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Homeless Dogs
&
Melancholy Apes

HUMANS AND OTHER ANIMALS
in the
MODERN LITERARY IMAGINATION



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I

SPECULATIVE SPACE

The Rise of the Animal in the Modern Imagination

In his sentimental novel *Melincourt, or, Sir Oran Haut-ton* (1818), Thomas Love Peacock depicts a dramatic rescue. The novel's eligible young heroine, Anthelia, while enjoying the delightful solitude of a bridge over a foaming stream, finds herself trapped on a rock in midtorrent by a sudden deluge. Out of the nearby pine grove a stranger runs with "surprising speed to the edge of the chasm":

Anthelia had never seen so singular a physiognomy. . . . The stranger seemed interested for her situation. . . . He paused a moment, as if measuring with his eyes the breadth of the chasm, and then returning to the grove, proceeded very deliberately to pull up a pine [which] . . . he bore . . . on his shoulders to the chasm: where placing one end on a high point of the bank, and lowering the other on the insulated rock, he ran like a flash of lightning along the stem, caught Anthelia in his arms, and carried her safely over in an instant.¹

This benevolent, quick moving, and unusually strong being is the figure of the novel's subtitle, Sir Oran Haut-ton, Baronet, whose extraordinary impact extends well beyond the moment of the rescue, and beyond his relationship with the novel's beautiful female protagonist: "The remarkable physiognomy and unparalleled strength of the stranger, caused much of surprise, and something of apprehension, to mingle with Anthelia's gratitude; but the air of high fashion, which characterized his whole deportment, diminished her apprehension, while it increased her surprise at the exploit he had performed" (106–107).

¹Thomas Love Peacock, *Melincourt*, vol. 2 of *The Hallsford Edition of the Works of Thomas Love Peacock*, ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith and C. E. Jones (London: Constable, 1924), 105–106.

In his disturbing, compelling, and extraordinarily fertile capacities within this playful text, Sir Oran can stand for the imaginary animal of eighteenth-century literary culture. Assembled from a wide range of eighteenth-century precedents—images, tropes, arguments, and ideas about animals that circulated in diverse texts, from Edward Tyson's *Anatomy of a Pygmy* (1699) to Edward Kendall's *Keeper's Travels in Search of His Master* (1798)—Sir Oran sums up the historical distinctiveness and the formal complexities of that experimental period that marks the rise of the nonhuman animal in the modern imagination.² And, beyond his own period, he provides a perspective on current debates about the nature of the human-animal relationship.

This chapter will explore the extraordinary flexibility of Peacock's portrayal of Sir Oran in order to provide a concrete demonstration of the ways in which the imaginary animal resists any simple positioning or singular interpretation. Sir Oran can help us see that the modern literary imagination represents animals in a manner that does not match up well with the two main positions advanced by critics of the human-animal relationship from the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century—the contrasting positions of anthropomorphism or alterity. I argue here, through a sketch of selected critical works on the animal in the Anglo-American tradition, that opposing claims that see the animal either through the lens of anthropomorphism or of alterity have largely shaped the critical understanding of animal-kind. Literature provides an alternative model. This chapter ends by describing the ways in which the vital new modern experience of the nonhuman animal, generated within the distinctive historical context of the eighteenth century, gives rise to complex and flexible literary fantasies that verge toward the dissonant, the unconventional, the aberrant, and the unbounded.

Sir Oran Haut-ton

The reader has been introduced to Sir Oran in an earlier chapter of Peacock's work, when he appears as the friend of Mr. Sylvan Forester, the eventual love-match of Antheia and the novel's spokesman for the benefits of nature over the corruptions of civilization as well as for the surpassing virtues of original man. Sir Oran joins Mr. Forester and his guest, Sir Telegraph Paxarett, in an elegant supper on Mr. Forester's estate, Redrose Abbey, a neighboring property to the eligible Antheia's Melincourt

² "Nonhuman animal" and "other animal" have become the acceptable phrases to refer to other-than-human animal species. Following Martha Nussbaum's example, I will sometimes use "animal" or "animal-kind" as shorthand for these more accurate but longer phrases. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 326n.

Castle. Sir Oran, we learn after the conclusion of this meal, is Mr. Forester's protégé, obtained from a sea captain who bought him from "an intelligent negro." Sir Oran had been "caught... very young, in the woods of Angola... and brought... up in [an Angolan family's] cottage as the playfellow of their little boys and girls" (54). As Mr. Forester says, "He is a specimen of the natural and original man—the wild man of the woods; called in the language of the more civilized and sophisticated natives of Angola, *Pongo*, and in that of the Indians of South America, *Oran Outang*" (52).

Sir Oran is a being of natural sentiment and amiable simplicity; he is ingenuous, contemplative, invariably polite, prone to melancholy, and deeply attached to his friends. He is also an instinctually talented musician on the French horn and flute and completely at home in the fashionable world. Mr. Forester has introduced him to the best society, and, he says, "with a view of ensuring him the respect... which always attends on rank and fortune, I have purchased him a baronetcy, and made over to him an estate" (61). Mr. Forester has "also purchased of the Duke of Rottenburgh one half of the elective franchise vested in the body of Mr. Christopher Corporate, the free, fat, and dependent burgess of the ancient and honourable borough of Onevote, who returns two members to Parliament, one of whom will shortly be Sir Oran" (61). A baronet, an MP, a man of feeling, a figure of fashion, and a rescuer of ladies in distress, Sir Oran has only one idiosyncrasy: he has a natural propensity to inebriation. Thus, at the end of the dignified supper with Mr. Forester and Sir Telegraph, where he has behaved with the utmost polite and mannerly attention to Sir Telegraph's comfort, "Sir Oran, ... having taken a glass too much, rose suddenly from table, took a flying leap through the window, and went dancing among the woods like a harlequin" (40).

If, for the moment, we take Sir Oran Haut-ton, Baronet, as a compendium of the many materials and effects that created the imaginary animal of eighteenth-century English literature, we can use him to generate a virtual encyclopedia of eclectic referents. First, Sir Oran shows us how eighteenth-century writers might evoke animal-kind in order to define and advance prominent concepts of human virtue: in this case the idea of natural sensibility with its signature accoutrements of sympathy, honor, dignity, friendship, contemplation, and melancholy, and its systematic separation from artificial attitudes or civilized structures. These good qualities make Sir Oran "a much better man than many that are to be found in civilized countries" (71). At the same time, however, we might understand Sir Oran as a model for the playful or burlesque or even satiric use of the imaginary animal to undercut such ideals. Such dissonance, as we shall see, is the signature attribute of this prototype. Next, Peacock's classical allusions illustrate the ways in which new depictions of nonhuman animals might lean on antique or established traditions—here the mythological domain of early modern humanism. Sir Oran is represented as an updated version of the sylvan semideity of classical mythology, one "of the very same beings whom the ancients worshipped as divinities under the

names of Fauns and Satyrs, Silenus and Pan" (64). Already we can see a tension between Sir Oran as the dignified and contemplative man of feeling, on the one hand, and Sir Oran as a mythological being engaging in his typical "Bacchanalian revelry" as he follows the model of "our friend Pan's attachment to the bottle," on the other (66).³

