

THESIS

POSTHUMANIST (AUTO)ETHNOGRAPHY:
TOWARD THE ETHICAL REPRESENTATION OF OTHER ANIMALS

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Summer 2011

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ABSTRACT

POSTHUMANIST (AUTO)ETHNOGRAPHY: TOWARD THE ETHICAL REPRESENTATION OF OTHER ANIMALS

This thesis project maps the theoretical reasoning for the extension of ethical considerations about representations of Others to Animal Others, and then offers ethical guidelines for the practical application of such considerations. More specifically, I point to autoethnography as a means of responsibly studying the animal Other in relation to and alliance with the human animal. As such, my project reflects a cross-disciplinary thread of interest seen in English studies, sociology, and anthropology. Notably, I use a selection of mainstream texts to illustrate each of the guidelines and, in the process, demonstrate how autoethnography might enable writers to confront ethical questions, inherently attest to the value of doing so, and thereby begin to actualize the ideological change envisioned by many postcolonial and animal studies scholars. I argue that this kind of change requires writers to fully embrace insights of certain scholars, such as Édouard Glissant's notion of Opacity. I reveal why and how this powerful notion combined with Cary Wolfe's tenets of posthumanist theory should guide the inquiries and written representations of animal Others. In totality, I demonstrate how posthumanist (auto)ethnography performed with opacity is a genre that potentially allows for the most ethical representation of alliances with other animals, why this matters, and to whom. Therefore, this project relates broadly to discussions in animal studies and uses research

methodology drawn from the field of rhetoric and composition, as well as sociology and anthropology.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and express my deep gratitude to the following individuals:

First and foremost, my mother, Linda Galyean Robinson. While this project would not exist without her for many reasons, her infallible support and faith in me has meant everything.

My father, Walt Robinson, who believed his “wild child” would make her own path, and has been ready to help me through the brambles along the way.

Dr. Sue Doe, who never shied away from my attempt to carve out a niche in our field. This thesis is largely the result of our many conversations over the last year about autoethnography, animals, and social justice for others. I appreciate every minute of her personal time.

My sister Kelly Robinson Bernado who lovingly fulfills the bonds of obligation with all members of her multispecies family.

John Robinson, my supportive brother, who I know will champion my next step.

To the other committee members, Dr. Sarah Sloane and Dr. Jane Shaw, for graciously agreeing to lend their names and their time to this work. I am honored and I am grateful.

Dr. Lynn Worsham, for her encouragement and contribution to this project.

To dear family and friends whose enthusiasm lifted my wings more than once during this process, with special thanks to Stacey Johnson and Summer Whisman—they know why.

PREFACE

Two front paws press into my thigh, bringing me back into my loft office and out of the world of my paper, one I entered by way of the computer screen-door. I look down to see Bleu's eyes wide-open, staring intently, a soft begging. Not the kind of pleading I see when he wants yet another Cheerio or more peanut butter (two of his favorite foods), but one that is driven by a need to relate and touch. This is a more emotional request, one meant to satisfy a deeper appetite—an appetite for interaction, love. But whose story am I telling here? Mine? Ours? How do I know I have represented my little dog well?

Entanglements. That is the nature of the bonds I share with two dogs—Bleu and Jaxon. Bleu is a Silky Terrier and a philosopher who has a cape and isn't afraid to don it. Jaxon is a Corgi-Bichon mix (we think), an outdoor enthusiast, runner, and social butterfly. I am a Caucasian mix and a lover of dogs, a dreamer really. Confusing, amazing, and sometimes downright messy, our characters, our “selves,” compose what Eduardo Kohn calls an “ecology of selves.” We beings live together, respond to one another, and thus shape each other in a co-constitutive process called life. But how does one represent this life or these lives responsibly? Can we?

When I was first introduced to autoethnography, I was struck by how postcolonial scholars interested in representing the generally silenced voices of Others have appropriated the genre for these purposes. Drawing from this, I began to consider *who* could be represented in this genre. I wondered if one might represent animal cultures and thus provide a voice for nonhuman beings. How would this work, I wondered, considering the central task of autoethnography would be impossible—the voice of the Other speaking for him or herself in resistance to portrayals of him or her—because the nonhuman is largely incapable of constructing the language that would do the representing and provide the insider perspective and lived experience? So I went looking

for representations of animals that seemed intent upon approaching fairer forms of representation of the nonhuman experience. While I found a relatively small collection of ethnographic studies involving autoethnographic methods, it soon occurred to me that entire shelves of my personal bookcases were dedicated to memoirs about animals. Everyday people authored these personal accounts in an attempt to integrate a fair rendering of the experience of their companions—essentially these texts were autoethnographic in nature. Since I had been planning to write about my life with Jaxon and Bleu, I originally bought these texts because I was interested in seeing how these people represented their bonds with animals in hope they might serve as a model for me. Yet, as much as I enjoyed them, there was something troubling me about these texts, something that kept me from writing about my animals.

Together, my companions and I are a pack. Our trio knows that response is required in spaces that society has paradoxically constructed as spaces that both separate and bond: human-canine. Entanglements often occur in these hyphens—these liminal spaces—when beings are open to them and each Other. I wanted to represent this space and each of my animal companions as respectfully and ethically as possible, and I wasn't sure these texts were the best models for doing that. What I really wanted were clear guidelines for representing animals ethically, guidelines I had not found. This thesis is the result of my search for methods that might begin to attend to the ethical concerns that representations of animal Others inspire, require, and wholly deserve. Thus, the bonds of obligation are my imperative.

DEDICATION



For my beloved companions, Jaxon and Bleu, who remained by my side on many a night into the twilight hours as this thesis took shape. My love for you is imbued in every word.

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Introduction: Why Animals?

“Today, through our ideologically loaded narratives of their lives, animals ‘hail’ us to account for the regimes in which they and we must live. We “hail” them into our constructs of nature and culture, with major consequences of life and death, health and illness, longevity and extinction. We also live with each other in the flesh in ways not exhausted by our ideologies. Stories are much bigger than ideologies. In that is our hope.”

~ Donna Haraway

Back in 1992 a renowned classical rhetorician dared to suggest that animals belong in our ken. In “A Hoot in the Dark: The Evolution of General Rhetoric,” George Kennedy broadly defines rhetoric as energy used by social animals to communicate. In doing so, this rhetorician sought to broaden the research of rhetorical studies—both in terms of the definition of rhetoric as well as who employs rhetorical practices. In short, Kennedy sought to include nonhuman animals as part of the “who” by positing that rhetoric is prior to speech and therefore employable by many species. Kennedy insists “we share a ‘deep’ universal rhetoric” with other social animals; meaning, humans “can learn to understand animal rhetoric and many animals can understand some features of human rhetoric that they share with us, such as gestures or sounds that express anger or friendliness or commands” (“Hoot” 6). Kennedy’s animal rhetoric appears six years later in his book, *Comparative Rhetoric: An Historical and Cross-Cultural Introduction*.¹ The first part of his book is dedicated to rhetoric in societies without writing and opens with a

1. The stated goals of Kennedy’s comparative study are to identify universals and distinctions in rhetorical practices across a wide variety of cultures; formulate a “general theory of rhetoric” that is innately shared by these societies; and develop terminology to describe these cross-cultural rhetorical practices (*Comparative* 1).

chapter provocatively titled, “The Rhetoric of Social Animals.” Here, Kennedy expands on the ideas introduced in his “Hoot” article. Then, curiously, Kennedy completely drops this line of inquiry.

Recently, I discovered why: Kennedy’s animal rhetoric was not well received at the time. Rhetorical historian Debra Hawhee describes what happened when Kennedy spoke about rhetorical energy and animals at an “interdisciplinary symposium on rhetoric” in 1993 (“Toward” 81). After Kennedy’s presentation “there were whispers, sidelong glances, and muttering, all of which bespoke a slight panic about his—and the field’s—direction” (Hawhee, “Toward” 81). Hawhee quotes rhetorician Victor Vitanza who “attests to the shockwaves” as Kennedy’s animal rhetoric surged through our field (“Toward” 81). In *Writing Histories of Rhetoric*, Vitanza describes Kennedy’s article as remarkable (with remarkable in scare quotes) “because of its undecidability”—meaning, Vitanza remains undecided about the article because he’s unsure whether or not “Kennedy (or ‘energy’) wrote it seriously” (ix). Most notably, Vitanza refers to the article as “wild” and “perhaps savage” (ix; Vitanza qtd. in Hawhee, “Toward” 81). In other words, Vitanza—and our field at large—took neither Kennedy nor animals² seriously.

Fast forward eighteen years. Hawhee claims that now is the time to pick up where Kennedy left off and be open to “the question of animals in the worlds of rhetoric” (“Toward” 85). Actually, she says, “now is a good time to *reconsider* Kennedy’s untimely meditations on animals” (Hawhee, “Toward” 83; emphasis mine). But why did it take so long? Especially considering how Kennedy drew inspiration from Aristotle and

2. Here, and throughout this project, I use the word “animals” to mean nonhuman animals, with an implicit understanding that humans are animals and that not all animals are the same species.

his “zoological writings [that] shaped knowledge of bestial bodies, lives and activities for subsequent generations,” and how the venerable Kenneth Burke “intuited decades prior: that nonhuman animals invite those of us (human ones) interested in the question of rhetoric and communication to suspend habituated emphasis on verbal language and consciousness” (Hawhee, “Toward” 83)? Why has our field been so resistant to animals and our own animality?

The reality is that animals have found similar resistance in many disciplinary camps. Their exclusion (and the scorn for scholars trying to include them) is not unique to rhetoric and composition. In fact, anthropocentric³ histories inscribe fields within the humanities and the sciences. This is largely due to a Cartesian legacy dating back to the seventeenth century when René Descartes likened animals to machines that do not think or feel (Mitchell ix; Arluke and Sanders ix). Sociology, for example, ignored animals “based on the linguacentric assumption that because animals lack the ability to employ spoken language, they consequently lack the ability to think” (Arluke and Sanders ix). Not until 1979, when Clifton Bryant “issued a call for sociologists to focus serious attention on ... the ‘zoological connection,’” did social scientists begin to focus on how animals influence human understanding and behavior under the rubric of “human-animal sociology” (Arluke and Sanders ix).

As a result, sociologists such as Arnold Arluke, Clinton Sanders, and Janet and Steven Alger are “[giving] systematic attention ... [to] everyday interactions between people and their companion animals” (Arluke and Sanders xii). Working “within a

3. Anthropocentric refers to the proclivity for viewing humans as the most important beings in the universe and “interpreting everything in terms of human experience and values” (“anthropocentric” n.p.).

perspective of symbolic interactionism,” these scholars “examine the intersubjectivity that emerges when people routinely interact with animals” (Arluke and Sanders xii). While their work “has already had an impact on social psychological conceptions of mind” (Arluke and Sanders xii), these scholars have had to make the case for animal subjectivity by “[establishing] an orientation toward mind that de-emphasizes [the] view of mindedness as a linguistic phenomenon and returns to an understanding of mind as the outcome of social interaction and social experience” (Arluke and Sanders xii). The animal Other is finding its way past other scientific canons, as well.

In 2007, anthropologist Eduardo Kohn called for an end to the anthropocentrism and ethnocentrism⁴ in his field, claiming anthropologists must “look beyond the uniquely human” in order to fully understand “what it means to be human in all of its contingent complexity” (6). In place of anthropology, Kohn boldly proposes “an anthropology of life”—a field of study that includes all of the life forms, or other “selves” (4, 6), entangled with humans. Clearly, Kohn shares the belief that other animals have a sense of self with human-animal sociologists. Also sharing this view of animal subjectivity is anthropologist and psychologist Barbara Smuts.⁵ Based on her interactions “with baboons, dogs and other animals,” she identifies “the presence of something resembling a human ‘self’” and thus “emphasizes the importance of recognizing and honoring this presence in other animals as well as in humans” (Smuts, “Encounters” 293). Smuts

4. In a general sense, ethnocentrism refers to the tendency to view other human cultures or ethnic groups from “the belief that one's own culture is superior to all others and is the standard by which all other cultures should be measured” (“Ethnocentrism” n.p.). The term has also been extended to denote the view of human cultures as superior to nonhuman cultures and therefore justifying the exclusion of other cultures from consideration. I use the term from this extended standpoint.

5. Notably, Smuts was schooled in anthropology at Harvard University and psychology (more specifically, “neurological and biological behavioral science”) at Stanford University School of Medicine (“Barbara” n.p.).

focuses on how social beings of different species “co-create systems of communication and emotional expression that permit deep ‘intersubjectivity,’ despite our very different biological natures” (“Encounters” 293). Pointedly, this scientist’s work takes the anthropocentric positionality of her field to task, as does the prolific work of Donna Haraway.

Haraway, a scientist and philosopher known for crossing disciplinary borders and weaving the ideas of those who inspire her, includes among her most recent theoretical-braids a study of living and learning with dogs. This work draws heavily from Smuts’ theories of intersubjectivity. In *When Species Meet*, Haraway insists that different species learn to communicate with one another through a co-productive process, which involves careful and respectful interaction with (versus mere observation of) animals. Following Smuts, Haraway says that what emerges from this process is a kind of embodied communication (*When* 26). This concept of knowledge as being co-constructed and co-shaped due to constitutive encounterings with others animals is a thread running through Haraway’s book—“becoming with” (*When* 3). While Haraway is formally trained in zoology, philosophy, and biology, in truth she is an epistemological artisan of interdisciplinary and cultural conversation. In effect, she pushes back on anthropocentric notions and axioms in both academic and mainstream cultural spheres.

