is a clear testament to the way in which the pig’s voice—even its blood—has become an aestheticized, technologized object. It is made distant and unnecessary to respond to in politically and ethically salient ways. Instead, we can either hear the album as a “beautiful” or interesting aesthetic object—a piece of art—or a too-distant-to-matter, because technologically mediated and disembodied, cry for action. *One Pig* is divorced from the pig’s animal being and agency through the technology of sound recording and is divorced, too, from any sense of authentic collaborative authorship. Indeed, a final breakdown in the collaborative feint is evident in the album’s final track, “May 2011.”

In this track, Herbert’s own voice completely takes over; his pretensions to serving the role of supporting musician are overwritten. The track begins with a return to the pig’s ecology—the industrial farm. Recordings of the pig’s ecology in the form of chirping and singing birds, however, are quickly drowned out by acoustic guitar and Herbert’s voice as he
sings a sentimental and egregiously cliché—for this album—“hymn-like lament” for the pig, now dead and consumed (on the penultimate track) (Lewis):

At this time, this time of the year
I take my happiness and disappear.
Tell these lungs to breathe again,
When the sun is back to my refrain.
A simple life is all we need,
To multiply, magnify, dignify each day…

Perhaps a more appropriate final track would have been one of extended silence: an acknowledgment of the fact that the pig is and can no longer be a collaborator with us and Hebert in music or in life—an acknowledgement of profound and interminable loss.

III. TAPE THREE: WHO GETS THE LAST TRACK?

Both of the contemporary texts—print (Animal’s People) and audio (One Pig)—which I discuss in this chapter turn to the technic and, specifically, the sonic as a preferred or complementary medium for expressing animal self-authorship. Sound has multiple benefits over and above print for capturing and communicating animal self-expression in instances of cross-species collaborative authorship. The first benefit is that the power dynamics between animal and human co-author are supposedly (if not actually) inverted away from the traditional dynamic in which the human co-author has total (e.g., traditional Victorian animal autobiography) or primary (e.g., Michael Field’s poetry) control over the final form of the authorial product in spite of the fact that a real or imagined animal who does not share human language or being is foregrounded as a co-author. In Animal’s People and in One Pig animal voice and perspective is situated in a place of prominence as human voice and perspective, as well as the human medium
of print communication, are partially or fully abandoned. Another benefit of sound articulated by these texts is its ability to capture not only the voice of an individual animal or group of animals, but entire acoustic ecologies. The richness of animals’ acoustic ecologies foregrounds the complexity of animal being and experience in addition to capturing the recursive, collaborative activity that occurs within and between species and between individuals and their environments. In both *Animal’s People* and *One Pig* the ability to experience both the animate and inanimate components of the environment of the speaking subjects through recording technologies opens up the possibility for certain forms of authorship and certain forms of political and ethical responses to situations ranging from factory farming to industrial pollution in the third-world.

Yet, there are clearly limitations to the productivity of the turn to sound and acoustic technologies in both texts, too. In *Animal’s People* the story Animal tells into his tape recorder will eventually be turned into a print text. Animal’s recorded story will retain a greater degree of integrity: all of his story will be included instead of an edited version, and the final text will, therefore, be demarcated by tapes, will represent rather than omit moments of silence and the sounds of Animal’s environment—both animate and not. However, the final text version of Animal’s story will erase the particularity of Animal’s voice and all other accompanying voices from the equation. Indeed, Animal’s voice and the voices accompanying it are removed from the consumer twice over: first, his original speech act is historically and technologically distanced via recording and, subsequently, undergoes further distancing with its translation into print.

This same problem is apparent in *One Pig*, where a tension exists around the question of whether the pig’s disembodiment through sound is productive or unproductive on an intellectual and ethical register—whether this disembodiment leaves us more open to question our
preconceived notions of the pig and the factory farming industry it is ensconced within, or whether this disembodiment serves to distance us from the pig as a living creature to whom we should be responding in an immediate way. Moreover, in *One Pig* it is even less clear than in *Animal’s People* that the album as a final product presents the pig’s voice with authenticity or integrity, even though Herbert retains the original medium of the pig’s voice—sound—rather than reinterpreting the pig through an additional human technology—human language and print text. Because the pig’s voice is pre-recorded and then edited—sampled, mixed, dubbed, and the like—the integrity of the pig’s voice is at the mercy of Herbert’s editing activities which occur, significantly, after the pig’s death and in the service of creating a product that is, at least in some general sense, aesthetically normative.