But the catalog of Sir Oran's roles is even more extensive and diverse. Though the river-rescue scene is compatible with the genre of romantic adventure and looks back to the seventeenth-century prose romance, the scene of Sir Oran's election to Parliament as representative of the borough of Onevote—with its political speechifying, public drunkenness, and final mock-epic brawl—is straightforward social satire. Sir Oran's generic affiliations are continuously under revision, and his character slips into and out of burlesque throughout the novel. Meanwhile, though Sir Oran, as "the natural and original man—the wild man of the woods," is defined in relation to a precivilized simplicity, he is also naturally a man of taste and fashion (52): "The theatres [of London] delighted him, particularly the opera, which not only accorded admirably with his taste for music; but where, as he looked round on the ornaments of the fashionable world, he seemed to be particularly comfortable, and to feel himself completely at home" (60). And indeed we see Sir Oran first at Mr. Forester's supper table, where he helps Sir Telegraph "with great dexterity" to a slice of fish and "bow[s] gracefully" as he tosses off the Madeira "with the usual ceremonies" (39). Here, in an allusion to several contemporary travelers' accounts of hominoid apes' behaviors in human settings, the character of Sir Oran suggests that a nonhuman being can perfect the essential arts of human civilization, especially those of the tea and supper table.

At least twice, Sir Oran's appearance generates an ontological shock, a kind of identity crisis, promulgating the idea of human-animal proximity, or the even more surprising notion that a nonhuman being might actually be indistinguishable from a human. When we first see him through Sir Telegraph's eyes, he appears as "that gentleman, sitting under the great oak yonder in the green coat and nankins [who] seems very thoughtful" (37); and again when he first appears to Anthelia she describes him as a "stranger" of "remarkable physiognomy," "unparalleled strength," and "high fashion." Meanwhile, Sir Oran supplies Peacock with an allusion to comparative anatomy, the modern science whose major discoveries regarding the proximity of humankind and the hominoid ape prepared the way for evolutionary thought: "Comparative anatomy shows that he has . . . in every essential particular, the human form, and the human anatomy" (68). Distinct, but not unrelated, is Peacock's use of Sir Oran to evoke and support a particular interpretation of the Platonistic chain of being; namely, the erosion

of the idea of the immutable gradations of the chain in favor of the possibility of the transformation of species. Thus Sir Telegraph exclaims: "Your Oran rises rapidly in the scale of being—from a Baronet and M.P. to a king of the world, and now to a god of the woods" (65). Sir Oran also gives Peacock an opportunity to invoke the major eighteenth-century taxonomists, Carolus Linnaeus and George-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, and their understanding of the biological classification of the anthropoid ape (62–63).

In addition, Sir Oran embodies the modern question of the role of speech in defining the human, or, more broadly, the nature of language in relation to human and nonhuman being. Peacock's text follows verse and line of contemporary debates on language in recounting that Sir Oran lacks speech but has the physiological organs and full potential for learning to speak, that he does not yet speak because speech is a "highly artificial" and difficult accomplishment of civilized man, that he is an expert musician because music is "more natural to man than speech," and that Mr. Forester is wishing and even expecting "to put a few words into his mouth" (68, 57, 61). But in a very different vein, Sir Oran's failure to speak is seen as a dimension of his "contemplative disposition," which is an allusion to the type of the "mute philosopher," a broad reference to classical traditions of silence from the Stoics to the Pythagoreans (37).⁴ For these traditions, of course, silence is a desideratum rather than a defect to be remedied.

Mr. Forester's benevolent adoption and protection of the orangutan references the contemporary humanitarian movements that advocated the custodianship of animals and resulted in proposals for anticruelty legislation and eventually in the founding of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. On the other hand, Sir Oran's love for Anthelia and his catching her in his arms during the river-rescue scene closely reproduce a disturbing contemporary fantasy of ape-human miscegenation, in which orangutan were said to carry off women to "their woody retreats, in order to enjoy them."⁵ Indeed, the text specifically signals this anxiety by describing Anthelia's "apprehension" in regard to the orangutan. Even though this apprehension is "diminished" by Sir Oran's reassuring behavior, the idea of inter-species miscegenation and of the violence that would accompany it is a vital contemporary image whose currency strongly affects the significance of this imaginary animal. Furthermore, Sir Oran's obvious attraction to Anthelia throughout the novel, especially notable as he shadows her nature walk, "peeping at her through the trees" (102), and in his final exercise of "boundless" wrath on her abductors in the last scene at Alga Castle, makes him a rival for Anthelia's love (449). Here again, Peacock's

³Marilyn Butler observes the problems generated by the satyr connection, noting the strange inversion in which "the satyr behaves like a gentleman." Marilyn Butler, *Peacock Displayed: A Satirist in His Context* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 69.

⁴Reference to silence also evokes the indigenous stories retailed in earlier travel literature: that the orangutan is a human who refuses to speak to avoid work or slavery. See H. W. Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London: Warburg Institute, 1932), 275, 337.

⁵Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2 (London: T. Lowndes, 1774), 360.

text plays down the effects of this rivalry; Sir Oran is only a proxy for Mr. Forester, Anthelia's perfect and uncontested future husband. But the notion of the animal proxy for a human lover is another vivid contemporary image, especially relevant to female pet keeping, to which Peacock's orangutan directly alludes.

In short, Peacock's Sir Oran provides an object lesson in the flexibility of the representation of animal-kind in the modern period. In this single imaginary animal we can find an anthropomorphic projection of human virtue as well as a fearful vision of violent alterity. We can read the orangutan as a playful experiment in species transformation, where the human can try on the identity of the nonhuman being and vice versa. We can take Peacock's account of the nonhuman animal as a practical lesson in contemporary taxonomic method and anatomical practice, as an intervention in theories of the nature of language, or as an expression of new conceptualizations of the life sciences that opened avenues for evolutionist thought. Sir Oran stands for the moral good of benevolent custodianship, but also for the sudden, troubling ontological undecidability inherent in the human discovery of the hominoid ape. He foils any attempt to find a coherent meaning in the imaginary animal or to attach a single significance to the appearance of the animal in literary representation.

In this book I will examine many of those eighteenth-century precedents in the representation of imaginary animals that directly inform and anticipate Sir Oran's multiple meanings, including the sometimes extreme anthropomorphism proposed by Jakob de Bondt, Edward Tyson, Richard Blackmore, and Thomas Boreman; the troubling or even terrifying alterities evoked by Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, John Arbuthnot, and Edward Long; the negotiations with identity, exchange, and transformation proposed by Jonas Hanway, Sarah Scott, Frances Burney, Susanna Centlivre, and Francis Coventry; the taxonomies laid out by Linnaeus and Buffon; the moral advocacy for animal custodianship asserted by Edward Kendall; and the linguistic theories developed by James Burnet, Lord Monboddo. As we shall see, Peacock self-consciously generates his imaginary orangutan out of these preceding forms and themes: Sir Oran is in this respect true to the eighteenth-century experience of the imaginary animal in all of its complexity. But Sir Oran also projects this experience into the future. Indeed, Sir Oran's successors are uncountable; they constitute a vast realm of literary representation—popular and canonical—that plays out this distinctive modern engagement with images of animal-kind. Among anthropoid apes, for instance, a rapid list of local highlights might include Sir Walter Scott's Sylvan of *Count Robert of Paris* (1832), Edgar Allan Poe's orangutan murderer in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841), Franz Kafka's Rotpeter in *A Report to an Academy* (1917), Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tarzan of the Apes* (1914), and of course King Kong of the internationally influential film of that name (1933). The portrayal of the anthropoid ape, however, represents only one stream in a flood of lyrical, narrative, anecdotal, and autobiographical accounts of intimate, immediate,