According to Hawhee, there are signs that the field of rhetoric and composition may also be unclenching its humanist fist from an anthropocentric mast.⁶ Currently, fellow English studies scholars are already engaging with the question of the animal as

6. Hawhee claims Kennedy’s “rhetoric-as-energy” is finding new life “in both the rising interest in material and bodily rhetorics ... and the refiguring of topoi as social energy” (“Toward” 82).

evidenced by the most recent issues of *JAC: Rhetoric, Writing, Culture, Politics* (volume 30 and 31). These essays about “the rhetoric of human-animal relation” (Worsham, “Introduction” 406) are an invitation to expand our circle of concern to include nonhuman animals, an invitation largely from the editor Lynn Worsham who says this “is a thread [she intends] to sponsor from now on” (“Re: Fw: JAC” n.p.). Of course, these scholars add momentum to “the recent meteoric rise of the question of the animal in literary studies and philosophy”—otherwise known as animal studies (Hawhee, “Toward” 82). This field “explores representations of animality and related discourses ... [for the purposes of] prompting fundamental reconsiderations of nonhuman and human difference, otherness and subjectivity” (Lundblad 496). Within this realm, the posthumanists—largely spearheaded by Cary Wolfe and Donna Haraway—are currently doing the kind of rhetorical analysis admired in our field.

When I first read Kennedy’s “Hoot” article about animal rhetoric, I was perplexed as to why he dropped this line of inquiry. Due to my lived understanding that animals can shape our lives and identities, I did not understand why our field was not talking about these Others. My meaningful interaction with animals is one of many common threads binding me with the scholars who are insisting animals be addressed in their fields. Therefore, I concur with Hawhee: the time is right for our field to revisit Kennedy’s “rhetoric in the world of animals” (“Toward” 85). We *should* suspend our “habituated emphasis on verbal language and consciousness” and broaden what counts as rhetoric and who employs it. After all, rhetoric and composition is a field that “repeatedly reinvents itself; its always-emerging ways of treating [rhetoric and] writing are made visible in [scholarship] that simultaneously evokes both history and foresight” (Miller xxxii).

My visions for future manifestations of Kennedy's theoretical inquiry are in agreement with visions largely outside our field, however. Hawhee, for example, seems to share Kennedy's and Aristotle's perspective that animals are good to think with; whereas, Kohn and I align our-"selves" with Haraway who also finds animals (dogs in particular) good to *live* with (Haraway, *Manifesto* 5; Kohn 4). We do not just want to think about animals or interact with them; we want to form respectful, responsive alliances with them in order to come to new understandings that are mutually beneficial. According to Haraway, to say you live in alliance with an animal is to say you respectfully listen and respond to that animal. In a broader sense, it means that while we socially construct animals, they socially construct us, too. The work of animal studies scholars and those in related disciplines,⁷ coupled with my lived experience with dogs, have convinced me our field can longer ignore or avoid the world of beings we construct and how and why we construct them the way we do—and, most importantly, who benefits and who suffers due to those constructions. Thus, I hold that animal Others warrant (serious) consideration in our field.

The Interstices Between Disciplines

We are in the midst of a dawning awareness of the myriad ways our relations with Others matter. These relations shape us. They inform the ways we view the world in relation to others, and it follows that these views determine how we treat others (Stibbe 147). In light of this, certain ethical considerations are taken into account and addressed when approaching and representing historically oppressed and thereby often silenced

7. Including, but not limited to, ethology, anthropology, human-animal sociology, and behavioral psychology.

human Others. This is prominently due to the work of postcolonial scholars and their interrogations of representations of Others. Recently, animal studies scholars have extended these same ethical considerations to animals, for they view concern for the animal Other as an extension of concern for the colonized Other.⁸ Postcolonial scholars Glen Elder, Jennifer Welch and Jody Emel,⁹ for instance, elucidate and scrutinize the historically innate connection between the racialization and animalization of people, and how these body politics continue to afflict humans and animals today. This relates to an overarching goal of animal studies scholars: to deconstruct and examine the human-animal binary—more specifically, the nature and implications of it on both humans *and* animals within specific contexts. From a postcolonial perspective, the human-animal binary has been used by dominant Western society as a kind of sliding continuum—with the white heterosexual male on one end and the most uncivilized “beast” on the other—on which humans and animals are slid into positions that serve to either empower or oppress them (Elder, Welch, and Emel, “Bounds” 192).

Historically, colonizers often animalized people as justification for oppressing them—a process largely accomplished through an abusive use of language that serves to dehumanize peoples. In fact, racialization is achieved by drawing similarities between humans and animals (Elder, Welch, and Emel, “Bounds” 194). For example, colored bodies were said to be “more primitive and uncivilized and closer to animals in their

8. Worsham recently taught a course “on the neo-slave narrative ... on the topic of American slavery. Since slaves were ‘animalized’ by slaveholders, these novels contain lots of opportunities to discuss with students our use of animals in the subjection of other humans, which [leads] to ... discussion of our subjection of animals” (“Re: Comp” n.p.).

9. These scholars illustrate how postcolonial (and animal studies) writing crosses disciplinary borders, with Welch and Emel as political geographers, and Elder a social psychologist.

unbridled biological urges and passions” (Elder, Wolch, and Emel, “Human” 28). In other words, people with darker colored skin were positioned closer “in proximity to nonhuman animals” on the human-animal continuum (Elder, Wolch, and Emel, “Bounds” 195), thereby dehumanizing people in likening them to animals. Armed with this concept, we can unpack Vitanza’s language use in describing Kennedy’s article as “savage” and “wild.” These terms have historically been used (and continue to be used) to justify the oppression and abuse of both humans and animals. In fact, they belong to an oppressive nomenclature with a long and violent history.¹⁰ Savages, barbarians, heathens, primitives, uncivilized creatures, half-breeds, natives (Elder, Wolch, and Emel, “Human” 27)—postcolonialists have repeatedly, and quite rightly, drawn our attention to these epithets used to oppress and “other” people.

As a result, oppressed peoples have understandably pushed back and often sought to (re)establish a position on the human side of the continuum and all the “power” that comes with that positioning. While my intentions are neither to minimize nor attenuate the voices of these peoples, I must point out the dual nature of this kind of oppression. The victims of animalization are both human *and* animal. To fully comprehend this, we must first understand why this is such an effective strategy. Animalization is effective because few question our right to dominate animals—“we take for granted the prior assumption that violence against the animal is ethically permissible” (Wolfe, “Human” 567). In fact, this kind of assumption reflects how “ideology often manifests itself more effectively by being implicit,” assumed as if it were “common sense” (Stibbe 148).

10. Historically, animalization has been used to justify the oppression of numerous groups and cultures, including the persecution of wiccans “in Medieval Europe ... [when] women who owned cats were often regarded as witches” (Elder, Wolch and Emel 195) and thereby heathens, and the relocation of “native” peoples from their lands in the continental United States with the passing of the Indian Removal Act. Feminist and queer theory also have a stake in the rhetorics of animalization.

Drawing from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's¹¹ "*pratique sauvage*, or wild practice, in which heterogeneous others [with colored bodies] use their marginality as a position from which to pursue radically open, anarchic, and inclusive politics," Elder, Wolch, and Emel call for a "profound rethinking of all savage practices toward animals" ("Bounds" 185; original emphasis). These practices involve the way we use language to "savage" Others. The field of rhetoric and composition must engage in this profound rethinking because there is much at risk here. Our language use often reinscribes (at times unintentionally) the human-animal continuum, and thereby savage practices which add to body politics at large. These savage discursive practices, in turn, limit our potential growth (as humans and as a field) because they allow for the continued exploitation and suffering of Others—Others of many kind. Considering the history of oppression shared by humans and animals, postcolonial and posthumanist scholars have a shared interest in examining the "historical logic of animalization" (Ahuja 558) and representational rhetorics.

Therefore, aligning myself with posthumanist scholars who are challenging notions of human exceptionalism, I argue that the ethical considerations applied to written representations of human Others also apply to animal Others. As postcolonialists well know, there are consequences when Others are misrepresented and their subjectivity assumed. The stakes are high—particularly when we consider "the extent to which human understanding of animals is shaped by representations rather than direct experience of them" (Baker 190). This is worth repeating: Representations of animals determine how people think about animals, and in turn how people treat animals (Stibbe

11. Spivak is a postcolonial literary critic and theorist well known in rhetoric and composition.

147). Just as representations of people have consequences for the people represented, representations of animals “have consequences for living animals” (Baker 197). Since language has been the colonial tool of choice to subjugate Others, human and nonhuman, we must attend to how we represent these Others. Our representations of animals matter.

Currently, there is no shortage of animal representations, especially in popular culture. Animals pervade new media in the form of cable networks completely dedicated to animals (i.e. Animal Planet and Nat Geo Wild), long running television programs (i.e. *Meerkat Manor* and *The Dog Whisperer*), and major motion pictures (i.e. *The Bear* and *March of the Penguins*). Popular literature is also teeming with animals. Entire sections of bookstores are dedicated to them, with shelves filled with stories about animals. Many of these narratives recount meaningful encounters with animals, while others are meant to commemorate the life of an animal. In fact, pet memoir (especially about dogs) has “grown into a major literary genre” (Sanders 109). This trend is indicative of the many ways animals shape what we are becoming as a society. As of 2006, there was “an estimated 65 million dogs and 77.6 million cats inhabiting [our] homes” (Anderson and Anderson 6). Our pets receive more advanced veterinary care today, including orthopedic and oncological; some even receive “alternative and holistic” medicine, such as acupuncture (Anderson and Anderson 6). Clearly, our representations of animals shape our ideologies about them and, in turn, our values and ethics in their regard.

While all representations of animals matter, for the purposes of limiting the scope of my thesis, I focus specifically on written representations of animals living in alliance with the writer. Due to this limited scope, I want to explicitly acknowledge how our culture has pulled companion animals closer to the human side of the human-animal

continuum. Animals that have inherited more animalized positions on the continuum—such as utilitarian, industrial farm, laboratory, zoo, and wild animals—as determined by the culture constructing (positioning) them, deserve no less attention. Undoubtedly, there is more work to be done beyond this project, work that is no less pressing. That work is beyond the scope of this project.

For those of us who have embraced a new, more complex level of relationship with animals, an alliance that requires particularly conscious kinds of stewardship because of animals' vulnerability to human interaction, how might we attend to this work? In particular, how might the field of rhetoric and composition approach and represent animal Others more respectfully? How might our field make representation a rhetorical argument? What frameworks might allow for a “profound rethinking” and in turn enable us to approach difference with humility and respect? My work suggests that the answers to these questions might be found within the interstices between disciplines—expressly English studies, sociology, and anthropology. Here, there are parallel calls for profound paradigm shifts as well as for frameworks that provide for humility and respect in the approach and representation of other animals. Notably, there is also a common research methodology: ethnography.

A Framework for Representing (with) Others

Ethnography is a qualitative research methodology used most prevalently in the social sciences in the study and representation of cultures. As a subgenre, autoethnography examines the situatedness of an individual researcher within a larger cultural context. The particular contribution autoethnography makes to more traditional

ethnography is therefore a privileged insider perspective. In short, the “auto” requires the researcher represent how the “self” affects and is affected by the cultural setting through significant self-reflection and deep engagement. Scholarship in the field of rhetoric and composition, including feminist, pedagogy, and community literacy, has appropriated and currently employs this research method. However, postcolonialists in particular use autoethnography to present the voices of marginalized Others—meaning those outside of dominant Western culture. Scholars, such as Gloria Anzaldúa and Mary Louise Pratt, find autoethnography a useful genre for marginalized Others to re-present themselves in resistance to and defiance of how they have been misrepresented. Others scholars have used autoethnography to bridge gaps and build understanding between cultures. Sometimes the purpose is to achieve both goals. Notably, either use of this genre potentially serves to complicate binaries or culturally constructed divisions.

Sociologist and autoethnographic theorist Leon Anderson provides guidelines for the ethical study and representation of Others (and Self-as-Other) within the autoethnographic frame. However, these guidelines were designed for the specific application of studies involving human cultures. They do not fully attend to posthumanist concerns with regard to the study of, interactions with, and representations of other animals or of the human animal within and across multiple species of the animal world. Therefore, in their current state, Anderson’s guidelines are not directly transferable to cultures of other or multiple species. Kohn also “calls for an analytical framework that goes beyond a focus on how humans represent animals to an appreciation of our everyday interactions with these creatures and the new spaces of possibility such interactions can create” (4). He too finds existing ethnographic frameworks inadequate. Recognizing a

lack in the scholarship, I offer a new framework that might allow us to attend to this work with other species more ethically.