Clearly representational issues surrounding the notion of an animal autobiographer require a more complex solution than a mere migration from text to sound as representational medium. Indeed, each representational technology, whether the older technic of print or the newer technic of the acoustic, is significantly human in conception and value and each has ethical consequences for its use in representing animal being and experience. Given this fact, it may seem preposterous to suggest that perhaps a next step is to turn further toward the technic, specifically the digital humanities, in order to represent the animal author through a combination of print text, sound, photographs, and short movies. Yet, this is exactly the proposal I make here; I suggest a turn to the digital humanities and discuss what I call a digital “chimeric animal autobiography.”

If text and sound independently or together serve to disembody the animal being in ethically problematic ways, then perhaps coinciding moving or static images of animal authors with textual representations and recordings of their voices would serve to reinforce animal
autobiographers as contemporaneous and present beings which require our immediate response. This is the impulse at the heart of the “chimeric animal autobiography” I propose. Clearly, just as turning to sound was an insufficient “solution” for the issues that adhere to print-text based, so too would turning to moving and static image be insufficient. Indeed, image, like text or sound, cannot stand alone, as the animal body itself, like the body of Bartrman in Ames’ article, is a site of extreme cultural over-determination, a fact which may leave us complacently reinvesting in these over-determinations rather than performing the more ethically fruitful work of forgetting them. Hence, the digital animal autobiography I propose is a digital humanities project that is chimeric not only for its cross-species authorship, but also for what I argue is a necessary combination of complementary, but individually insufficient, representational technologies in one digital text-space.

Given the climate of digitization and digital annotation in contemporary humanities scholarship, it is becoming increasingly possible to imagine and produce animal autobiographies that are chimeric in nature in the way I describe above. There are generally two ways that such a text might take shape: either at the point of original authorship (the author of the animal autobiography may make the choice), or by way of post-production intervention by digital humanists who can digitally annotate texts, embedding sound files, pictures, and movies that complement the original textual product.61 In the second case, the digitized, technologically-chimerical animal autobiographical text may be properly scholarly in nature or may serve a purely pedagogic function in classrooms where the ethics of various forms of animal representation is being explored. While a turn to the digital humanities and toward the

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61 This kind of retrospective digital annotation of texts with audio files has applicability not only to the animal autobiography, but to any textual moment where animals are represented. One example might be the pig-killing scene in Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure*, which may be annotated in a digital edition with audio recordings of an actual pig’s slaughter in combination with moving and static images representing this activity.
technologically and representationally mosaic animal autobiography has promise for scholarship and pedagogical activities surrounding the question of animal authorship and authenticity, there are some potential concerns with the move toward the digital humanities. I discuss these concerns—including the “death” of the book, the displacement of humanistic critical practice, and the positive and negative valuations of “infinite” texts and infinite interpretations—as I parse out how, where, and why the chimeric digital animal autobiography I propose may be of use.

Clearly the form of animal autobiography I propose above is no longer purely textual and no longer properly a “book.” The book as dead or dying scholarly object has been “echoed” time and again in relation to burgeoning interest in the digital humanities. A diverse array of scholars have insisted that while books may have been “what gave the Renaissance its peculiar stamp,” today the “many media of information” means that the book’s “role” and our relationship to it as a particular material embodiment of knowledge have changed (qtd. in Muri 117). Among the many who have weighed in on this issue are Jean-François Lyotard and Jay David Bolter, the latter of which “famously predicted that ‘the idea and the ideal of the book will change: print will no longer define the organization and presentation of knowledge, as it has for the past five centuries’” (Muri 117). Allison Muri adds in “Twenty Years After the Death of the Book: Literature, the Humanities, and the Knowledge Economy,” that such predictions have been met with a certain amount of “pessimism” (117). Citing Sven Birkert’s warning of the “danger with these sexy new options,” Muri makes clear that the notions of “knowledge transfer” and technological integration at the heart of this digital-technical revolution have uneasy stakes for the humanities, even in the wake of the birth of digital humanities as a coherent discipline (117). These uneasy stakes are seemingly articulated as fears about the status of the humanities and its object of study—the book—in an increasingly technological and digital age, in addition to fears
that the digital humanities will displace qualitative humanistic inquiry in favor of the quantitative