personal, and contemporary interactions with animal-kind. These accounts swell the canonical and popular press from the early nineteenth century onward, from Sarah Trimmer's *Fabulous Histories, Designed for the Instruction of Children, Respecting Their Treatment of Animals* (1796) and Joseph Taylor's *General Character of the Dog* (1804), with its sequels *Canine Gratitude* (1806) and *Four-Footed Friends* (1828); and from William Wordsworth's *Fidelity* (1805) and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *To Flush, My Dog* (1844); to today's explosion of diverse narrative sub-genres: the rescue-dog stories, detective-fiction dogs, sheepdog trial dogs, supernatural-thriller dogs, and memoirs of dogs, along with the parallel repertory of cat genres, and not to mention the substantial bibliography of imaginative works on pigs, horses, wolves, bears, and birds.⁶ This extensive cultural event—the rise of the nonhuman animal in the modern literary imagination—takes its shape in the eighteenth century, in the literature that comprises Sir Oran's immediate predecessors. Those earlier works, fewer and more venturesome for their time, can be used to examine some of the core ways in which animals enter the modern imagination and alter its products. And like Peacock's orangutan, these experiments in the portrayal of the nonhuman being are flexible, complex, and resistant to a singular understanding of the status or meaning of the animal. Thus they are not readily contained by the set of positions typical of many of the current approaches to the topic of the human-animal relationship—approaches that often oppose anthropomorphism to alterity, or a human-associated to a human-alienating approach to the nonhuman.

Anthropomorphism and Alienation

The modern understanding of the nonhuman being is often built on this opposition between anthropomorphism and alienation—on the long Western tradition of human-animal dichotomization. Richard Sorabji has provided a full history of “the origins of the Western debate” in his account of the treatment of reason in regard to nonhuman animals in classical philosophy of mind. He argues that Aristotle's denial of reason to animals led to a crisis in the understanding of perception, and thence to “a massive re-analysis of psychological capacities: of perception, of perceptual appearance, of belief, of concept-possession, of memory, of intention and preparation, of anger and other emotions, and of speech.”⁷ On the other hand, Sorabji shows, the long

⁶For a summary of nineteenth-century materials, see Barbara T. Gates, *Kindred Nature: Victorian and Edwardian Women Embrace the Living World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 220–230, and Teresa Magnum, “Dog Years, Human Fears,” in *Representing Animals: Theories of Contemporary Culture*, ed. Nigel Rothfels (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 35–47.

⁷Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals: The Origins of the Western Debate* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), 103.

debate generated by the Aristotelian position was variously countered by the views of the Pythagoreans, the Cynics, and the Platonists. Plato's long-standing interest in the idea that animals may be reincarnated humans tended to imply their possession of a rational soul (Sorabji, 10). Similarly, the Pythagoreans and in particular the Pythagorean Empedocles, in opposing meat eating and animal sacrifice, countered the Aristotelian alienation of human from animal by proposing that "we are made of the same elements, one breath permeates us all," and that "we are quite literally akin, because the dog you are beating could be a friend, or presumably a relative, reincarnated." And the Cynic philosopher, Diogenes of Sinope, who went by the nickname of "dog," was an advocate of the claim that animals are superior to humans, a position that is taken up by the Platonist Plutarch (Sorabji, 173, 131, 160).⁸

In the early modern period, the influential positions staked out by Descartes and Montaigne have often been used to map these same contrasting poles for the subsequent debates of modernity. For Descartes, whose central category is the rational soul, the animal is activated solely by "the corporeal and mechanical principle," which he opposes to the "incorporeal principle" or "thinking substance" that defines the human; animals are natural "automatons" for which "we cannot at all prove the presence of a thinking soul."⁹ The core test of this difference for Descartes is the capacity for language: "There is no other animal, however perfect and well-endowed it may be, that can [make their thoughts understood in speech].... This shows not merely that the beasts have less reason than men, but that they have no reason at all.... Their souls [are] completely different in nature from ours." And the crucial consequence is the exclusion of animal-kind from an afterlife:

[The rational soul] cannot be derived in any way from the potentiality of matter, but must be specially created.... After the error of those who deny God,.... there is none that leads weak minds further from the straight path of virtue than that of imagining that the souls of the beasts are of the same nature as ours, and hence after this present life we have nothing to fear or to hope for, any more than flies and ants. But when we know how much the beasts differ from us, we understand much better the arguments which prove that our soul

⁸ James Serpell provides a thumbnail account of the classical and early modern positions on animals, summarizing Richard Sorabji and Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility* (New York: Pantheon, 1983). See Serpell, *In the Company of Animals: A Study of Human-Animal Relationships* (1986; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 147–168. Nussbaum cautions that the intervention of Judeo-Christian views strongly shaped the impact of the classical tradition on animals (328–329).

⁹ René Descartes, Letter to More, 5 February 1649, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 3, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984–1991), 365, 366.

is of a nature entirely independent of the body, and consequently that it is not bound to die with it.¹⁰

In Montaigne's thought, on the other hand, humans and nonhuman animals are on a path toward convergence. Deeply comparable in sensibility, playfulness, and even communication, these beings are sometimes for Montaigne even difficult to distinguish from one another: "When I play with my cat, who can say that it is not she amusing herself with me more than I with her?... This deficiency that prevents communication between them and us, why is it not in us as much as in them?"¹¹ And significantly, in describing his sympathetic connection with animals, Montaigne too takes up the notion of the soul:

Pythagoras borrowed the doctrine of metempsychosis from the Egyptians; but since then, it has been accepted by many nations.... The religion of our ancient Gauls held that men's souls, being eternal, never ceased to move and change place from one body to another.... When I meet, among the more moderate opinions, with arguments whose purpose is to prove the close resemblance between ourselves and animals, and how largely they share in our greatest advantages, and with how much likelihood they are compared to us, I certainly then abate much of our presumption, and readily resign that imaginary sovereignty over other creatures which is attributed to us.¹²

The tendency either to alienation or to association is strongly evident in the modern study of the natural world, from the Darwinian revolution in natural history that generated a new science of human-animal proximity to the rise of ethology and the formulation of behavioral animal studies, whose inductive methodology erects an absolute barrier between animal and human. Sorabji sees Darwin's *Descent of Man* as the modern analogue of Pythagorean ideas of reincarnation, "the claim of literal kinship" between human and animal. Darwin, Sorabji argues, "defends his thesis of the *Descent of Man* from the apes... by insisting that animals differ from man only in degree. No characteristic, he maintains... is unique to man, not emotion, curiosity, imitation, attention, memory, imagination, reason, progressive improvement, tool use, abstraction, self-consciousness, language, sense of beauty, belief in the supernatural, nor moral sense" (131). On the other hand, speaking for modern behavioral

¹⁰ Descartes, "Discourse on the Method" (1737) in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1, 140–141.

¹¹ Michel de Montaigne, "Apology for Raimond Sebond" (1580) in *The Essays of Montaigne*, vol. 2, trans. George B. Ives (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925), 202.