More specifically, my contribution to the scholarship is a set of guidelines for posthumanist autoethnography. These guidelines reflect the insights of animal studies and postcolonial scholars, including Édouard Glissant's notion of opacity. Glissant, a poet, novelist, and ethnographic theorist, is perhaps best known for his postcolonial theory (Lindner and Stetson 41). Political scientists Keith Lindner and George Stetson translate Glissant's notion of opacity as "that which can not be reduced"—meaning, Others remains irreducible in our representations of them (41). Recognizing the importance of "ethical engagement with difference" (Lindner and Stetson 41), these scholars argue that the concept of opacity insists on a stance of "working to write with, rather than about" others, thereby providing for "an ethical mode of relation between scholars and the Others they study" (Lindner and Stetson 45). Since Glissant defines the "non-human world" as nature, Lindner and Stetson extend the notion of opacity to this all encompassing "nature" (Lindner and Stetson 43). I, in turn, extend the notion of opacity more specifically to representations of animal Others.

Of primary concern to opaque autoethnography is that the researcher represents new knowledge formed through the respectful alliance with the Other. In other words, knowledge is created and represented jointly as an act of Glissant's "giving-on-and-with." Notably, Glissant's giving-on-and-with is not unlike feminist scholar Susan Jarratt's "speaking alongside" (128), and both are consistent with Haraway's "becoming with." I want to argue that we take a more ethical stance by speaking alongside an animal rather than *about* an animal and thereby represent a "multiplicity of voices" (Jarratt 119)

through opaque alliances and the use of posthumanist frameworks. Informed by the notion of opacity and posthumanist values, the guidelines I propose begin to attend to the particular considerations required for the ethical approach and representation of other animals. I offer these guidelines as a heuristic, a place to start. Further, I invite the interrogation of these principles in the hope that more ethical relations and representations of the animal Other will derive from multiple efforts and increasingly critical analysis.

To fully articulate the guidelines I propose, and how they insist on an ethical approach to the animal Other, I point to features and language use within a selection of mainstream texts that claim to represent an animal's perspective. My focus here is not the texts themselves, as much as the guidelines. My intention here is to provide the most complete picture possible of these guidelines; therefore, I use the texts to provide concrete examples of the principles comprising each guideline. Toward this end, I draw upon a modified form of critical discourse analysis in offering a concentrated and pragmatic critique of specific features of these texts in relation to one or more of the guidelines. I do so with the understanding that, while I have identified autoethnographic features in them, the authors had no explicit intentions of performing autoethnography or representing the genre. Many of them set out to write memoirs or other personal narratives rather than autoethnography. As such, I certainly do not hold them to a standard that may not have seemed relevant to their genre of choice. However, we can take measure of these texts against some standards since these standards suggest the problems and potentials of representing animal Others. Doing so will help us imagine how the guidelines I propose might be used to evaluate the representation of animals—a

set of standards called "a multispecies representation ethic" that demonstrates awareness of posthumanist autoethnographic criteria. We can also call for the use of these standards in future texts, including our own.

My literature review appears in the following chapter, where I expand on the interdisciplinary theories visited in this introduction and how they specifically inform the theoretical underpinnings supporting my thesis. Most notably, I provide Wolfe's definition of posthumanism, differentiating his extraordinary vision from other critical theory labeled "posthumanist" by pointing to why he might pull them like weeds from their humanist grounds. Chapter two defines autoethnography more fully as a methodological genre and illustrates how scholars have used this genre to re-present marginalized Others. I delineate my process in revising Anderson's framework in chapter three, where I also introduce the selection of mainstream texts and explain my methods and rationale for choosing them. The central focus of my thesis appears in chapter four—the set of guidelines for posthumanist autoethnography. Here, I use excerpts from one or more of the mainstreams texts to exemplify the stipulations of each guideline in a more concrete way, often drawing upon a modified form of critical discourse analysis. Finally, I conclude by pointing to the implications of my work and the work that still calls on us.

In a broader sense, then, my thesis suggests the ways autoethnography might excavate and complicate assumptions "about who the knowing subject can be," in order to examine "the question of what knowledge is" and how it is often limited by "overdeterminations and partialities of our" species (Wolfe, "Human" 571). In doing so, I hope to reveal how our research and writing might embody our animality and reframe itself "in a larger universe of communication" with other species (Wolfe, "Human" 571).

My overarching hope is that the autoethnographic guidelines I propose might begin to attend to the ethical considerations required for the respectful study and representation of animal Others. I have designed them to insist on opaque alliances and reflect posthumanist values. Our discursive practices, narratives, and stories, all constitute representations of animals that matter, that have consequences, that construct Others and often reinscribe ideologies based in “common sense” assumptions. If Haraway is right, then our ideologies do not eclipse the stories of our lived experience. This thesis denotes my hope in the power of stories—stories of becoming with. Stories told with Others.

Chapter One: Literature Review

*"We can never hope to know the material opacities of cultures, identities and things,
yet we can imagine the totality of their never-ending relation."*

~ Keith Lindner and George Stetson

*"We do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because 'we' are of
the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming."*

~ Karen Barad

The field of rhetoric and composition welcomes a breadth of “research and scholarship” making it “a benchmark for interdisciplinary thinking that requires realistic interest and a measure of expertise across professional boundaries” (Miller xxxi). In this spirit, my theoretical framework is a synthesis of complex and multifaceted scholarship, drawing from anthropology, sociology, and English studies at large. With varying degree and purpose, an enclave of scholarship in each of these disciplines seeks to interrogate epistemological and ontological questions—questions about our evolution as a species, including all of the complex systems shaping, and shaped by, our evolution, such as language, culture, and environment. This is important and decisive work, for the answers to these questions (as much as the questions we ask) indicate who we humans (think we) are as a species, and who we might become (with) in the future. Notably, the reasons for the parenthetical additions in this statement will become clear as I define the imperative of the field from which I draw most prevalently, animal studies. What follows is a sketch of this field and a comprehensive look at the critical theory that provides a frame of

reference for my thesis. In essence, I will speak to current ontological and epistemological ideologies with regard to the human-animal dyad, subjectivity, interspecies communication, and alterity.

Animal studies, or human-animal studies, a field finding roots in the humanities since the early 1990s (Wolfe, *Posthumanism* 99), appears to be living up to our benchmark. With a broad range of disciplinary voices, this field “explores representations of animality and related discourses ... [for the purposes of] prompting fundamental reconsiderations of nonhuman and human difference, otherness and subjectivity” (Lundblad 496). However, Cary Wolfe, one of the field’s most prominent scholars, cites serious concerns about “internal disciplinary practices” (“Human” 572) that, in his view, risk undermining the basic tenets of animal studies. More pointedly, Wolfe finds the current rubrics of animal studies and human-animal studies subpar for this work because they are highly “problematic in light of the broader context in which [it] must be confronted—the context of posthumanism” (*Posthumanism* 99). Within this context, the “questions that occupy (human-) animal studies can be addressed adequately only if they are confronted on” two levels: “the animal” that the field studies, as well as *how* the field thinks about “the animal” (Wolfe, *Posthumanism* 99). On this second level lies Wolfe’s chief concern. In his most recent work, *What is Posthumanism?*, Wolfe explains that the “theoretical and methodological approach” of well-intentioned scholars in his field is often “humanist—and therefore, by definition anthropocentric” (*Posthumanism* 99).

Concerns of anthropocentrism are voiced in much of the scholarship informing this thesis. Yet, regardless of disciplinary roots, scholars engaging with “the question of

the animal”¹² need to adopt the kind of metacognitive awareness Wolfe necessitates. Cohesively, the theoretical concepts I outline here inform how we might represent animal Others more ethically. Posthumanist theory provides an ideological paradigm to guide this work. This is supported by theories found in human-animal sociology and anthropology (of life), some providing a more pragmatic view of respectful interactions with animal Others. Finally, postcolonial theory informs the ethical stance required in both the approach and representation of the animal Other. All of these theories—that I attempt to do justice—have rich strands alive with posthumanist overtures. Woven together, these strands form a bridge suspended across an ontological divide between us and the Other we call animal. A bridge that might allow us to leave our current paradigm behind and, perhaps, if we are open to it, find ourselves face-to-face¹³ with the Other: animal-to-animal.

The Animal Question

From Wolfe’s perspective, in comparison to other cultural studies, animal studies should be most

invested . . . in fundamentally rethinking the questions of what knowledge is, how it is limited by the overdeterminations and partialities of our [species]; in excavating and examining our assumptions about who the knowing subject can be; and in embodying that confrontation in its own disciplinary practices and protocols (so that, for example, [the work] is

12. The philosopher Jacques Derrida is known in many disciplinary circles for using this phrasing when he first began to insist on this motif in his field (Mallet ix). Currently, this phrase is used in several variations (i.e. the animal question) with an implicit nod to Derrida, and is accepted as vernacular in many fields. Thus, I will use these popular idioms without citation, with all due respect to Derrida.

13. With this reference I push back on Emmanuel Levinas’ claim that “only human beings have a face in the ethical sense” (Atterton 58).

radically reframed in a larger universe of communication, response, and exchange, which now includes manifold other species). (Wolfe, “Human” 571)

Wolfe places a tall order here. Rethinking these ontological and epistemological questions will require highly complex investigations. In order to illustrate the complexity of the task Wolfe poses, I will parse out these entangled lines of inquiry. Since Wolfe emphasizes the importance of interrogating the frameworks scholars are using to engage with the question of the animal, I will begin with this part of his call to action:

“embodying that confrontation in [their] own disciplinary practices and protocols.” As previously stated, Wolfe insists that more robust investigations into the animal question, including questions about knowledge and subjectivity, require a new context—namely, posthumanism.

Posthumanism

Posthumanism is not easily defined in Wolfean terms despite the title of his book that directly poses the question (*What is Posthumanism?*). Curiously, Wolfe often defines posthumanism by defining what is *not* posthumanism. First and foremost, Wolfe clearly differentiates his vision from other “posthumanisms” that embrace “the philosophical ideas of transhumanism [as they] are quite identifiably humanist” in that they are primarily “invested in the ideals of human perfectibility, rationality, autonomy, and agency” and in the “dream of transcending the life of the body and our ‘animal’ origins” (“Discovering” n.p.). In fact, Wolfe identifies many of these strands as “transhumanist” (and thereby humanist) due to their focus on technologies that “enable us to transcend our physical and biological limitations as embodied beings” (“Discovering” n.p.). This track

of thinking is clearly humanist because it leads to becoming “*posthuman*”; whereas Wolfe’s track leads to becoming “*posthumanist*” (“*Discovering*” n.p.). “Posthumanism,” then, in Wolfe’s words, “isn’t posthuman at all—in the sense of being ‘after’ our embodiment has been transcended” (*Posthumanism* xv). Contrary to this, posthumanism insists that we face, even embrace, that we are a species of animal and thereby share a finitude with other animals—and here Wolfe draws from Derrida’s “finitude of life”—meaning, like other animal species, we suffer, feel pain, and eventually will die (Wolfe, “Human” 570). In other words, posthumanism asks us to embody our animality instead of denying our mortality and, in doing so, our connectedness to the other beings who remind us of our (unavoidable) immortality.

Thus, whereas humanism involves human-centered views, interests, and conceptions, posthumanism involves exploration beyond human interests. Yet, Wolfe is clear about his critique not being “a wholesale rejection or surpassing of humanism and its values” (“*Discovering*” n.p.). In fact, he embraces many of its “values and aspirations”—such as treating people “with respect and equality” (Wolfe, “*Discovering*” n.p.). The problem, in Wolfe’s view, is that “humanism’s often admirable aspirations are undercut by the conceptual and philosophical tools it uses to conceptualize them” (“*Discovering*” n.p.) Thus, Wolfe resists the anthropocentrism resulting from the ontological division inherent in humanist frameworks and the consequences for animals that follow “in the wake” of that division (“*Discovering*” n.p.). In Wolfe’s words, and the closest he comes to articulating a definition,

Posthumanism can be defined ... as the necessity for any discourse or critical procedure to take account of the constitutive (*and* constitutively paradoxical) nature of its own distinctions, forms, and procedures—and

take account of them in ways that may be distinguished from the reflection and introspection associated with the critical subject of humanism. (*Posthumanism* 122; original emphasis)

The bottom line: humanist frameworks (re)produce humanist ideologies—more of the “same” de facto discriminatory logic. Put simply, frameworks with a discriminating frame of reference can never fully liberate. Wolfe delineates this point by disarticulating the liberal humanism embedded in animal rights rhetorics and how the underlying frameworks suffer from paradoxical logic. In short, the rhetorical arguments for extending ethical concerns to animals are normatively based on comparisons to humans.

A prime example is the “Great Ape Project” passed by the Spanish parliament in June 2008. This legislation served to “extend fundamental human rights to great apes, protecting them from painful experimentation and other forms of exploitation” (Wolfe, “Human” 567). For those of us concerned about nonhuman animals and the suffering we often cause them, there is much to celebrate here. However (though well-intentioned) the logic is flawed: this measure is built on a humanist foundation in that ethical considerations were extended to other beings specifically based on similarities to humans. “Great primates,” it was argued, “share important characteristics, like social organization, communications and strong affectionate bonds ... which demonstrates that they are intelligent” (“History” n.p.). In short, these beings were deemed worthy of “similar rights to ours,” because they have emotional lives and physical attributes similar to ours (“History” n.p.).