Yet, the rationale for the digital humanities is not, of course, a desire to delegitimate or replace the book as a source of study, nor is it to replace the qualitative questions which occupy humanists. Instead, the rationale is that digital technologies can benefit scholarly work in the humanities by enabling humanists to ask and respond to disciplinary questions in new ways.

According to Sas Mays in “Literary Digital Humanities and the Politics of the Infinite,” the “digital humanities broadly thought concerns the ‘migration of our cultural legacy into digital form and the creation of new, born-digital materials and tools’” (Mays 117). Andrew Stauffer speaks to this migration, in Victorian scholarship in particular, in “Digital Scholarly Resources of the Study of Victorian Literature and Culture.” He notes that

The field is changing…We are turning with greater frequency towards digitized texts…as our primary mode of engagement, and we are thus becoming both more fluent in the navigation of electronic information and more interested in shaping its representations. Furthermore, as we increasingly make use of born-digital resources—such as Wikipedia, email listservs, and blogs—we adapt our methods of professional information exchange in ways that suggest a larger migration of scholarly practice. In short, interest is growing in the translation of our work to digital formats and platforms. (293-4)

This translation of nineteenth-century scholarly work into the digital is taking shape in obvious and nonobvious ways, including activities running the gamut from enabling the “electronic searching” of Victorian texts to “scholar-built digital projects”62 (Stauffer 293-4). For both Stauffer and Mays, it is important to stress that the digital humanities don’t replace traditional humanistic critical activities, but occur alongside them to “allow[] humanists to raise new questions” such that “the ways in which archival materials can be searched, mined, displayed,

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62 The latter includes large-scale digitized collections of Victorian literary texts and archival materials, such as NINES (Networked Infrastructure for Nineteenth-Century Electronic Scholarship) which supports digital humanities projects in nineteenth-century studies. Many of the projects supported are digitized collections that accumulate related text, image, archival and other materials for co-presentation alongside extensive annotation (Stauffer 295-6).
taught and analyzed” becomes “radically chang[ed]” (Muri 120). Like Stauffer and Mays, Muri insists that the methods of digital humanities and the methods of traditional humanistic study are not in a winner-takes-all battle. While Muri references “the word cloud and collocation visualization tools,” noting that the “visualizations” these tools produce “certainly can be evocative and often result in new questions or insights,” she stresses that “word counts” and other such visualizing technologies prove inadequate methodological tools when used “alone” (124). Hence, for Muri, the turn to the digital humanities is neither equivalent to abandoning humanistic critical methods, nor to abandoning “the book.” Instead, the digital humanities are a space for asking and responding to different questions and different mediums all while retaining standard disciplinary practice, including the practice of close reading.

While Muri’s discussion is focalized around “collocation visualization tools,” Travis Brown, in “The Substantial Words are in the Ground and Sea: Computationally Linking Text and Geography,” discusses digital annotation, a category of digital humanist activity that most aptly describes the chimeric animal autobiography I propose. Brown maintains that the digital humanities enable the literary cannon to expand infinitely into new interpretive possibilities in part through digital annotation. Predominantly, the forms of digital textual annotation encountered occur in the form of notes on an author or important selections of text. However, another highly popular form of non-textual annotation is spatial or geographical annotation, a form of digital work termed “digital geography” (Brown et al. 324). Indeed, digital geography is so proliferous that it’s a standard component of many Google Books texts, which include a “‘places mentioned in this book’ list” (Brown et al. 324). Hence, readers of the digital text are referred to maps and other relevant spatial-geographical representations which, in its original, non-digitally annotated form, the text did not contain. A digital geography project of a very
different vein is the Haunter Box. The Haunter Box differs significantly from the “digital geography” illustrated in the Google Books example, as the box itself takes on the role of a text (Thomas Hardy’s *Poems of 1912-1913*) which is activated only when the person(s) transporting the box arrive at a correct set of pre-determined GPS coordinates:

The project is centred on the haunted box – the wooden casket which knows where it is and will recite poetry to you if you take it to the right place. Inside the box is a pile of smarts: a GPS sensor, a microphone, a speaker, an SD card full of poetry recordings; hence you can script the journey of the box voice…The aim is that these smarts give us a way into the literature and landscape of Hardy country: we’ve used the *Poems of 1912-1913* collection, the poems he wrote following the death of his first wife Emma. You take the box for a walk out of Dorchester, through the fields towards Stinsford, and finish at the graveyard where she is buried… (Flintham)

I consider the Haunter Box a useful example of digital humanities work not only because it is a contribution to Victorian scholarship, my object of study, but also because it utilizes technologies of geography and space (GPS) in combination with a host of other representational technologies. These additional technologies include sound recordings that are both pre-recorded (the poetry) and recorded in the moment as the microphone picks up and records the box’s transporters’ reactions to the poetry and landscape of Hardy. The Haunter Box and my own, admittedly much less technical, digital humanist project share in common several key aspects and goals. First and fore mostly, both projects annotate texts with a combination of representational technologies for the purpose of foregrounding the reader’s (or listener’s) response to the text not as a passive, disembodied, distant, or mundane object, but as immediately present and strange in ways requiring new questions and new responses. Questions and responses that may not, in fact, be organic to the original non-digitized text itself, whether that original text is an animal autobiography like Swell’s *Black Beauty* or Hardy’s poetry.
Annotation is just one way that “the work of art changes over time in relation to its subsequent history, the ‘pre’ transformed by the ‘post’” (Balfour 969). As John Bryant explains in “Rewriting Moby-Dick: Politics, Textual Identity, and the Revision Narrative,” “[t]exts evolve” continuously (1043). However these evolutions in text are often obscured, whether they are driven by the original authors and editors, or by subsequent readers who enact various forms of adaptation and alteration for professional or non-professional purposes:

the processes of textual evolution are invisible. Authors revise, editors intervene or expurgate, readers appropriate, translate, adapt, quote, and misquote; but these acts of rewriting, which create new versions, are lost to us. To be sure, nothing is more material, more visible, more closely watched, and more fixed than a printed text as it marks space across and down a page. And yet fictive works...[that are] iconic, seemingly immutable works...are ‘fluid texts’; they exist in multiple, significantly different material versions. (1043)

Using the example of film adaptation and through reference to Benjamin, Ian Balfour makes a similar claim in “Adapting the Image and Resisting It: On Filming Literature and a Possible World for Literary Studies,”

the work of art demands its own critique, its reading, its reworking in or translation into another form, including that of another work of art (‘concept’). The adaptation can be all these, and the strong adaptation that, like the kind of translation about which Benjamin theorized, marks its distance from the original, marks itself as adaptation or translation even as it engages its original, never trying or pretending to fold itself or dissolve itself back into the original. (969)

In many ways texts produced by the digital humanities, whether the Haunter Box or the Google Book with geographical annotation, embody the ideal form of textual critique Balfour, via Benjamin, champions. Indeed, adaptation, translation and related activities that occur in the space of the digital humanities cannot “dissolve...back into the original” text in any seamless fashion, a fact borne out in particular by the Haunter Box which creates a distinctly new text each use as individuals transporting the box not only make different geographical decisions (going to one GPS-activated position before another), but respond to the combination of
spatiality and poetry in novel ways captured by the box’s recording mechanism. According to Mays, “traditional or digital texts may be thought of, qualitatively speaking, as being endless in their interpretive possibilities,” and digital formats like the Haunter Box clearly expand these possibilities in new and exciting ways (Mays 118).