¹² Montaigne, "Of Cruelty" (1580) in *The Essays of Montaigne*, vol. 2, 167.

animal studies, William T. Keeton's basic textbook in biology warns that "we must constantly guard against unwarranted attribution of human characteristics to other species."¹³ And John S. Kennedy's polemical reassertion of the argument against anthropomorphism in *The New Anthropomorphism* (1992) enjoins readers: "If the study of animal behaviour is to mature as a science, the process of liberation from the delusions of anthropomorphism must go on."¹⁴

The alienation of human from animal is further sustained, though in a very different register, by the philosophical problem of the privacy of mind—the skepticism regarding the possibility of knowing what passes in minds not our own. For example, in accounting for the problem of the privacy of pain in "Knowing and Acknowledging" (1969), Stanley Cavell offers his own characterization of the skeptic's real sense of incapacity when encountering another person's feeling. The result is the "gesture towards [the] self": "I am filled with [the] feeling . . . of our separateness . . . and I want you to have it too."¹⁵ Descartes himself refers to this impasse as he reflects on his denial of reason to animal-kind: "Though I regard it as established that we cannot prove there is any thought in animals, I do not think it can be proved that there is none, since the human mind does not reach into their hearts."¹⁶ Though for Descartes the privacy of mind does not support (or refute) his conclusion that animals are automata, it sustains affectively the alienation of human from animal that the Cartesian principle argues logically.

Thus, within and also well beyond modern philosophical discourse, the animal mind has been a focus of intense speculation and a test case for thinking about the subjectivity of minds not our own. Thomas Nagel's well-known essay on the importance of subjectivity, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" (1974), famously considers the experience of a specific nonhuman being in order to explore the divergence between subjective and objective. On the one hand, as a mammal, the bat approaches proximity to the human in that "we all believe that bats have experience." On the other hand, bats diverge sharply from the human because of their use of echolocation; in this respect they are "a fundamentally *alien* form of life." Thus Nagel argues that we cannot "extrapolate to the inner life of the bat"; it has "a specific subjective character, which it is beyond our ability to conceive." But on the other hand, we can know that "there is something that it is like to be a bat."¹⁷ Nagel's animal example thus provides a paradigm for the importance of the subjective character of experience—in that we know both that it exists and that it is inconceivable.

¹³William T. Keeton, *Biological Science* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), 452.

¹⁴John S. Kennedy, *The New Anthropomorphism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 5.

¹⁵Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?* (1969; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 262–263.

¹⁶Descartes, Letter to More, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 3, 365.

¹⁷Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" *The Philosophical Review* 83 (1974): 435–450, 438, 439.

The critical, cultural, and environmental theory of the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century that takes up the issue of animal-kind can also be parsed in terms of this dichotomy between human-associated and human-alienating approaches. A very selective account of this writing can help to illustrate the continuing strength of the dichotomy. In the context of Anglo-American critical theory, the human-alienating perspective is often signaled by the designation of the nonhuman being as the "other." Indeed, the animal-as-other has become a common extrapolation of that very influential human category derived from twentieth-century anthropology and cultural theory. The idea of the "other" reflects the development and manipulation—often through psychoanalysis or Marxist theory—of the Hegelian dialectic between subjective and objective, idea and nature, or master and slave. In all these recent contexts the other usually has a constitutive function in relation to the non-other: the psychic self or the identity of the colonizer is produced through the projection or subjection of the other. Designed originally to define the human self or the claims to power of the human subject, the concept of the other is thus conceived within the realm of human consciousness.

Paul Shepard's *The Others: How Animals Made Us Human* (1996) recruits this idea in support of deep environmentalism. Shepard writes out of "respect for that which is unbridgeable between ourselves and the animals" and describes his position as "an attitude of accepted separateness." But his aim is to demonstrate that the human is ecologically, evolutionarily, cognitively, cosmologically, and psychically created by and through connection with nonhuman animals. His accounts of the human in all these realms serve to "confirm difference in a way that relates us to animals but does not assume that we understand them." The letter signed by "The Others" that closes Shepard's book thus adopts an entirely human epistolary discourse to warn: "When we have gone they will not know who they are."¹⁸

The claim to authenticity is a hallmark of this human-alienating idea of the animal-as-other. Building on the important concept of "becoming-animal" introduced in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), Steve Baker has argued that a study of the role of the animal in postmodern visual culture can supply a definition of both the human-animal relationship and the aesthetics of postmodernism. In Baker's analysis, postmodern art is an "unthinking or undoing of the conventionally human." This form of creativity is evident in postmodern representations of animals, which entail a performance of "becoming-animal"—a representation that is "swept up in something of the animal's difference and distance from the human," and that generates a "radical un-humaning of animals" that is "discouraging [of] anthropomorphic

¹⁸Paul Shepard, *The Others: How Animals Made Us Human* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1996), 5, 7, 333.

identifications" and anthropocentric meanings. By this means, Baker argues, these works of art can obtain access to "the truth and immediacy of these animals" and thus can serve as a direct recording of "precisely that animal's reality." They should be understood then as enacting a literal "sense of responsibility to the animal."¹⁹

But Donna Haraway's sense of responsibility is directly opposed to the human-alienating scenario. In various ways, her works resist paradigms of radical differentiation. *Primate Visions* (1989) employs the methods of postcolonial studies to expose the modern use of the animal for the ends of capitalism, imperialism, technology, and patriarchy. Evoking Said's orientalism, Haraway argues that modern primatology—"simian orientalism"—can be understood as an appropriation of the ape in the form of the other, an appropriation that has served to constitute modern culture. Haraway's summary statement illustrates the extent of her reliance on the idea of the postcolonial other, which operates in a range of repeated contrasts:

Primatology has been about the construction of the self from the raw material of the other, the appropriation of nature in the production of culture, the ripening of the human from the soil of the animal, the clarity of white from the obscurity of color, the issue of man from the body of woman, the elaboration of gender from the resource of sex, the emergence of mind by the activation of body.²⁰

In this book, Haraway makes clear her "distaste for [these] endlessly socially enforced dualisms" (Haraway, *Visions*, 3). In *When Species Meet* (2008) she moves on to active advocacy of a human-associated approach to the "messmates," "companions," or "partners" of humans among animal-kind. Here, Haraway takes up another concept from postcolonial studies: the mediating paradigms of the contact zone or of transculturation, made influential through the works of Mary Louise Pratt and James Clifford. Haraway designates this human-animal association through the notion of "becoming with"—a phrase that expresses a "coshaping" of identities and behaviors, and which refers to complexity, reciprocity, "intra- and interaction," and "multispecies knots."²¹ "Becoming with" is based in touch, in "the making each other available to events," and in the inheritance of common histories, and it results in "accountability, caring for, being affected, and entering into responsibility" (Haraway, *Species* 36, 27). In practice, Haraway's

evidence and proving ground for this relationship is behavioral animal training—"the naturalcultural art, of training for sport with a dog" (Haraway, *Species*, 226).