This begs the question, are we prepared to draw this kind of line in the sand, dividing animals that are like us (and thereby deserving of protection from exploitation)

from those that are not (and thereby may suffer)? Thus, posthumanism prompts the reconsideration of how we differentiate ourselves from others and why. Toward this end, Wolfe asks,

Shouldn't we instead endeavor for a mode of thought that values the heterogeneity of ways of being in the world for their difference, their uniqueness, their non-generic nature, rather than their ability to reproduce or approximate, however imperfectly, a normative picture of "us"? ("Discovering" n.p.)

In essence, when we extend ethical considerations to other animals strictly based on their similarity to us—meaning, to those we have slid closer to us on the human-animal continuum—we reify a hierarchal and oppressive ontological tool and sanctify notions of human exceptionalism.

Incidentally, Wolfe refers to what I call the human-animal continuum as a "grid" (*Rites* 101). Like the continuum, Wolfe's grid signifies how the "law of culture" positions groups in a hegemonic order, from the most powerful to the least: humanized humans, animalized humans, humanized animals, and animalized animals (*Rites* 101). Viewed through a posthumanist lens, this entire spectrum calls on us to question the purpose it serves (humanize/value/purify/deify or animalize/negate/defile/demonize) and for whom. Humanist frameworks are intrinsically invested in keeping such structures in tact (Wolfe, *Rites* 102). A posthumanist framework, on the other hand, asks us to deconstruct such continuums and spectrums. Further, it insists that we begin to appreciate difference versus using it as a reason to oppress or withhold ethical considerations or the "rights" to not suffer.

However, posthumanism equally insists that we not oppress or reduce others on the basis of similarity. While it has been observed that as animals we share traits and behaviors with other animals, there is a difference between drawing similarities between humans and animals, and *only* valuing certain species based on these similarities. In our culture, this is primarily evident with animals we call pets. Humanizing animals that seem more like us is a “symbolic sacrificial substitution” of “the animal” (Wolfe, *Rites* 104). “The logic of the pet,” as Wolfe refers to it, is highly problematic as it is often to the detriment of both humans and animals (*Rites* 104). Humanizing companion animals can lead to behavioral issues in the animal (often with fatal consequences such as euthanasia); animals living lives that are unsatisfying to their particular species or breed; and the affirmation of a humanist ideology that dictates that specific animals are more deserving of ethical treatment and consideration due to the way we construct them to be more “like us.” Both the continuum and the grid are models of power used in the game of body politics: depowering through animalization or empowering through humanization. They were construed and are sustained via humanist schema.

Notably, the notion of Western subjectivity relies on “the tacit agreement that the full transcendence of the ‘human’ requires the sacrifice of the ‘animal’ and the animalistic” (Wolfe, *Rites* 6)—which leads to all sorts of discrimination: racial, sexual, class and *species*. This underscores the importance of scrutinizing the conceptual frameworks of our normative order. While it may be impossible to fully eradicate “savage practice” and anthropocentric discourse from society, Wolfe’s definition of posthumanism dictates that we must “take account of the constitutive (*and* constitutively paradoxical) nature of” our discourse, including its “distinctions, forms, and procedures

... in ways that may be distinguished from ... humanism” (*Posthumanism* 122; Cecchetto 31-2). Thus, for “a genuinely posthumanist approach to the question of the animal,” Wolfe insists that fields of study “take this problem as its starting point” (Calarco, “Question” n.p.). Scholars must examine their own conceptual frameworks for this kind of “exclusionary logic,” by examining how their theories might “[produce] its own set of exclusions” (Calarco, “Question” n.p.) and thereby reinscribe humanist paradigms despite posthumanist intentions.

Consequently, the issue of problematic frameworks due to inherent ideologies was the impetus for including the parentheticals in the last statement of my opening paragraph. The answers to the questions about our evolution as a species, and the complex systems shaping and shaped by our evolution *are* important and decisive. Restated without the parentheticals, it reads more posthumanistly: *the answers, as much as the questions we ask, indicate who we humans think we are as a species, and who we might become with in the future.* Simply put, we must examine the ideologies underlying our inquiries and our answers to them. This is a crucial step because, as Wolfe points out, “it is perfectly possible ‘to do’ posthumanism in a thoroughly humanist way” (“Discovering” n.p.).

This is important because it suggests that how we construct animals in relation to ourselves shapes our sense of fair representation. If our ideologies are drawing from a flawed conceptual apparatus, our representations will be (often unknowingly) flawed because our representations reveal our ideologies. More precisely, our representations of animals reveal our ideological constructs of humans *in relation* to animals. Again, when

engaging with the question of the animal, the apparatus we use is critical for achieving new insights about the animal, including (and especially) the human animal.

Ontological Bridges to New Paradigms

Shifts toward a posthumanist paradigm require we consider our “ecological embeddedness as creatures of evolution in a web of life not of our making” as well as how “our ‘animal’ biological inheritance ... shapes our emotions, our behavior, our needs and wants” (Wolfe, “Discovering” n.p.). In a Wolfean sense, posthumanism necessitates

moving beyond the philosophical simplifications of humanism ... to arrive at a much thicker, more complex and layered description of this thing we call “human” and how it is bound up with all sorts of forces and factors that aren’t “human” at all. (Wolfe, “Discovering” n.p.)

This is a complicated task. It involves being willing to traverse the tangled philosophical-web we have weaved—the story of who “we” are. More specifically, it means rethinking this thing we call “self” and “Other.” In this vein, a posthumanist framework “forces us to attend to the paradox that we can ‘become who we are’ only by virtue of being constituted by [things] ... that we are not” (Wolfe, “Discovering” n.p.). And, “chief among these” things *that we are not*—but nonetheless use to define ourselves—“is language” (Wolfe, “Discovering” n.p.). This brings us to Wolfe’s “question of what knowledge is, [and] how it is limited by the overdeterminations and partialities of our [species].” Here, Wolfe points to how humans have historically constructed the capacity for human language as a measurement of intelligence—placing humans, naturally, well above other “intelligent” beings.

Over the past seven decades, primate studies have aimed to discover if these animals could acquire human language (Jannedy et al. 27). As our “nearest relatives,” great apes are considered “very intelligent creatures” and biologically similar to humans (Jannedy et al. 27). In the 1950s, it was claimed that a female chimp named Viki vocalized three words (Jannedy et al. 27-28). About a decade later another female chimp, Washoe was taught American Sign Language (ASL), followed by the infamous Koko the gorilla, who is also believed to have learned ASL to some degree (Jannedy et al. 28). In the end, the results of these projects remain controversial (Jannedy et al. 27). While the natural communication systems of great apes are deemed highly complex, the logic goes, they still “lack displacement and productivity” unique to human language (Jannedy et al. 27). Thus, language use remains uniquely human—it takes more than a sign system or three words “to prove human language capability” or lingual continuity (Jannedy et al. 27-28). This ideology has deep Cartesian roots. Wolfe wants us to interrogate these roots at a deeper level than we currently are. From a posthumanist perspective, we remain partial to age-old ontological and epistemological conceptions of ourselves, what amount to “essentialist determinations of the human” (Calarco, “Zoontologies” n.p.). As animal studies philosopher Matthew Calarco explains,

Throughout much of the history of metaphysics—e.g., from Aristotle to Aquinas, from Descartes to Kant, and from Hegel to Husserl—the essence of the human has been repeatedly determined in opposition to the animal, where the former is understood to be in possession of a certain capacity or trait (logos, ratio, ... spirit, subjectivity, etc.) the latter lacks. (“Zoontologies” n.p.)

This concept of human beings has had dire consequences for alingual beings in the form of the human-animal binary, the consequences of which will soon become clear.

First, we need to recognize that this binary does not make sense because humans *are* animals (Calarco, *Zoographies* 143). There is a problematic and grandiose distinction being made here: this binary distinguishes one species of animal from *all* of the others. When using the binary to represent bonds or interactions between species, which social scientists in particular often do, it would be more proper (arguably) to position “human” across from another species of animal (i.e. human-canine). While this may first appear trivial, it is not. Ontological binaries, including human-animal and nature-culture, require major paradigm shifts in order to deconstruct conceptions of what we are in relation to other organisms and beings. Again, ontological and epistemological dichotomies are largely drawn due to the human capacity for language. Or, more accurately, due to our *partialities* for own capacities. From a humanist standpoint, language is “something that institutes not just a phenomenological difference but an ontological difference between ‘normal’ human beings and the rest of universe” (Wolfe, “Discovering” n.p.). In other words, there are “ontological and ethical consequences” dependent on a society’s normative values with regard to language. More precisely, the capacity for language (and language difference) has been used as a measure of intelligence and worth, and a determining factor in terms of placement on the human-animal continuum.

According to social psychologist George Herbert Mead “languageless animals were mindless, selfless, and emotionless” (Arluke and Sanders ix). The assumption that animals have limited intelligence based on their inability to employ human language is a bias known as linguacentrism in social science circles (Arluke and Sanders ix), the legacy of René Descartes. However, within the last two decades, scientists have begun to portray a different picture of language. Linguists, in particular, are complicating current notions

about the nature, development, and uniqueness of human language. Recently, Harvard researchers working with linguist Norm Chomsky produced “data [that] suggests a much stronger continuity between animals and humans with respect to speech than previously believed,” and thus concluded that “any claims of uniqueness” in terms of human speech must be researched further (Chomsky qtd. in Wolfe, *Posthumanism* 40-41). These scientists, as Donna Haraway explains,

argue that such powerful capacities might have evolved in domains other than communication (such as territory mapping, spatial navigation, and foraging) and then been hijacked for communication in ways uncoupled from tight constraints of function. (*When* 373n44)

This means that human language may have developed because humans found speech acts more and more useful as the reasons to interact with others and the need for more nuanced expression increased (Haraway, *When* 373n44). In scientific terms,

organisms possess heterogeneous sets of mental tools, complexly and dynamically put together from genetic, developmental, and *learning interactions* throughout lives, not unitary interiors that one either has or does not have. (Haraway, *When* 374n47; emphasis mine)

This research clearly challenges notions of human exceptionalism based on the nature of language. Pointedly, Chomsky and the other scientists qualify future claims, saying they should not be based merely on an “assumption rooted in premises of human exceptionalism,” that they must be proven with a “testable hypothesis” (Haraway, *When* 373n44). Perhaps most notably, this work suggests that the mental tools required for language developed due to interaction *with* other (human and nonhuman) organisms, and not as an innate human ability.

Wolfe makes a similar case by synthesizing Niklas Luhmann's second order systems theory with Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction.¹⁴ While Derrida contends that the "trace structure of writing/communication is not limited to the domain of the human and the linguistic alone," according to Wolfe, Luhmann's highly abstract "work allows us to situate [this contention] within a coevolutionary account of the relations between meaning, communication, language, and the forms of complexity they make possible in psychic and social systems" (*Posthumanism* 24). This is important because "historically, the ontological divide between the animal and the human has been secured by grounding human personhood [or selfhood] in the use of language to create meaning" (Sacacas n.p.). Further, while deconstruction "seeks to release difference from reality ... systems theory explains how systems cope with that difference" (Sacacas n.p.). So, "while Derrida emphasizes the *final* undecidability of any signifying instance, Luhmann stresses that even so, systems *must* decide" (*Posthumanism* 23). With that, Wolfe concludes that systems theory requires a kind of "reconstruction of deconstruction" thereby providing for the "rigorous articulate analysis [that] deconstruction only gestures [toward] philosophically" (*Posthumanism* 26). What is critical here is that Wolfe's reconstruction of deconstruction confronts "the complexities and paradoxes of self-referential autopoiesis" (*Posthumanism* xxi).

In simplest terms, autopoiesis is a "reduction of complexity" (Wolfe, *Posthumanism* 122)—a kind of sifting through a complex world of communicative information by an organism for what is significant to that particular organism. In fact, "with ... systems theory meaning is disarticulated from language," explains theologian

14. Deconstruction was largely a response to what Derrida viewed as "the reduction of logic to grammar" (Zupko n.p.).

L. Michael Sacasas,¹⁵ “and stems rather from the preference of human and nonhuman (even non-biological) systems for reducing complexity or ‘noise’ which autopoietic systems must do if they are to survive” (n.p.). Further, “meaning . . . is produced by each system that constitutes itself within its environment through autopoietic closure” (Sacasas n.p.). While autopoiesis has typically been used to refer to a self-enclosed system embedded within a larger system, Wolfe’s reworking of autopoiesis now confronts the paradox that “nothing ‘self-organizes” (Haraway, *When* 317n46) because the “reconstruction” represents a constant recursivity—constant interaction with other systems as a semiotic process (or assignment of meaning). As Sacasas explains,

Human beings are just one of many autopoietic systems sharing their environment with a wide range of non-human animals, each “bringing forth world” [as Wolfe puts it] in a meaningful, if not human, way. (n.p.)

With this, autopoiesis can be more accurately defined as a self-referencing system embedded in a larger system in which it *recursively* communicates with other autopoietic (self-referencing) systems. Again, autopoiesis is a “reduction of complexity” (Wolfe, *Posthumanism* 122) within a complex system of interaction and communicative utterances. This means that humans are one of many beings that employ autopoietic processes in order to communicate within “a larger domain of meaning that includes all sorts of non-linguistic forms of communication not limited to the human domain” (Wolfe, “Discovering” n.p.).