According to Mays, however,

[s]uch infinitude may be positively or negatively valorized. The infinity of the text and the archive many appear as the positive possibility of the subjective agency, and ongoing cultural production considered as the generation of multiple meanings. On the other hand, it can be negatively vaolrised as a multiplicity that defers determinate knowledge. (118)

Quoting Katherine Hayles, Mays demonstrates this disparate valuation of limited and infinite interpretation; Hayles explains that in the sciences “[r]eduction is good, proliferation is bad” as “[t]he more instances that can be reduced, the more powerful the theory is meant to be” (119). By way of contrast, in literary studies it is often held that “reduction is bad, proliferation is good” because while the literary cannon is “materially finite” it is “qualitatively and ideationally infinite” (119). This valuation of the infinite in the humanities, including literary criticism, is held in tension with the issue of textual authenticity that has co-evolved with our privileging of the book and a certain understanding of scholarship qua the book. On the one hand, Balfour claims that “[i]n our historical moment in the (hyper)modern West, with its increasingly visual culture, the formerly pure text, if there ever was such a thing, stands under a certain—or uncertain—pressure of the image” and other representative technologies (969). While Bryant also echoes this critique of the “pure” text, he notes that “despite the transformations of deconstruction, twentieth-century literary criticism (still in practice in the new millennium) has rested uneasily on a New Critical foundation myth of textual coherency that requires scholars and critics to expect a fixed text as their agreed-on base for critical interpretation” (1043–4).
This vacillation between privileging a fixed text for the sake of textual and scholarly “coherency” versus a desire for an infinitude of scholarly responses to text is important when considering how, when, and why to digitally annotate text using something like a Haunter Box, or in the chimeric way I propose for the animal autobiography.

At the beginning of my conclusion I suggested that there were several ways a digital, mosaic animal autobiography could take shape: either it could originate at the point of artistic conception, or this annotation could be added post-production by digital humanists for scholarly or pedagogical purposes. The first option—that an author could choose him or herself to implement a multi-representational digital annotation of an animal autobiographical work—seems the easiest proposition to defend in light of my discussion of the digital humanities above. However, the second option becomes trickier to parse as we must ask questions—questions I’ve been asking in this chapter and its predecessor—about authorship and authenticity, as well as how we value the proliferation of text and interpretation in various contexts, including historical contexts (the Victorian) and professional contexts (scholarship versus the classroom). The answers to these questions may or may not foreclose the kinds of post-production annotation activity we can or should undertake as scholars or, at the very least, suggest to us more and less fraught practices and uses of such digitally annotated texts.

For the specific purpose of furthering pedagogical goals in the classroom, digital annotation of animal autobiographical texts appears a fruitful option. Students can undertake authorship of their own, purely textual, animal autobiographies and subsequently revise these autobiographies through digital annotation to immediately foreground questions about animal representation, the cross-species, collaboration and authorship. Alternatively, students can be asked to annotate an extant text in promotion of the same critical questions noted above. In yet
another instance of pedagogical application, we as scholars may take it upon ourselves to perform digital annotations of texts, activating these annotations or de-activating them at crucial moments in the classroom to foreground important critical questions surrounding representational technologies, animality, and ethical responsivity. In each instance described above, the coherency and authenticity of the original textual product would be maintained either through the use of an original piece of creative writing authored by the student in place of a text from the cannon, or by using digitally annotated texts as supplements to, rather than replacements for, their originals. For exactly this reason, it is less clear whether similar forms of digital annotation could be useful for producing scholarly editions of extant animal autobiographical or animal-oriented texts, for example *Black Beauty* or *Flush*.

Scholarly applications of the annotation work I propose would incur serious problems, particularly when occurring in relation to texts from the Victorian and pre-Victorian periods, as it may be difficult or impossible to adhere to stringent disciplinary annotation and editing standards when selecting and including annotations. Indeed, it would be an especial challenge to construct a truly mosaic digital text that is sufficiently historical and accurate given technological and other constraints that occur alongside historical and technological distance. While “[r]evision” may be “the hallmark of our being and our texts,” as scholars we must be careful of the ways we revise texts either in the acts of editing and adapting them, or interpreting them. Indeed, in the realm of scholarship—less so in the realm of original authorship or even the realm of the classroom—we must be mindful of the fact that “each version of a work has its own textual identity whose boundaries are signs of private and public contestation. Because textual boundaries shift and because we are drawn to revise, the mixing of the versions of ourselves and
our texts is equally a joy and a problem” as we “test the boundaries of textual ownership” (Bryant 1058-9).
INTRODUCTION


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CHAPTER ONE


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