Significantly, Haraway directly dismisses both Deleuze and Guattari's "becoming-animal" and Derrida's "animal that therefore I am," in both cases for their human-alienating implications. She finds that, though Deleuze and Guattari work, as she does, "to get beyond the Great Divide between humans and other critters to find the rich multiplicities and topologies of a heterogeneously and nonteleologically connected world," they symptomatically fail to achieve this aim in any genuine way because of their inability "to take earthly animals... seriously," because of their scorn, disdain, and even horror for the homely, ordinary, daily, affectional lives of animals (Haraway, *Species*, 27, 29, 30). Meanwhile, for Haraway, Derrida as well, though correct to reject "the facile and basically imperialist... move of claiming to see from the point of view of the other," stops too soon and fails to consider "an alternative form of engagement," residing instead too much on his side of what he himself characterizes as "the abyssal limit of the human."²² Derrida thus "failed a simple obligation of companion species: he did not become curious about what the cat might actually be doing, feeling, thinking, or perhaps making available to him in looking back at him that morning" (Haraway, *Species*, 21, 20).

Haraway's criticism shows that she ultimately understands the post-structuralist view—in which the animal is thought in terms of aporia, self-difference, or antifoundational multiplicity—to be a human-alienating position, one that rejects any simple or direct forms of engagement, communication, or proximity between animal and human. And like Haraway, other recent Anglo-American cultural and literary critics have also invoked the continental tradition to support versions of this radically alien positioning of the animal. Cary Wolfe's *Animal Rites* (2003), for instance, leaning on Derrida's "animal that therefore I am," works from the grounding assertion of the abyssal rupture entailed by the other-than-human. Wolfe seeks to make this idea of radical animal alterity into the preeminent category of post-structuralist difference or heterogeneity by arguing that what "Derrida is struggling to say [is] that the animal difference is... not just any difference among others; it is, we might say, the most different difference, and therefore the most instructive." Wolfe's own struggle to bring this "posthumanist" understanding of the animal to bear upon questions of ethics leads him to emphasize the embeddedness of the "inhuman" in post-structuralist thinking in regard to the human, a move that almost brings the human-alienating position around full circle to the human-associated view. Citing Derrida especially, Wolfe claims that the animal "resides at the core of the human itself [as]... the 'trace'... that inhabits it," as "the outside

¹⁹ Steve Baker, "What Does Becoming-Animal Look Like?" in *Representing Animals*, ed. Nigel Rothfels (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 67–98, 80, 96, 95, 88, 89.

²⁰ Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 11.

²¹ Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 42, 4, 35.

²² Jacques Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)," *Critical Inquiry* 28 (2002): 369–418, 381.

that is always already inside," or the "non-power at the heart of power."²³ This near-full circle explains how Wolfe could begin a study designed to track the radical alterity of the animal with a strongly human-associated evocation of contemporary popular views (from *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report*) of the breakdown of human-animal boundaries through accounts of experiments demonstrating animal subjectivity, cognition, altruism, and linguistic innovation. In the end, however, Wolfe's theoretical claims as he develops them in *Animal Rites* simply contradict these empirical, experiential, hands-on human-animal associations, which occupy a mode of understanding the animal that is ultimately incompatible with the philosophical discourse that generates the radical abyss of the post-structuralist animal-as-other.

As Wolfe's attention to Derrida indicates, some literary critics treat animal studies as an immediate successor to deconstruction by interpreting the critique of language and subjectivity through the lens of the human/animal difference, thus recreating post-structuralism as posthumanism. The 2009 *PMLA* issue on animal studies features several essays that echo these themes: that the animal embodies radical difference, that that difference is constitutive of the human, that we are always already radically inhuman, and that the idea of the animal challenges not only claims to humanity but also claims to agency and knowledge, including those assertions of moral certitude that defend the rights of animals.²⁴ The posthumanist view thus forces alterity and identity—the human-alienating and the human-associated positions that we have been pursuing from Descartes to Montesquieu—into one intensely aporetic depiction of the animal. And thus, like Wolfe, critics pursuing this perspective often express a strong allegiance to the human-associated position.

Not surprisingly, trainers, describing an immediate hands-on engagement with animals, have been the most direct advocates of the human-associated position. As we have seen, Haraway's "becoming with," in *When Species Meet*, directly recounts the experience of agility training. Vicki Hearne, an animal trainer and poet turned philosopher-theorist, had also drawn on her background as an animal trainer to propose a strongly antiskeptical and antialienating perspective. In fact, as the field of animal studies develops a canon, Hearne's *Adam's Task* (1987) has become recognized as the pioneering synthesis of moral philosophy, poetic impulse, and animal advocacy in the service of a strongly asserted human-associated argument. The core of Hearne's contribution is an engagement with language and communication. She takes up as an opening question

the anthropomorphic language of animal trainers, and moves on to her own operative category—the idea of inter-species "talking" or "conversation." Talking expresses her investment in the active participation and communication between trainer and animal. This is a form of communication that generates for Hearne a kind of knowledge—"knowledge of the loop of intention and openness that talk is, knowledge of and in language."²⁵ Hearne's "talking" evokes a respect for animal consciousness, intelligence, morality, courage, and even heroism, and leads to "transformations that are psychically miraculous," most especially the transformation "that takes the trainer and the animal out of the moral life and comforts of its patent goods into the life of art, a life of uncertain value but characterized by genuine risks and diamond-hard responses and unprecedented responsibilities" (245). Influenced by Cavell's ideas about doubt, language, and understanding, Hearne acknowledges the "problem of the other," but expresses this skepticism not as a problem of "knowing the other" but as a function of our own "unreadiness to be understood," "our making mysteries of ourselves with the aid of science and philosophy." Horses, for example, have a "capacity to feel our presence incomparably beyond our ability to feel theirs"; our "denial of our own knowability" by the horse, our "will to remain obscure" to the animal, express only our own failure to engage in the human-animal conversation of training.²⁶ This is a failure to grasp "true knowledge" (115).

Language is a core criterion, then, in these approaches to the dichotomy of the human-animal relationship, not only in cultural and critical theory but in the life sciences as well. Eileen Crist's *Images of Animals* (1999) argues that in behavioral thought, from natural science to ethology to sociobiology, "particular linguistic mediums" have played a powerful and formative role in "the creation of alternative visions of animals." In readings of selected texts, from Darwin to twentieth-century sociobiology, Crist distinguishes the "ordinary language of action and mind," often labeled as anthropomorphism, from the technical language of behavior. The first represents animals as subjects possessed of "knowledge, emotion, intention, thinking, and memory"; it "advances a powerful view of animal life as experientially meaningful, authored, and temporally cohesive and articulates a compelling argument for human-animal evolutionary continuity. . . . [It offers] the understanding of animal life in semantic kinship with the human world." The second tends to remove "authorship from the animal world"; as a result "animals appear mindless . . . [and] the conceptual space for a tacit or explicit attribution of mentality drastically shrinks." This latter mode of discourse both reflects and also serves to construct the version

²³ Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 67, 17, 72, 67, quoting Derrida.

²⁴ See *PMLA* 124 (2009): Susan McHugh, "Literary Animal Agents," 487–499; Una Chaudhuri, "Of All Nonsensical Things: Performance and Animal Life," 520–525; Rosi Braidotti, "Animals, Anomalies, and Inorganic Others," 526–521; Bruce Boehrer, "Animal Studies and the Deconstruction of Character," 542–547; Cary Wolfe, "Human, All Too Human: Animal Studies' and the Humanities," 564–575.