From this vantage, then, human language is “an essentially ahuman prosthesis, a technique and a machine that itself is a subset and second-order phenomenon” within a

15. Sacasas is currently earning a doctoral degree in the Texts and Technology program at the University of Central Florida (“Michael Sacasas” n.p.).

larger system of meaning (Wolfe, “Discovering” n.p.). Further, Wolfe’s notion of recursive semiosis provides a “more robust and nuanced picture of how language is (and is not) constitutive of human behavior” (Wolfe, “Discovering” n.p.). More importantly, because this notion paints a new picture of the “evolutionary and biological background out of which ‘linguistic domains’ ... emerged” (Wolfe, “Discovering” n.p.), it suggests how we might begin “to describe how meaning gets made in recursive exchanges across previously discreet ontological domains” (Wolfe, “Discovering” n.p.). Philosopher Karen Barad adds to this discussion about the continuity of language (or, more accurately, of rhetoric) with “a posthumanist account of discursive practices,” in her article “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter.” “Discursive practices,” she explains, “are often confused with linguistic expression, and meaning is often thought to be a property of words” (Barad 818). According to Barad this is inaccurate because “meaning is not a property of individual words or groups of words,” and neither is it “intralinguistically conferred nor extralinguistically referenced” (818). Instead, when we engage with other sentient beings, “materiality is discursive” (Barad 822).

In this sense, human language evolved, and continues to evolve, due to interaction with other sentient beings. This is because meaningful communication is a first-order phenomenon that does not require the use of language—language is a second order phenomenon that uses the meaning created in the first-order autopoietic process (Wolfe, *Posthumanism* 22), a process used by many organisms. Therefore, these posthumanists redefine language as a communication system that has evolved (differently while not necessarily more complexly) *with* other communication systems. This not only

challenges current conceptions about language, but the ways those concepts are used to ontologically distinguish (and elevate) human beings from alingual ones. If linguacentric biases about knowledge and language remain intact, not only do we limit our understanding of other beings and their ways of “knowing” the world, we limit our understanding of human beings. In this sense, representing animal Others ethically, at least in terms of a posthumanist perspective, hinges on one’s “theory of language” (Wolfe, *Posthumanism* 47), and more specifically, I would add, rhetoric.

“What all of this suggests,” Wolfe sums up very succinctly, “is that ‘our’ thoughts, ‘our’ concepts, are in an important sense not ‘ours’ at all, but rather they derive from our constitution by something radically *not us*” (“Discovering” n.p.; original emphasis). What makes us what we are as beings is meaningful activity with *other beings*. As humans, we are merely systems within a larger system. Crossing the ontological bridge (and understanding its existence) to the animal Other means accepting that “we” humans would not be who we are without the existence of, and interaction with, other nonhuman beings; and that beings interacting with us would not be what they are without those interactions with “us”—we constitute each other. In other words, we are not who we think we are, and we are not as extraordinary as we have “thought” ourselves to be. Thus, “the nature of thought itself must change if it is to be posthumanist” (Wolfe, *Posthumanist* xvi). It would seem that the creature we need to transcend is a chimera, otherwise known as the “human.”

Subjectivity in an Ecology of Selves

Through both research and personal experience, many scholars already recognize a continuity of rhetoric among and *between* social animals, that lingual capability is not a prerequisite for knowledge and meaning-making. Moreover, they recognize other animals as “knowing” beings (Kohn 17). Anthropologist Eduardo Kohn, for instance, “[looks] beyond the uniquely human” in order to fully understand “what it means to be human in all of its contingent complexity” (6). This is why Kohn, like others who work and live with animals, “questions the privileged ontological status of humans as knowers” (6). For Barad, “knowing cannot be fully claimed as human practices ... because knowing is a matter of part of the world making itself intelligible to another part” (829). These scholars argue that “humans are not the only knowers” (Kohn 17) in a world full of semiotic life forms.

Scientists, such as Kohn and Haraway, study how “emergent entities” are shaped and thereby how knowledge is co-constructed due to interaction between humans and other nonhuman actors (Haraway, *When* 136; Kohn 5). In her book, *When Species Meet*, Haraway refers to this concept of knowledge or meaning being co-shaped during co-constitutive encounters as “becoming with.” Notably, “becoming with” is a derivative of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s philosophical notion of “Becoming-Animal.”¹⁶ More specifically, Haraway draws inspiration from their “[emphasis] on transformations of energy central to ecosystems ... [and how] through these transformations, entities are

16. Deleuze and Guattari pose the notion of “Becoming-Animal” as only applicable to specific contexts, which Haraway takes offense with because they not only exclude relations with companion animals, they flat out mock them (*When* 29). Haraway thus adapts the notion by broadening the scope of permissible “becomings.”

continuously in states of becoming” (Birke and Parisi 65). However, Haraway’s supplementary *with* stresses the reciprocal nature of semiosis. In semiotic-material worlds “to be one is always to *become with many*” (Haraway, *When* 4; original emphasis). Simply put, semiotic worlds are created in “constitutive encounterings” (Haraway, *When* 164). It is during these “world-making entanglements” that meaning-making occurs, where knowledge is co-constructed and co-shaped, even when the Other is another species (Haraway, *When* 4, 164).

For emerging entities, then, semiosis is a recursive process of making oneself “intelligible” or known to others (thereby making others knowing subjects) and thereby becoming “oneself” in relation to other selves (Barad 829; Kohn 7). Therefore, “transspecies interactions depend on the capacity to recognize subjectivity” (Kohn 9) in other animals. And subjectivity is dependent on having a sense of self. However, some scientific debate about the notion of a “self” in nonhuman animals still exists. In fact, in order to have an “impact on social psychological conceptions of mind” (Arluke and Sanders xii), social scientists and other scholars have had to make a case for animal subjectivity by “[establishing] an orientation toward mind that de-emphasizes [the] view of mindedness as a linguistic phenomenon and returns to an understanding of mind as the outcome of social interaction and social experience” (Arluke and Sanders xii). This brings us to Wolfe’s insistence on “excavating and examining our assumptions about who the knowing subject can be.” By this, Wolfe is asking scholars to examine what underlies the reasons for deeming other species incapable of knowing us. Based on research and developments during the past two decades “in cognitive science, ethology,” human-animal sociology, anthropology and other social sciences, scholars—such as Wolfe,

Haraway, Kohn, the Algers, and many others—argue that there is little reason for “repressing the question of nonhuman subjectivity, [and] taking it for granted that the subject is always already human” (Wolfe, *Rites* 1; Kohn 17).

Currently, there are many research scholars looking at the influence of animals on human understanding and behavior, particularly the “everyday interactions between people and their companion animals” (Arluke and Sanders ix, xii). More specifically, these scholars “examine the intersubjectivity that emerges when people routinely interact with animals” (Arluke and Sanders xii). By working “within a perspective of symbolic interactionism,” they defy “Mead’s perspective, [that] animals lacked the ability to employ significant symbols and were therefore unable to negotiate meaning and take the role of [social actors]” (Arluke and Sanders ix). Symbolic interaction is a form of communication involving the ability to perceive “how others perceive [you] and how others might react to [your] choices” (Alger and Alger 10). Mead theorized that animals lack certain cognitive skills necessary for role-playing (i.e. memory and projection of events), and a sense of self that is required for such ability, and therefore could not engage in symbolic interaction (Alger and Alger 11).

Mead was of course working within a humanist framework. His theory has largely been discredited by sociologists, including Janet and Steven Alger, who “[do] not see language as critical for symbolic interaction” (12). According to the Algers, nonhuman animals engage in one type symbolic interaction. The two types are differentiated by outcome goals: practical goals and social goals (Alger and Alger 12). In the latter, which is the focus of the Algers’ work, goals are co-developed by participants who share bonds of obligation during situated “natural interaction rituals” (Randall Collins qtd. in Alger

and Alger 12). Because there is mutual focus and investment in interacting, meaning is created and attached to objects or activities. Thus, contrary to Mead, the Algers assert that linguistic communication is not required to create meaning during these interactions, and nonhuman animals often assume different roles in order to achieve the social goals and/or create new ones.

Of course, the debate about selfhood in animals relates to the humanist linking of language and intelligence. In other words, another binary is at work: episteme-ontology (or semiotic-material, or subject-object). Kohn suggests that we “critique our assumptions about representation (and, hence episteme) through a semiotic framework that goes beyond the symbolic” (17). While “symbolic reference is a distinctly human form of representation,” it is one “that is embedded in more fundamental and pervasive modes of representation” (Kohn 5)—a notion Wolfe’s definition of language also supports—“which are based on iconic and indexical modes of reference which are intrinsic to the biological world” (Kohn 5). In other words, as a first-order process, meaning-making (or semiosis) exceeds language as a second-order phenomenon (which relies in part on symbolic reference). Therefore, “symbolic reference is an ‘emergent’ phenomenon ... in that it grows out of more fundamental iconic and indexical modes of reference” (Kohn 6)—humans make meaning using the *same modes* as other beings do. Since “the semiosis of the nonhuman biotic world is iconic and indexical,” this indicates that “even the simplest organisms are inherently semiotic” (Kohn 5-6).

It can also be said, “humans are not the only knowers, and knowing (i.e., intention and representation) exists in the world as an other than human, embodied phenomenon that has tangible effects” (Kohn 17). Clearly, Kohn’s research supports the Algers’ theory

that social animals can be knowing beings and have a sense of self. As Kohn explains,

[a] self does not stand outside this embodied dynamic as “nature,” evolution, ... or (human) observer. Rather, it emerges within this dynamic as the outcome of an embodied process that produces a new sign, which interprets a prior one. For this reason, it is appropriate to consider nonhuman organisms as selves and biotic life as a sign process, albeit one that is often highly embodied and nonsymbolic. (6)

For Kohn, sentient beings are “selves”¹⁷ that interact with other sentient beings comprising “an ‘ecology of selves’” (4). In this formulation of relations, Kohn draws on Jacob von Uexküll’s notion of the “*umwelt*.” According to Kohn, von Uexküll¹⁸ claimed that

ecological relations ... are the product of the interaction of the phenomenal worlds—what he called “*umwelt*”—that are particular to the perceptual and bodily disposition, motivations, and intentions of different kinds of beings. (4-5)

Thus, humans, once present, are not the sole harbors of meaning in worlds of ecological relations. Significance, rather, emerges as “myriad beings”—*umwelts*—interact with and at times “blur” in becoming with others (Kohn 5, 7). When this happens, “attributes and dispositions become dislodged from the bodies that produce them and ontological boundaries become blurred”—what Kohn calls a “blurring of ‘becoming’” (7). This blurring is indicative of an intersubjectivity in which beings inhabit other *umwelts* (Kohn

17. Coincidentally, Kennedy purports that “the faculty of rhetoric, more than anything else in nature, is probably responsible for ... a sense of selfhood” (“Hoot” 10). However, he limits this to what he deems to be “the highest forms of life” (“Hoot” 10). Hence, with this exclusionary logic at work, it is not surprising that he never extended his “rhetoric of social animals” across species lines, or, rather, *down* to “lower” life forms as it were.

18. Kohn notes his awareness of the controversial history of this scholarship, particularly in relation to other theories born of the Nazi regime. He uses it, however, as a “way to “begin to think about nonhuman living beings as selves” (Kohn 18). Since I support the notion of animal selfhood with other theory, I use it as well, with similar reservations and sensitivities noted by Kohn (18).

7). In a broader sense, this means, while we socially construct animals (including ourselves) as knowing “selves,” animals socially construct us, too.

Posthumanist Communication, Response, and Exchange with Others

Ecosystems are comprised of emerging beings related by “contingent complexity” (Kohn 6)—they depend on each other for existence within a shared spatial and temporal space. In this light, “the epistemology-ontology binary ... breaks down” (Kohn 17). This also complicates other binaries, such as nature-culture and human-animal, for when we begin to view semiosis as emergent and situated in materiality, we begin to realize that humans are part of larger ecologies living in semiotic-material worlds. In other words, we do not pre-exist these ecological relations (Haraway 6); we are semiotically entangled with them. This has important implications for how we represent other knowers and the ways they know us. In fact, these considerations provide segue into theories that inform how we might more fully understand, approach, and represent “a larger universe of communication, response, and exchange, which now includes manifold other species.” What follows are more insights from scholars not only engaging with *the question* of the animal, but engaging *with animals*—nonhuman animals, that is. What these theories afford me in this thesis is a way to gauge the level of engagement an author has with the animal they claim to be representing. Since much of this theoretical discussion has been quite abstract thus far, the following theories are helpful in a more practical sense.

For example, they help us address questions such as, what does it actually look like to engage in reciprocal communication with another species? What does becoming with actually look like when it occurs? What does it mean to respond to another animal?

How might we envision *bringing forth a world* with other animals? The answers to these questions will allow us to understand the guidelines I present in chapter four—guidelines for representing animals in a more posthumanist way, as well as critiquing animal representations with a posthumanist lens. Below, I present a more pragmatic look at how relations with animals influence human understandings, including what interspecies communication looks like, such as embodied communication and paralinguistics. First, however, I will explore what living in alliance with another species looks like and why communication, response, and exchange matter—for all participants.