²⁵ Vicki Hearne, *Adam's Task: Calling Animals by Name* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 85.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 114–115. The third and fifth of these quoted passages are from a personal letter from Cavell, reproduced by Hearne.

of mind-body dualism that, Crist argues, has generated an “oppositional conception of the human and animal nature”: an absolute distinction between action and behavior—the former being mindful, meaningful, and human, and the latter being unintentional, physiological, and animal.²⁷

Even within the field of animal behavioral studies, then, some researchers advocate a rehabilitated anthropomorphism, a concern with continuities between animal and human mental capacities. In *Anthropomorphism, Anecdotes, and Animals*, a collection on the newly visible debate about the uses and abuses of anthropomorphism, Frans B. M. De Waal’s foreword summarizes the dichotomy at hand:

Students of animal behavior are faced with a choice between classifying animals as automatons or granting them volition and information-processing capacities. Whereas one school warns against assuming things we cannot prove, another school warns against leaving out what may be there.... Inasmuch as descriptions [of volition and awareness] place animals closer to us than to machines, they adopt a language we customarily use for human action. Inevitably, these descriptions sound anthropomorphic.²⁸

The authors of the book’s introduction describe both the earlier engagement with and the renewed interest in animal consciousness, observing that “attitudes towards these approaches to understanding animals are changing within the scientific community” (3).

As we have seen, the imaginary Sir Oran Haut-ton, Baronet, is very far from this debate. His multiple meanings intersect and diverge unpredictably, comically, ironically, or satirically, making it impossible either to assign him entirely to the world of the other or to embrace him as a partner or fellow animal, and rendering irrelevant those categories of authenticity, immediacy, respect, and responsibility that have served to valorize one side or the other of the human-animal debate. The perspectives developed from the conflicting representations of the nonhuman animal in science, philosophy, and cultural and critical theory are not much help as we try to understand the fantasies of animal-kind presented in the literature of Sir Oran’s era. Guided by the figure of Sir Oran, we might hypothesize that, unlike the animals given to us by theory, science, and philosophy—which are either absolutely alien or intimately familiar—the representations of animal-kind in the literary culture of this period offer a diverse range of formal, thematic, rhetorical, and generic innovations that resemble each other

²⁷ Eileen Crist, *Images of Animals: Anthropomorphism and Animal Mind* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 8, 204, 202, 203, 214.

²⁸ Frans B. M. De Waal, forward to Robert W. Mitchell, Nicholas S. Thompson, and H. Lyn Miles, eds., *Anthropomorphism, Anecdotes, and Animals* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), xv.

not in their adherence to either a human-alienating or human-associated perspective, but in their dissonance—in their tendency to surprise, to invert, to challenge, or to experiment with expected modes of order and stable structures of meaning.²⁹ In this dissonance, Sir Oran and his eighteenth-century predecessors establish their own models for the imaginary animal—models that take a different tack from and shed new light on the opposition between anthropomorphism and alienation, and that provide a distinctive understanding of both the human-animal relationship and the animal’s role in history.

Humans and Other Animals in Human History

Anthropological and archaeological approaches to animals have proposed an intimate, even constitutive, connection between human culture and the representation of animal-kind. In summarizing his argument that the metaphoric use of the “totemic” animal represents a complex embodiment of “ideas and relations conceived by speculative thought” rather than simply an arbitrary symbol or an indication of a potential food source, Lévi-Strauss produced a now widely cited aphorism: that animals are selected for human cultural activities “not because they are ‘good to eat’ but because they are ‘good to think.’”³⁰ Thinking about animals is a uniquely human trait—a mode of imagining that seems to have emerged with the development of human culture. Steven Mithen, in his study of “the prehistory of human-animal interaction,” produces a theory of the representation of animals that suggests the historical centrality of imaginary animal-kind to human evolution itself. For Mithen, the human-animal relationship—as a cultural phenomenon and as a conceptual problematic—is a core evolutionary event. He claims that humans have moved “beyond the predator, competitor and prey relationships that other animals experience into a whole new world of inter-species interactions that are unique to ourselves.” For Mithen, “the course of our biological and cultural evolution is indeed intimately tied up with the emergence of those new inter-species relationships” that are grounded in the realm of representation.³¹

²⁹ Christine Kenyon-Jones argues in a similar way that literary representations of animals can “have an advantage over cultural history, anthropology, sociology and scientific disciplines” by offering “a space in which human creativity can experiment with different ideas about animals, without claiming for itself a specious (speciesist) ‘rightness’ or ‘correctness’ about what is being done.” She also notes “animals’ capacity for consolidating, challenging and reforming human ideas and cultures.” *Kindred Brutes: Animals in Romantic-Period Writing* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2001), 8–9.

³⁰ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism*, trans. Rodney Needham (1962; repr. Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 89.

³¹ Steven Mithen, “The Hunter-Gatherer Prehistory of Human Animal Interaction,” *Anthropos* 12 (1999): 195–204, 195, 201.

The first modern humans...developed that diverse range of relationships with animals that we see in the modern world today. One of the key mental developments lying behind these new relationships seems to be that of anthropomorphizing animals. As long ago as 500,000 years ago, our human ancestors are likely to have evolved a theory of mind: interpreting the behavior of other human individuals by attributing to them beliefs and desires different to one's own...This ability would have been essential for the development of more complex human societies...After 50,000 years ago, it seems that this way of thinking was also applied to animal minds, one manifestation of what I have termed the emergence of "cognitive fluidity"...In this regard, by attributing animals with human-like minds, those animals were brought into the world of human culture and society. (126)

In other words, imaginary animal-kind has both created complex human society and also given animals themselves a role in human history—the potential to affect and alter human culture.

As in human prehistory, in human history thinking about nonhuman animals has been a generative activity, shaped by the conditions of the particular historical moment, but in turn informing the realm of human culture. An examination of distinctive fantasies of animal-kind thus engages both the cultural impact and the historical role of the animal. For eighteenth-century England, imaginary animals reflect a new historical experience and indicate a new mode of understanding, distinct from the concrete experiences and structures of thought characteristic of the medieval and early modern representations of the natural world. The assessment of the change in the mode of thought from the early modern to the modern period has been shaped by Foucault's account of the turn away from the "age of similitude" in the mid-seventeenth century.³² William B. Ashworth has defined this cultural shift specifically from the perspectives of natural history and the representation of animals. What Ashworth calls "the emblematic world view" dominates the late-Renaissance perspective on the natural world and is evident in the humanist discourse of the Renaissance encyclopedists Conrad Gesner and Ulisse Aldrovandi. Theirs is "a discipline forged in the library with the bibliographic tools of the scholar," characterized by the collation of symbolic, metaphorical, and emblematic materials, whose goal is "to capture the entire web of associations that inextricably links human culture and the animal world."³³ The works of emblematic natural history are

³² Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon, 1970).

³³ William B. Ashworth Jr., "Emblematic Natural History of the Renaissance," in *The Cultures of Natural History*, ed. Nicholas Jardine, J. Anne Secord, and Emma C. Spary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 17–37, 19, 35.

complex exegetical compilations of classical mythology, associative images, Aesopian symbolism, adages, devices, and emblems.

Ashworth argues that this approach to the representation of animals is transformed in the mid-seventeenth century by the appearance of the first documentation of new-world animals in natural histories—animals who had "no known similitudes" and no "emblematic significances" to be collated. When the representation of old-world animals was adapted to match the model of new-world descriptions, suddenly "the Old World animals lay naked to the observer's eye for the first time."³⁴ Meanwhile, even for the earlier encyclopedists the use of naturalistic images within their emblematic texts diverged fundamentally from the exclusively symbolic bestiary illustrations of the medieval period. Their interest in carefully naturalistic illustrations seems to have derived from the botanical images of medicinal books, where accurate representation was essential to the identification of particular plants. Combined with a new engagement with empirical thinking, and new efforts to test the truth of the associative and symbolic information gathered by the Renaissance natural historians, these impulses turned the project and discourse of natural history decisively away from an emblematic understanding, and the meanings and significances of animals took an entirely different direction.

This major shift in the understanding of the natural world is implicated in and contemporaneous with historical novelty—with the concrete new encounters between human and nonhuman beings that mark the eighteenth century as a decisive moment in the understanding and representation of animal-kind. Social and cultural historians of this period have accumulated evidence for this new engagement with the animal in a range of studies. Harriet Ritvo has focused on the "new human assertiveness" toward animals connected with the development of stock breeding, the rise of the life sciences, and the major taxonomic systems of the eighteenth century. She describes this period as indicating a "fundamental shift in the relationship between humans and their fellow creatures." Keith Thomas treats a range of themes that demonstrate the changes in attitude toward animals that take place in the period up to 1800 and that generate what he terms the "modern sensibility," including the rise of empiricism, the development of biological classification, the creation of the companion animal, the speculation about animal souls, the effects of urbanization, and the pursuit of humanitarianism. J. H. Plumb believes the new eighteenth-century practice of pet keeping to be a key factor in the "acceptance of modernity." Londa Schiebinger describes the "excitement and confusion" of eighteenth-century taxonomists as they sought to confer order on a natural world that was being strangely reshaped by the discovery of the hominoid

³⁴ William B. Ashworth Jr., "Natural History and the Emblematic World View," in *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution*, ed. David D. Lindberg and Robert S. Westman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 303–332, 318, 319.

ape. Philip Armstrong focuses on the role of scientific experimentalism in generating the “radical” “shift in human-animal relations occurring in Europe in the eighteenth century”—a shift that is felt most directly in the “confusion of this boundary between wild anthropomorph and human.” Ingrid H. Tague argues that eighteenth-century epitaphs and elegies for animals demonstrate the widespread practice of pet keeping in the period. And H. W. Janson’s classic study of “ape lore” has demonstrated the impact on the modern imagination of the “discovery” of the hominoid ape, whose “formal entry . . . into the consciousness of Western civilisation” he dates to 1699.³⁵

These and other studies suggest that the experience of nonhuman animals was dramatically reshaped by two major and related historical phenomena that coincided in this period: the discovery of the hominoid ape and the rise of widespread bourgeois pet keeping. In each case, animals entered the space and consciousness of human beings in a distinctively new way. The discovery of the hominoid ape grew out of the globalizing context of mercantile capitalism, through travel, trade, and exploration, and gave rise to an explosion of popular and scientific speculation about the relationship between humans and nonhuman animals that threw European thought into “turmoil,” and that ultimately led to the development of theories of evolution (Thomas, 129). Contact with the hominoid ape thus worked in the realm of concept and cognition to raise problems of ontology and to disrupt accepted ideas of human identity or genealogy. At the same time, the cultural practice of pet keeping arose in the commercial, bourgeois society of eighteenth-century England, creating the companion animal as an antidote to the alienation and commodification of modern urban life. Humans have always had intimate connections with other animals, but the particular material practices and modes of interaction characteristic of the relationship with the pet are highly distinctive and historically specific. This period saw extensive experimentation with types of pets, the breeding and sale of pets, their adornment and taming, and their memorialization in literature and other arts. Thus intimacy with the pet pertained to the everyday experience of the life world and presented novel alternative structures of kinship and difference, affection and antithesis.

Together these two historical innovations in human-animal contact generated a vital imaginative power that fundamentally shaped the idea and the roles of nonhuman

³⁵Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 13, 2; Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility* (New York: Pantheon, 1983); J. H. Plumb, “The Acceptance of Modernity,” in *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); Londa Schiebinger, *Nature’s Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 80; Philip Armstrong, *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 49, 55; Ingrid H. Tague, “Dead Pets: Satire and Sentiment in British Elegies and Epitaphs for Animals,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41 (2008): 289–306; and H. W. Janson, *Ape and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London: Warburg Institute, 1952), 336.

animals as they are represented in the literature of the modern period. Because they are tied to relatively sudden disruptions in established ways of understanding animal—and human—kind, the imaginary animals of this historical moment offer dissonant, alternative, or unconventional avenues for approaching literary form, human identity, genealogical continuity, relationships of hierarchy, and ideas of coherence, and raise larger questions about the nature of the human, the definition of love, the experience of diversity, and the possibility of transcendence. As Tague argues, “Eighteenth-century people used animals to think about the world and their place in it” (292). Writing about animals in this period brought some of the abstract ideas of contemporary philosophical and scientific speculation into the realm of everyday experience and found distinctive forms for the expression of these ideas. Thus Plumb finds that “quite humble activities [of human-animal contact] played their part in the acceptance of modernity and of science . . . [thus creating] one of the greatest revolutions in human life” (233). Indeed, the depiction of nonhuman animals in eighteenth-century literature generated more instances of unconventional ways of thinking than were available in the contemporaneous treatment of human difference. Native American, African, and Polynesian “princes” who visited London in the eighteenth century were accommodated as European aristocrats. Slaves were represented as sentimental objects, to create support for the popular antislavery movement. Africans were caricatured as “Hottentots” or apes. But dogs could revise norms of intimacy, monkeys could expose systems of violence, orangutan could become inappropriate heroes, and imaginary animals could cross over the boundary of the real into a realm of inter-species transcendence.

The chapters that follow pursue significant instances of these dissonances, showing that the aesthetic effects of animals and the kinds of conceptual or ontological thinking that they inspire are inseparable and systematically coordinated. The chapter entitled “Mirror Scene” pursues the motif of the indistinguishability of human and ape—which can be traced in writings from seventeenth-century travel narratives to *Frankenstein*—to suggest the ways in which imaginary animals posed disorienting ontological questions and deranged the core eighteenth-century concepts of human self-definition: the heritage of classical humanism and the new affective values of sensibility. The trope of the lady and the lapdog from Pope to Dickens is the subject of chapter 3, “Immoderate Love,” which argues that the structures of inversion typical of that image produce a new understanding of intimacy, based on the alienating effects of reversal and dissonance rather than on norms of kinship and coherence. Chapter 4, “Violent Intimacy,” shows that the image of the pet monkey connects the dramatic comedy of the early eighteenth century to Frances Burney’s influential novel of manners, *Evelina*. The monkey generates questions about the eighteenth-century ideal of companionate marriage in a way that extends beyond social satire and beyond prescriptions for decorous female conduct, to portray the experience of gender difference as an alien, even violent struggle. And “Dog

Narrative," chapter 5, describes the sub-genre of dog-centered and dog-narrated fiction, invented in the eighteenth century and surviving through the twentieth. This chapter shows that ideas about canine behavior and character—its endemic itinerancy and its implication with the diversity of beings—provide ways of representing the aberrant or unconventional, of creating a fantasy of species transcendence, and of challenging conventions of novelistic realism.