Response and Co-Presence: Mattering to Others

Kohn and Haraway have a lived understanding that animals can shape our lives and identities, particularly companion animals. Haraway's most recent works, for example, provide insights into the powerful bonds humans can co-create with animals. Before *When Species Meet*, Haraway published a short but impassioned manifesto, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*. In both she insists that different species learn to communicate with one another through a co-productive process, one that involves careful and respectful interaction with (versus mere observation of) the Other. While Haraway speaks to communication and exchange with animals, she emphasizes the importance of response. In fact, in her manifesto and *When Species Meet*, Haraway waxes poetic about how entangled and messy our relations often are with companion species, with response being a key thematic. Perhaps most interesting about these texts is how Haraway, a scientist, finds herself in a relationship with an animal so profoundly moving that the bond itself became the imperative behind these

works. Entire sections in both texts are dedicated to how she and her dog, Cheyenne, learn to compete in dog trials together.

In Haraway's view, to say you live in alliance with an animal is to say you respectfully listen and respond to that animal (*When* 71, 77). "In becoming with," she explains, "we are in a knot of species coshaping one another in layers of reciprocating complexity...response and respect are possible only in those knots, with actual animals and people looking back at each other" (Haraway, *When* 42). For Haraway, "there is an unnamable being/becoming with in copresence" (*When* 310). Thus, when living in alliance with others animals, social worlds are co-created—"co-constitutive companion species and coevolution are the rule, not the exception" (Haraway, *When* 220). Beings in these worlds shape one another through reciprocal communication and response—subject to subject—an intersubjectivity. Further, becoming with an animal matters because "mattering is always inside connections that demand and enable response" (Haraway, *When* 70-71)—each participant attends to situated "response-abilities" (Haraway, *When* 418) that he or she interprets as necessary for achieving the goals for that specific interaction. As such, this kind of alliance in which beings matter to one another requires more response-able representation. This is the imperative behind my work here.

Interspecies Communication and Levels of Response

Barbara Smuts provides insights into the materiality of communication between and *across* species based on her work and "relationships with baboons, dogs and other animals" ("Encounters" 293). Through a dual lens of anthropology and psychology, Smuts studies the "emergent properties that embodied communication produces and what

these properties might mean in the context of a relationship” (“Embodied” 138). Smuts defines embodied communication as “the physical way beings communicate and express themselves” (“Embodied” 138). Mainstream society most commonly refers to it as body language. Wolfe also speaks of “the material contingency” of language. Meaning is often found in “its enunciation in and through the body, in its involuntary kinesics and paralinguistic significations” (Wolfe, *Rites* 86). As an example, Wolfe points to Gregory Bateson’s “work on language, communication, and species,” and how this linguist “argues . . . that [while] human languages have a few words for relationship functions,” often these “words function poorly in the actual discussion” (*Rites* 86). The word “love” is a prime example: when one says I love you to another person, the individual on the receiving end is often more interested in *how* the word is said—in the accompanying gestures, and facial expressions (kinesics) as well as posture, tone, and style (paralanguage)—than the word itself (Bateson qtd. in Wolfe, *Rites* 86). More meaning is found in the materiality of reciprocal communication than in words.

According to Hawhee, Kenneth Burke often used animals as a way to ruminate on “the tangled relation between bodies and communication” (“Kenneth” 174), indicating that “animals . . . function for Burke, as a way to reflect on bodily communication and bodily thought otherwise obscured by language in humans” (“Kenneth” 173). They seem to serve a similar function for Aristotle who claimed “nonhuman animals are expert in the bodily economies of perception and action” (Hawhee, “Toward” 85). However, due to the continuity of language, many scholars (including the Algiers and Haraway) are taking the embodied communication of the nonhuman animal world at “face” value, and using their own bodies to respond. Smuts is one of them. She asserts that, in interspecies

communication, “meaning arises from the pattern of interaction rather than the behaviors shown by each individual” (“Embodied 140”), which seems in keeping with the Algers’ “social goals” of interaction.

Similar to Kohn, Haraway, and the Algers, Smuts identified “the presence of something resembling a human ‘self’ in other species, and therefore “emphasizes the importance of recognizing and honoring this presence in other animals as well as in humans” (“Encounters” 293). With this in mind, she offers “a preliminary framework for conceptualizing the ways that humans and animals can relate to one another” (Smuts, “Encounters” 294). This framework consists of seven levels of response and is based on the premise that social beings of different species “co-create systems of communication and emotional expression that permit deep ‘intersubjectivity,’ despite ... very different biological natures” (Smuts, “Encounters” 293). What follows is a synopsis of Smut’s seven levels of response.

At the first and “most basic level, an animal responds [to a human] in an impersonal ... and reflexive way, based on ‘instinct’ and habitual responses,” often fleeing the scene of encounter (Smuts, “Encounters” 306). At the second level, “an animal attempts to learn or detect something new about [the other],” but does so “from a safe distance,” and at the third level the animal responds in a way that suggests he or she recognizes the individuality of the human (Smuts, “Encounters” 306). A “turning point” in relations between social beings is seen at the fourth level, where reciprocal communication first becomes possible due to the added “challenge of learning to interpret each other’s signals” (Smuts, “Encounters” 306). Typically, the need for communication at the fourth level is driven by what is construed by each participant as being in his or her

“best interest,” so any cooperation seen at this level “does not imply mutual affection or altruistic motives” (Smuts, “Encounters” 307); meaning, the interaction is not understood as mutually beneficial, nor is there necessarily interest or concern for mutual benefit.

The fifth level is reached when both human and animal are voluntarily “motivated to maintain a mutually beneficial relationship” involving direct interaction, such as play and other “rewarding activities” and routines (Smuts, “Encounters” 307). Here again, Smuts explains, affection is not the bonding force of the alliance (“Encounters” 307). While the relationships are not necessarily motivated by mutual affection, they do involve direct interaction, cooperation, and “move beyond merely understanding each other’s standard signals” (Smuts, “Encounters” 307). However, it is at the sixth level where the relationship is likely maintained for “its own sake” (Smuts, “Encounters” 307), and, concomitantly, where the possibility for approximating the emotional state of the other increases significantly. While social beings attempt to approximate each other’s emotional states at the fourth level, signifying the turning point, signal interpretation is still very rudimentary. Here at the sixth level, however, there is a level of deeper understanding and connection—when bonds begin to form. Smuts suggests “many people experience this kind of relationship with a mate, a child, close friend, or a companion animal” (“Encounters” 307). As Smuts explains,

Whether mutuality occurs within or between species, the participants typically move beyond merely understanding each other’s standard signals to the development of a new language and culture that transcends the particulars of either [animal’s] individual or species-specific repertoire. (“Encounters” 307)

Clearly, Smuts believes a culture and a hybrid language, a kind of arcana,¹⁹ can develop between humans and other species. In other words, these are polymorphous levels of contact, of *becoming with*. Each member of the culture is being shaped by social interaction, and more so by interactions that matter.

“Intersubjectivity,” Smuts theorizes, “could be a label for interactions or relationships occurring at levels six and seven” (“Encounters” 308). Curiously reminiscent of Kohn’s blurring *umwelts*, Smuts believes that some humans “experience such a profound degree of intimacy that their subjective identities seem to merge into a single being or a single awareness (at least some of the time)” (“Encounters” 307). According to Smuts, this aligned awareness is indicative of the seventh level. Smuts is quick to point out that she is quite aware of the paradox here, since “relationship’ implies interaction between two separate beings,” and although she does not seem to know exactly how it happens, she theorizes that “such separation dissolves ... temporarily” (“Encounters” 308). Interestingly, Smuts adds, it is difficult to say “how common such experiences are” because in our culture people “don’t tend to talk about them” (“Encounters” 308). She identifies this experience more specifically as a “merging of minds” (Smuts, “Encounters” 306). “Many people,” she explains, “seem to have experienced such moments with others, perhaps especially with companion animals,” even though they typically never “[expect] to merge with others in this way” (Smuts, “Encounters” 308).

19. By arcana I refer to the way interspecies communication is often very specific to the individuals creating meaning together, and thus a bit of a mystery to newcomers. For instance, if a stranger were to tend to my dogs, this person would likely not understand all of the nuances of their communication strategies. I also use it to denote the mysteriousness of these species-transcending rhetorics and how all of their particularities actually develop (Smuts, “Encounters” 307). This is a fascinating form of rhetoric.

Interestingly, Haraway believes the phenomenon Smuts describes “is another kind of isopraxis” (*When* 370n37). Isopraxis is more typically used to describe, in Haraway’s words, when “horses and riders are attuned to each other” (*When* 229). This is based on the detailed analysis of “skilled human riders and educated horses” that revealed how “homologous muscles fire and contract in both horse and human at precisely the same time” (Haraway, *When* 229).²⁰ Thus, Haraway’s personal experience tells her that this kind of attunement is possible with other species as well, as when dogs and humans train for dog trials.

However, using a critical anthropomorphic lens (as explained below), I am more comfortable with thinking of this as “synchronous energies,” or blurring of *umwelts*, during which time, for instance, a human might have a heightened sense of what it means to be “dog-with-human” versus “dog.” Smuts’ “merging of minds” is slightly too suggestive of subjugation for my posthumanist sensitivity. That said, her seven levels are quite useful for my project, and therefore, I will render the seventh level as follows: At the seventh level, humans sometimes experience such a degree of intimacy that it seems as though their subjective identities merge into a kind of phenomenological synchronicity with the animal Other, and thereby experience their “becoming with” in a profound way.

Finally, in terms of the levels, Smuts does not position the seventh level as a ceiling, suggesting that even deeper levels of understanding might be perceived in the future. Naturally, these ideas raise concerns about representing animals “truthfully,” including anthropomorphism and sentimentalism.

20. Haraway learned about this study by ethologist Jean-Claude Barrey via Vinciane Despret (*When* 229).

Anthropomorphism and Sentimentalism

According to ethologist Marc Bekoff, “anthropomorphism is the attribution of human characteristics to nonhuman animals” (123), and it “is usually applied as a term of reproach, both intellectual and moral” (Daston and Mittman 5). However, it is important to distinguish anthropomorphism from anthropocentrism—they are not the same, although they can be related. Social psychologist (and symbolic interactionist) Leslie Irvine explains that while “all human attempts to understand and describe any phenomena occur from the human point of view, the ‘problem’ of anthropomorphism is not unique to the depictions of animals” (68). As Bekoff contends, “being anthropomorphic is a linguistic tool to make the thoughts and feelings of other animals accessible to humans” (123)—in other words, humans use the language that is available to them (Irvine 68). These scientists do, however, consider specific representations or descriptions of animals unethical—such as those that reveal biases to the ways humans perceive the world, or ignorance to the ways a species perceives the world. For instance, when humans “ascribe ideas and preferences to animals with little basis for doing so” (Irvine 73). This is a cultural phenomenon, in fact, that often occurs in the form of narrow, highly sentimentalized, representations of animal Others. Irvine refers to this as “sentimental anthropomorphism” (73), and as previously discussed, it equates to humanizing animals in detrimental ways. Bioethicist and social scientist Peter Steeves is also sympathetic to claims that anthropomorphism and sentimentalism are “forms of violence ... [that] reduce the animal, speak (inappropriately) for the animal, and fail to do justice to our being together” (9).

As a way to avoid such acts of violence, Irvine suggests “a middle ground [that] involves informed, systematic interaction with and observation of an animal,” with the idea being that “over time, this makes possible a ‘critical’ ... anthropomorphism” (69). Critical anthropomorphism, then, “entails grounding statements about animals” in empirical data beyond our own observations, including scientific theories about a “species’ natural history, perceptual and learning capabilities, physiology, nervous system and previous individual history” (Burghardt qtd. in Irvine 69). The idea is to make the most informed, respectful statements possible using human language (Irvine 69). When speaking for the animal, a critical anthropomorphic approach resists assumptive and devaluative claims. We should not assume that we know with certainty what any Other—human or nonhuman—knows or feels. The point here is not to demark all sentimental expression *about* an animal outright, especially in view of becoming with. As animal studies philosopher Vinciane Despret elucidates,

to ‘de-passion’ knowledge does not give us a more objective world, it just gives us a world ‘without us’; and therefore, without ‘them’ ... And as long as this world appears as a world ‘we don’t care for’, it also becomes an impoverished world ... in other words, a poorly articulated (and poorly articulating) world. (“Body” 131)

However, descriptions and interpretations that are *over* sentimentalized are being problemized, particularly those expressing the views or emotions of an animal. This is when representation becomes a form of violence. Even Steeves admits that, in light of such concerns, he has “taken to thinking about silence,” yet, concerns aside, “[he continues] to talk to animals” (13), and represent them. A critical anthropomorphic approach requires careful attention to language use, particularly in terms of presumptions and claims of certitude. These kinds of acts of violence are often committed

unintentionally—so the idea in this approach is to become hyper-intentional out of respect for the Other. Therefore, it requires we question what we have the ability to know about the Other.

Perspectivism

Despret insists that it is impossible to know another animal's perspective, that we can only represent the perspective of that Other *in relation to* him or her and within a specific context. Despret's stance here is informed by perspectivism, which refers to "a translation of intentions" ("Becomings" 134). Among several concepts, perspectivism entails the "possibility of thinking one's own intentions from the point of view of the animal that perceives them" (Despret, "Becomings" 134). However, when we resolutely claim to provide another animal's perspective, or that of an entire species, in Despret's view, we have made a false and disrespectful claim: we have over-determined our abilities as a human. (These kinds of claims are common in scientific and educational media.) Kohn further complicates this by claiming "we can never really know what other selves—human or nonhuman—are 'really' thinking, just as we can never be sure of what we ourselves are really thinking" (9). Thus, from this perspective, "it makes no difference whether that interpreting self is located in another (kind of) body or whether it is" what you know as your-"self" (Kohn 9).