These are some of the founding figures for the flood of animal literature that then follows Peacock's *Melincourt; or, Sir Oran Haut-ton*. They belong to the first phase of the rise of the animal in the modern literary imagination, and thus they express most clearly the disruptive forces of novelty and innovation. The emblematic Aesopian tradition, which, as we have seen, played such a significant role in late-Renaissance natural history, continues as an influential strain throughout the eighteenth century, initially through its neoclassical redactions by John Dryden and John Gay, and especially in its later adaptations for the juvenile press.³⁶ But as Keith Thomas says, "It was direct experience rather than classical tradition which did the most" to create the new views of animal-kind in the eighteenth century and to inspire their literary redactions (121). In large part, the fable tradition tends to hold this immediacy of experience, and the literary dissonance it produces, at a distance. Furthermore, as it develops in the course of the later eighteenth century, the animal fable begins to dissolve into natural history and realist description, blending materials from contemporary experience and observation with the symbolic depiction that made it a core component of the emblematic worldview. Louise E. Robbins has described the complex relationship between fables and natural history in this period, arguing that "nature continued to be a source for lessons, but in a different way than it had been in earlier periods." In Robbins's account, "the mingling of fable and natural history occurred in both directions," creating a "hybrid genre" that mixed scientific observation and moral meanings. By this means, moralizing was translated from the classical format of the Aesopian fable to the empirical context of the naturalists' descriptive writing. Thus, for Robbins, "Buffon was a master of the new fable."³⁷

³⁶ Studies of the Aesopian tradition include Annabel M. Patterson, *Fables of Power: Aesopian Writing and Political History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991); Jayne Elizabeth Lewis, *The English Fable: Aesop and Literary Culture, 1651–1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Mark Loveridge, *A History of Augustan Fable* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Frank Palmeri, "The Autocritique of Fables," in *Humans and Other Animals in Eighteenth-Century British Culture*, ed. Frank Palmeri (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006), 83–100; Frank Palmeri, "The History of Fables and Cultural History in Eighteenth-Century England," in *Historical Boundaries, Narrative Forms: Essays on British Literature in the Long Eighteenth Century in Honor of Everett Zimmerman*, ed. Lorna Clymer and Robert Mayer (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007). Palmeri argues in "Autocritique" that certain critical fables "examine the form from within," and thus constitute another kind of divergence from emblematic representation (83).

³⁷ Louise E. Robbins, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots: Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century Poets* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 179, 181.

The imaginary animals generated by these new views of animal-kind are flexible and complex fantasies which, as Sir Oran has taught us, are best understood through a close analysis of the diverse images, themes, or formal structures that they generate within their particular texts, and through a perspective that attends to the potential for disruption of accepted ways of ordering or understanding that these structures may imply. Thus they mingle human-associated and human-alienating impulses, anthropomorphism and alterity, in a way that takes the question of the human-animal relationship in a different direction from that of the strict dichotomy that we have seen to be common in theoretical and scientific discourse. All these animals exist only in the realm of representation, but all are also mediated expressions of the new human contact with actual animals in this period of historical transition. Whether in literature, philosophy, or science, claims to an authentic rendering of the historical existences of "real" animal beings are obviously problematic, and assertions about respect and responsibility are highly contentious. The perspective provided by a critique of literary culture, on the other hand, finds a different way of assessing the presence of animals in history. First, it suggests a means of understanding imaginary animal-kind as emerging from a particular dimension of the historical contact between humans and other animals. And second, these imaginary animals can themselves be seen to participate in history by opening up distinctive opportunities for creativity, which in turn shape the human relationship with the world. The monster of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, an imaginary being generated by the discovery of the hominoid ape, continues to exert an influence on the modern understanding of science, technology, and identity. And the itinerant dog narrator, a creation of the bourgeois phenomenon of pet keeping, still helps us imagine experiences ordinarily beyond our ken—the lives and deaths of the homeless, as well as the worlds beyond boundaries that all beings might share.

On a broader scale, the perspective of literary culture may also prove useful in suggesting approaches to other portrayals of animals in purportedly nonimaginative contexts. Of course, all discursive modes of delineating or understanding animals are powerfully mediated by the effects and forms of language. As we have seen for example, Eileen Crist's close readings of the "linguistic mediums" of behaviorism illustrate the ways in which the process of representation itself constructs particular visions of animals even in the fields of sociobiology and ethology. But more pervasively, absolutely every effort to gain access to animals "on their own terms" or to "the animal as other" raises the basic representational paradox that continues to challenge modern critical approaches to the animal: that all such efforts emanate from the realm of human language and culture. In his study of *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* (2008), Philip Armstrong provides a summary acknowledgment of this problem: "Of course novelists, scientists and scholars can never actually

access, let alone reproduce, what other-animals mean on their own terms. Humans can only represent animals' experience through the mediation of cultural encoding, which inevitably involves a reshaping according to our own intentions, attitudes and preconceptions." Armstrong here summarizes some of the subtle remedies for the paradox of representation that have been proposed by modern critics: strategies of indirection that include a search for subtle "traces" or the more animal-based "tracks" left by actual animals within human texts, signs of destabilization and deconstruction of agency, or a kind of revulsion against the human that is said to propel the reader toward an inter-species sympathy (2, 3, 46-47). The application of these remedies has been limited to strenuous, local close reading, and thus their larger usefulness and relevance to a conceptualization of the human-animal relationship have been circumscribed. But the problem of representation, as understood in animal studies, does suggest a special relevance for imaginative literature, which this study seeks to exemplify. To the extent that literary texts openly lay claim to the realm of representation, foregrounding the medium and the processes of mediation and making those processes available to detailed analysis, imaginative literature may provide a template for assessing a wider range of discursive representations of animals, including those of ethics and philosophy, or biology and evolution. In other words, if we admit the whole world of imaginary animals into our thinking about the human-animal connection, we can develop a new vocabulary for understanding that connection.

And literature has a deeper relevance to other representations of animals as well. The interactions of humans and other animals—and the issues of justice and rights that have emerged from these interactions in our own period—are to at least some extent historically implicated with the imaginary representation of animal-kind. Since the eighteenth century, as we have seen, literary animals have inspired modes of thought that question conventional hierarchies, and they have projected such questions into the modern debate about the status of animals. It was in the period of Sir Oran Haut-ton that the range of political topics that have formed the basis of modern animal-rights discussions took shape: the animal-protection movement and the founding of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (1824), the vegetarian movement, the antivivisection movement, and the inspiration for the utilitarian defense of animals in Jeremy Bentham's famous query, "Can they suffer?"³⁸ These were followed by the first sustained argument for animal rights by Henry Salt in his *Animals' Rights Considered*

³⁸ Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, 2nd ed. (1823; repr. Darien, Conn.: Hafner Publishing, 1948), 311. On these political developments, see Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 143-191; Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes*; Gates, *Kindred Nature*; James Turner, *Reasoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); and Kathryn Shevelov, *For the Love of Animals: The Rise of the Animal Protection Movement* (New York: Henry Holt, 2008).

in *Relation to Social Progress* (1892), and ultimately by the major modern works of Peter Singer, Tom Regan, Mary Midgley, Martha Nussbaum, and others.³⁹ Thus, though they exist only within the imagination, the animals of eighteenth-century literature possess an historical effectivity. From the realm of the human imagination, they can alter the world of all beings.

³⁹ Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: Towards an End to Man's Inhumanity to Animals* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976); Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983); Mary Midgley, *Animals and Why They Matter* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1983); and Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice*.