To resolve this Despret proposes we speak to the specific relation that actualized the behavior or characteristics being described ("Becomings" 128). In other words, we speak to the situatedness of becoming with the animal—the specific context of that intersubjectivity. For instance, if we intend to represent a specific dog's perspective, we

would not attempt to represent the perspective of all dogs, but rather the perspective of that dog-with-human. It follows then that we represent *our* perspective as an other also co-shaped, as human-with-dog. This distinction is crucial. This shift from representing the views *of* others to views-*with*-others is not only more respectful to those others, it is also a strategy for warding off claims of anthropomorphism. Additionally, according to Despret, we should never presume we can speak for an entire species—as if representing “dogness”—based on one animal, particularly one who has been co-shaped and co-constituted with a specific human. Notably, “one doesn’t substitute one point of view for another; on the contrary,” this resistance to speak for *all* others allows for more respectful perspectives in that they are seen as “*additional* ... points of view” (Despret, “Becoming” 134; emphasis mine). Perspectivism, then, insists on specificity *through* a multiplicity. And, representing becoming with becomes a narrative about the apparatuses and efficacy that render the becoming possible (Despret, “Becomings” 127). One of these apparatuses is the human’s presence and interaction with the animal Other.

Related to this, is the current epistemic bias that often blinds us to the ways other species “know” the world. Predeterminations about how animals perceive the world, serve to limit what might be otherwise revealed (voluntarily) to us. More to the point, as a species we largely privilege the faculty of sight as the way to “know” the world. For us, facts and Truth are often thought of as that which can be captured as empirical evidence, that which can be observed and explained using language. A posthumanist perspective finds this highly problematic due to a full bodily sensorium through which other species may experience the world, and us. Thus, posthumanism requires we resist claiming to know—with certainty—how a species interprets and perceives the world. Absolute

claims are mired in human exceptionalism, for only exceptional beings have such omnipotence. Such claims are also a form of violence in that they are an index of our power to know. This is a familiar form of oppression as claiming to know others is a colonial act. Thus, for philosopher Stanley Cavell, the question becomes—are we ready to release ourselves to “underknow” animal Others, and thereby willingly “stand’ under, not above” them (qtd. in Wolfe, *Rites* 5)? Postcolonial scholars share these concerns about hegemonic positionality and what amounts to epistemological subjugation. Like Cavell, many insist on a new stance to Others, but instead of “under” they suggest a lateral move, alongside.

Speaking Alongside with Humility

Despret expresses concern for “the ‘we’ that academic knowledge imposes in order to constitute difference between animals and humans,” arguing that “it [is] ... necessary to learn to present ourselves properly and address others properly” (“Becomings” 129). Susan Jarratt expresses similar concerns about representations of marginalized Others that effectively serve to reinscribe difference in her essay “Beside Ourselves: Rhetoric and Representation in Postcolonial Feminist Writing.” By analyzing the rhetoric of three feminist postcolonial scholars (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Rigoberta Menchú Tum), Jarratt describes their approach as “speaking alongside” (128); meaning, these scholars speak alongside the Others of the marginalized group to which they belong, versus presuming to speak for them. This stance of speaking alongside, rather than *for* or *about*, is a more ethical stance, one similar to what Despret advocates. Here, “representatives” are not *substituting* a representation with their point of view, but, instead respectfully *adding* to the many—and thereby creating a “multiplicity

of voices” (Jarratt 119), or an “ecology of selves” (Kohn 7). Both respect difference while simultaneously honoring the voice of a “self.”

Édouard Glissant, a prominent postcolonial scholar, also expresses great concern about the approach to and representation of marginalized Others in his book, *Poetics of Relation*. Glissant is particularly concerned about the incessant “need to know” and the reduction of Others, which he views as violent colonial acts. In response, Glissant insists that scholars assume a position of profound humility and respect in their approach to Others: a position of opacity. From this more ethical stance, assumptions and assertions about the Other are not permissible. Opacity requires that we ethically approach and represent an alliance *with* the Other, and that we incorporate new knowledge as being created jointly, as acts of “giving-on-and-with” (Glissant 192). The “giving” here represents a “giving up the need to know,” as a way to minimize the risk of reducing or pressing the Other to reveal themselves to us. Thus, the notion of opacity asseverates that the Other has the right to remain irreducible—the Other as “that which cannot be reduced” (Glissant 191).

In their article, “For Opacity: Nature, Difference and Indigeneity in Amazonia,” Keith Lindner and George Stetson explain that Glissant defines the “non-human world” as “nature” and discusses his concern for it at length. Lindner and Stetson speak to how Glissant often recognizes the “multiple meanings of nature” and claims “there *are* natures that matter” (55; original emphasis). Recognizing that “the line between human characters and non-human nature is blurred to the extent that it becomes impossible to disentangle these two domains,” Lindner and Stetson extend the notion of opacity to Glissant’s all-inclusive “nonhuman nature” (55-56). I, in turn, extend the notion of

opacity and “the right to difference” (Glissant 190) more specifically to animal Others, thereby honoring their irreducibility to the essence of “nature.” Notably, such an approach to animals acknowledges that the human translation of the animal Other will always be imperfect. Instead of making assumptions, we accept what the Other chooses to tell through the complex, species-specific, and situated interspecies communication. Opacity dictates we accept that, in the end, we may have the message all wrong, completely misunderstood. What matters most is honoring the relation—the humility of deep and abiding respect and alliance for the Other's sense of well-being. Clearly, “giving-on-and-with” is consistent with Haraway’s “becoming with” and Jarratt’s “speaking alongside.” They are all positions of humility with respect to difference.

Frameworks of Vigilance, Responsibility, and Humility

As Wolfe explains, “posthumanism means not the triumphal surpassing or unmasking of something but an increase in the vigilance, responsibility, and humility that accompany living in a world so newly, and differently, inhabited” (*Posthumanism* 47). Thus, posthumanist values might be summarized as vigilance, responsibility, and humility. Posthumanist scholar Neil Badmington suggests that what I have identified as posthumanist values might also be the answer to Wolfe’s book title, *What is Posthumanism?* (n.p.). From this standpoint, posthumanism is the practice of approaching, representing, and engaging with nonhuman Others with vigilance, responsibility, and humility. The value of vigilance “compels us to adopt an attitude of permanent vigilance against the temptation of certainty” (Maturana and Varela qtd. in Wolfe, *Critical* 78) and against “willful ignorance” (Derrida qtd. in Wolfe, “Rites” 66)—thereby, we become vigilant in the analysis of our discursive practices and

representations of animal Others. We vigilantly interrogate our interlocution for implicit “common sense” assumptions that serve to reinscribe oppressive ideologies (Stibbe 148). The value of responsibility reminds us to attend to our ethical “response-abilities” with regard to the other species that share this material-semiotic world *with* us. And, finally, we are to approach and represent these Others with the humility and respect they deserve.

Vigilance, responsibility and humility are familiar values to the field of rhetoric and composition. In his examination of ideological interpellations, the venerable James Berlin asks, “What are the effects of our knowledge? Who benefits from a given version of the truth? ... To whom does our knowledge designate power?” (679). Wolfe is asking similar questions but from a posthumanist view. Social animals are “knowing” beings that can engage in embodied communication with us. With this new understanding of other social animals as “selves,” how do we begin to write about these “ecologies of selves” and our “becoming with?” Further, before we can determine if stories or other representations of animals might surpass the prevalent ideologies about animals in our culture, we must examine those ideologies more closely, right down to their roots. From a posthumanist standpoint, we cannot consider how we might write about animals more ethically before we consider how we might *think about them* more ethically. Therefore, we need frameworks that potentially allow us to exercise the vigilance, responsibility, and humility required of a posthumanist stance.

Autoethnography is a research methodology that involves the study of self within culture. Often used to push back on dominant representations of Others, it might be considered a genre of resistance. Thus, I will argue that the principles of autoethnography provide the foundation for such a posthumanist model, particularly when the notion of

opacity is applied—this positionality will guide much of my discussion in this thesis. Consequently, what will become clear in the next chapter is that the primary concern of the autoethnographic stance is that the researcher ethically represents his or her alliance with the Other, that it incorporates new knowledge as being created jointly, a process of “giving-on-and-with.” Also, autoethnographers often push back against representations that have not taken a respectful stance. With the new understanding of language and culture represented herein, I hope to illustrate how autoethnography is an analytic framework that might allow us to represent self-with-Other, and do so *with* the other “matter [that] comes to matter” (Barad 823). The synthesis of autoethnographic, posthumanist, and opaque values helps us to discriminate between acceptable and unacceptable representations of the animal Other. These values help us know if we are doing violence unto friends.

Chapter Two: The Autoethnographic Imperative

*“How do you tame a wild tongue, train it to be quiet, how do you bridle and saddle it?
How can you make it lie down?”*

~ Gloria Anzaldúa

Gloria Anzaldúa’s provocative words in the above epigraph open her manifesto “How to Tame a Wild Tongue.” Therein, Anzaldúa speaks to how voices or languages like her native Spanish have been silenced in the past by dominant Western culture, and even more recently are being (mis)represented, or (re)silenced, by research scholars. More specifically, Anzaldúa bears witness to the identity conflict and cultural oppression that results from living in a society in which a dominant tongue reigns (77). In doing so, she vehemently rejects representations of her culture, representations often comprised of false claims and assumptions that have violent colonizing effects. Notably, Anzaldúa’s metonymic questions about bridling and saddling her (voice) implicate a dual oppression—of humans and animals. “Tame” and “wild” suggest that Anzaldúa was the victim of savage practice: she and her language were animalized. In response, Anzaldúa engages in Spivak’s “wild practice” in an attempt to overcome the residual effects of a “tradition of silence” (Anzaldúa 75). Her manifesto powerfully demonstrates the ways postcolonial theorists are using life writing for socio-political purposes. As a result, rhetoric and composition scholars have become increasingly interested in the potentiality

of life writing²¹—a term that generally refers to “writing about lives in various disciplines and modes” (Hobbs 4).

Susan Jarratt, for example, espouses the value of postcolonial work that employs modes of life writing in direct address of “rhetorical questions, the answers to which had been for many years assumed: “who speaks? on behalf of whom? who is listening? and how?” (110). In an attempt “to address the problem of speaking for others,” Jarratt looks at how Others represent themselves (110). More specifically, she looks at the writing of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Rigoberta Menchú Tum, who write as members of marginalized cultures. While all use a form of life writing, collectively they wield an interesting array of rhetorical strategies. Spivak uses the personal essay to take a perspectivist position, claiming to add another perspective to the “multiplicity of voices” of her peoples (Jarratt 119). Thus, she speaks *with* the members of her culture versus *for* them. In an academic textbook, Minh-ha displays “a radical dispersion of self” as she “[divides] herself into subject and object” in an attempt to “[speak] nearby or together” with the others in her culture (Minh-ha qtd. in Jarratt 120-21). Therefore, as Jarratt rightfully derives, “both Spivak and Minh-ha “choose a complex construction of subjectivity in an ethical response to the exigencies of that placement” (121).

Finally, Menchú employs the power of the testimonio to vociferate the grief and urgency as she and her peoples suffer at the hands of “an oligarchic government” (Jarratt 123). Menchú makes no apologies for speaking for her people, because, as postcolonial-

21. Following Catherine Hobbs, rhetoric and composition scholar and author of *The Elements of Autobiography and Life Narratives*, this thesis “uses the term *life writing* to refer to a broad range of stories about people’s lives” (3; original emphasis), including, but not limited to, life narrative, manifesto, testimonio, autobiography, and autoethnography.

feminist Lynda Marín explains, the “first person singular subject” of testimonio has been deciphered as “a collective ‘we’” (Marin qtd. in Jarratt 124). From this perspective, Menchú’s testament is given in order to express a “collective experience” (Jarratt 124). In effect, all three women use life writing to situate themselves alongside others in their cultural group, versus speaking for or about them. In essence, Jarratt concludes, they are “figuring structures of relation” (111). This reconfiguration is in stark contrast to an ethnographic tradition of disrespectfully speaking for others and thereby assuming a position of power and claiming to know; thus, these writers are inciting “the politics of representation” (Neuman 188). In addition to these women, there are countless other scholars with postcolonial and postmodern sensitivities using life writing to engage with “the question of difference” (Jarratt 110).

Postcolonial-feminist Sidonie Smith, for example, confronts the biopolitics of savage practice with autobiography, as a way to rewrite her body, her culture, and the “body of the text” (267). Thus, Smith resists the marginalization (and animalization) of her body through “autobiographical writing with skin” (267). Also, Zora Neale Hurston is well known for her historic and poetic, autobiographical hybrid, *Dust Tracks On a Road*, in which she writes of self within Black heritage circa 1920-1940. This list is certainly not exhaustive, but is impressive nonetheless. Notably, aside from Jarratt, all of these scholars are writing from the perspective of marginalized Other *as* marginalized Other. In other words, each is expressing her *own* lived experience through her own writing. Hence, Mary Louise Pratt would likely define all of these texts as autoethnographic.

Pratt proposes that “autoethnographic texts are representations that the so-defined others construct *in response to* or in dialogue with [...] representations others have made

of them” (35; original emphasis). For Pratt, such texts represent the results of “contact zones”—the social spaces she envisages “where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other” (34). Therefore, autoethnographic “texts often constitute a marginalized group’s point of entry into the dominant circuits of print culture” (Pratt 35). Pratt further explains that an autoethnographic text “often involves concrete collaborations between people, as between literate ex-slaves and abolitionist intellectuals” (35). Here, Pratt wisely acknowledges the “highly asymmetrical relations of power” (34) in this alliance. As communications scholar Soyini Madison explains, “positionality is vital because it forces us to acknowledge our power, privilege, and biases just as we are denouncing the power structures that surround our subjects” (7). Therefore, such awareness of positionality and hegemonic imbalance is necessary when figuring structures of relation to meet our ethical obligations to the Other.

Over the past four decades, autoethnography has been used in diverse ways by the sciences and humanities. As a subgenre of ethnography, it stems from a history fraught with agential and ethical issues, necessitating the need for contact zones. In fact, all of the postcolonial scholars previously mentioned who are rewriting themselves (such as Anzaldúa, Minh-ha, and Spivak) are largely pushing back on the work of ethnographers who studied and wrote about them. These Others would likely agree with culture and media studies scholar Mark Neumann who insists, “ethnography—and other forms of cultural representations—matters deeply in the lives of others who find themselves portrayed in texts not of their own making” (191). In consideration of this, it is necessary to more fully define autoethnography in relation to ethnography, as well as to other modes of life writing. In addition, while it is outside the scope of this thesis to fully

outline the trajectory of ethnography or autoethnography, I will outline this history with the intention of situating autoethnography with regard to the field of rhetoric and composition, and my thesis.

Autoethnography

Most prevalently embraced by sociologists and cultural anthropologists (Anderson, “Analytic” 376), ethnography is a methodological approach for the study of culture and representation of that culture. True to most qualitative research, several forms of data collection substantiate ethnographic research, most commonly including naturalistic observation, interview, and additional texts or artifacts (M. Patton 394). Data analysis typically involves description, interpretation, and analysis of interpretation (M. Patton 371). Simply put, ethnographic researchers examine a group’s observable and learned patterns of behavior, customs, and ways of life, providing a high level of ecological validity or accuracy due to the research being done in lived (naturalistic) rather than laboratory contexts. The particular contribution autoethnography makes to more traditional ethnography, then, is a privileged insider perspective. Here, the individual perspective provides mechanism for suggesting the multitudinous ways of experiencing and describing culture, working to complicate the glossing over of individual experience that often occurs in generalized cultural studies.

Thus, the autoethnographic approach provides a unique opportunity for writers to define their individual identities in participation with others within a community. The individual (auto) examines the relationship between the individual researcher and a larger cultural context (ethno) then represents and/or opposes dominant ideologies of the culture

in question. Perhaps most distinctive to autoethnography is the required level of immersion with the culture in question as a member-researcher, who is later clearly visible in the text by way of significant self-reflection (Anderson, “Analytic” 376). Again, the main focus of an autoethnographic work is self within culture, self often providing push back to cultural dynamics within a culture, and the way that culture defines an experience and a sense of self.

Blurring Genre Lines

Various genres of life writing, including personal narratives (or stories), “autobiography, memoir, and personal essays, ... easily overlap and run together, often replicating form while differing in purpose” (Spigelman 64). For example, whereas autobiography generally reflects on the *life* of an individual either with or without focus on the awareness of cultural context, autoethnography generally examines *culture* through the experience of the individual. This difference is indicated by the morphemes bio and ethno—where bio indicates life, and ethno culture. Further, while autobiography fully reveals how a person became who he or she is by “centering on reflections concerning his or her personal development,” memoir focuses on specific “events and characters” that were personally “*witnessed* by the author” (Hobbs 2; original emphasis). Thus, autobiography is distinguished from memoir by focus (Hobbs 2); memoir is generally narrower in scope versus encompassing an entire lifetime.

The testimonio (such as Menchú’s) is understood as a first person account of events as testimony to abuse and atrocity due to political and social oppression (Jarratt 123). The narrator, then, is a member of the group speaking as an authoritative

representative to publicly declare and thereby disclose specific exigencies of that group (Jarratt 124). Since the occasion is often urgent, “the rhetoric of reading testimonio is cast as a movement from identification to persuasion” (Jarratt 126)—there is a call to action here. So, while other modes of life writing focus on identifying oneself (for oneself) to an audience, the testimonio is intended to evoke response from an audience believed to have the “power” to help. The manifesto (like Anzaldúa’s) is “a personal or collaborative position paper publicly announcing ... [a] stance on controversies involving ethics, moral values, or cultural and political matters” (Hobbs 4). Notably, the manifesto is a genre of autoethnography. Other autoethnographic genres include, but are not limited to, confessional, analytic (or academic), and evocative (or poetic). All of these life writing modes differ by audience, as well as levels of interpretation and purpose—both in terms of the level of epistemological questions addressed and the level of reflection about cultural influence on self and vice versa.

These differences notwithstanding, the divisions between these modes have become increasingly blurred. In fact, sociologist and autoethnographer Sarah Wall provocatively suggests that the “wide range of published personal narratives,” particularly in this decade, “[are] the typical *product of* autoethnography” (2; emphasis mine). That is to say, Wall thinks most life writing begins with an autoethnographic process; meaning, there is some level of reflection with regard to cultural influences on the self in all of these modes. The lines dividing these genres are somewhat fluid for Pratt as well. In fact, she identifies a particular letter as the quintessential autoethnographic text (Neumann 189). Authored by Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, “addressed to King Phillip III of Spain” and dated 1613, the letter represents “an idea of autoethnography as

a political gesture in a larger textual economy of representation”—or the “art of the contact zone” (Neumann 189). In roughly 1,200 pages and two languages, Guaman Poma essentially rewrote the history of the New World using the recognizable form of the chronicle, and titling it as such in order to reappropriate a history of the Andean world using the most dominant and recognizable genre of the Spanish colonizer. The chronicle, in other words, was widely used as the means of documenting explorer/conquerors’ exploits of the Americas to Spanish readers and an Andean peasant took on the task of correcting the record. Guaman Poma not only offered his own chronicle but also mailed it to the King of Spain, the importance of which only began to be understood roughly 350 years later.

Considering this, it might be argued, as Wall suggests, that autoethnography is more of a profound idea, a thought process—specifically about self in relation to others and culture at large. From this perspective, any genre has the potential to be considered autoethnographic, while not necessarily autoethnography. Aligned with this, Neumann defines autoethnography as,

a form of critique and resistance that can be found in diverse literatures such as ethnic autobiography, fiction, memoir, and texts that identify zones of contact, conquest, and the contested meanings of self and culture that accompanies the exercise of representational authority. (191)

Drawing from this, I will use “autoethnographic” to denote any mode of life writing, including autoethnography, that has a strong component of cultural examination and discussion, where the author (or authors) speaks to reciprocal influence: how one has been shaped by culture, *as well as* how culture has been shaped due to this interaction. My use of the descriptor, unlike Pratt’s, will include texts written in collaboration with

marginalized Others (but not necessarily by the Other), and those that are not explicitly politically charged.

The Quest for the Other and the Crisis of Representation

As I have illustrated by way of Pratt, Jarratt, and other postcolonial scholars, ethnographic methods have the potential for colonizing effects, particularly when researchers benefit by using the lives of Others as their study. The trouble also lies in the imperative behind the research. In other words, the question is, what does the researcher really want? Adventure, social positionality, prestige and academic accolades, a taste of the exotic—these are trophies of a colonial past that may remain part of the prize today.

As Neumann suggests,

perhaps the ethnographic imagination so often sought the exotic because it promised a connection with mystery—a world of adventure, physicality, sexuality, difference ... [however,] the ethnographic voice typically refashioned the mystery into a quest for control and order. (192)

In Neumann's view, social scientists are "still trying to find an exotic ... [because,] in many ways, ethnography is a genre of writing that relies on that mysterious other who exists 'out' there" (182). In other words, Western society loves a mystery, but loves "solving" it even more. Historically, there has also been a need for "marking boundaries of home and *civilized* life" (Neumann 176; emphasis mine), and the notion of the "primitive" fulfilled this purpose. Citing Marianna Torgovnick, Neumann confers that "the primitive appears in ethnography, literature, and art as a symbol mediating ... the loss of an idyllic relationship with the natural world" (176). Then, often functioning "as an alternative discursive space, a site of difference," primitive or indigenous peoples "are

constructed in terms that affirm the place and identity of the observer's world" (Neumann 176). Thus, ethnographic methodologies have effectively been used for Othering by way of savage practice—reduction, animalization, and exotification.

Autoethnography emerged in the late 1970s as social scientists sought to abandon "the colonial era of ethnography" (Anderson, "Analytic" 376) and upset the hegemonic dynamic between the observer and the observed. This shift coupled with the postmodern turn resulted in "the crisis in representation that is framing ... debates in contemporary discourse about ethnography" (Neumann 182). Autoethnography gained in popularity as scholars came to embrace the value of being "members of the cultures they studied" (Anderson, "Analytic" 376), as well as working in alliance with other members to conduct research and substantiate findings—the work become more rewarding and meaningful. Many rhetoric and composition scholars have embraced this methodology for similar reasons. Actually, the field has long shaped, and been shaped by, ethnographic and other qualitative methodologies (Hall 115; Spigelman 67). In addition to the postcolonial and feminist scholars affecting the ethnographic shift, for instance, other rhetoric and composition scholars²² have called for active representational critique through the use of critical ethnography—a form of ethnography with an implicit or explicit purpose of social activism (Madison 13). The motivation to provoke social change on behalf of marginalized Others is the ethnographic imperative here.²³

22. See *Ethnography Unbound: From Theory Shock to Critical Praxis*, edited by Brown and Dobrin.

23. Janet Alsup, an English education scholar who specializes in critical pedagogy, writes, "In a postmodern world where the Cartesian conception of truth has been dismissed and intellectuals now believe in a multidimensional or contextual truth, a self-reflexive researcher stance seems to be a necessity when seeking or creating new knowledge" (222). It would seem that critical *autoethnography* is well suited for this work, based on the level of self-reflection this ethnographic form requires.

Undoubtedly, this is the imperative behind Lindner and Stetson's article on opacity, "For Opacity: Nature, Difference and Indigeneity in Amazonia." Stetson works with Village Earth, a non-government organization serving marginalized and/or indigenous peoples in several geographical areas, including the Amazon. He and his colleagues sought a more ethical approach to the indigenous peoples there, peoples they often found themselves representing in various contexts. Now guided by Glissant's notion of opacity, they respond to the ethnographic imperative from a position of humility, speaking alongside and working in alliance with indigenous peoples, instead of speaking for them and making decisions on their behalf. In this relational structure, alterity is irreducible. In the face of "the crisis of representation," Lindner and Stetson (and Village Earth) vigilantly found a more ethical way to respond to the ethnographic imperative. They have embraced the notion of opacity and now form alliances with indigenous peoples, allowing them to make all decisions in terms of representation and action taken on their behalf. This is an opaque stance, a respectful positionality alongside others.

Critique, Resistance, and New Understandings

In addition to postcolonial and feminist theory, queer theory is also currently exposing "relations of oppression and domination in our culture" (Foss 219) using autoethnographic methods.²⁴ However, while autoethnography is and has been used to draw boundaries and denounce imposed identities, it is also used collaboratively to establish ethos between two or more cultures. Anthropologist Ruth Behar and Mexican

24. Autoethnographic research is also currently informing pedagogical scholarship.

citizen Esperanza Hernández coauthor Esperanza's onerous life story in *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story*. The collaboration yielded rich insights as both authors came to terms with the hegemonic border that divided them socially, politically, and culturally, and served to complicate each woman's notion of the truth in self-telling, and thereby their relationship. This is an autoethnographic work that denounces cultural constructions, represents new understandings, *and* illustrates how new understandings can be reached through reciprocity.

As a form of “critique and resistance” that can be used to “identify zones of contact, conquest, and the contested meanings of self and culture,” autoethnography potentially offers a space for typically silenced Others to be heard (Neumann 191). It allows marginalized others to resist, to challenge savage practices and ideologies about alterity, and thereby potentially shift paradigms. Autoethnography, then, can offer an alternative perspective to the dominant, most often imposed, version of the lived experience of a culture. Autoethnography may also provide spaces where healing might begin for marginalized Others who are “beside themselves” with anger and sadness due to “deep emotional turmoil”—spaces where this rage and grief might be expressed and heard (Hernandez 6; Jarratt 110). For those “locating themselves in the borderlands” (Hernandez 1), autoethnographic collaboration with Others may provide spaces to rage together, toward new understanding and social change. Thus, autoethnographic texts might also be viewed as “invitation[s] into dialogue with Others and audience” (Gergen and Gergen 18). Jennifer Browdy de Hernandez, another postcolonial-feminist scholar, adds to this discussion by noting how many resistance writers “make use of formal innovations like linguistic code switching ... in the service of textualizing previously

silenced, culturally complex voices” (2). Guman Poma, for example, managed to take on the language of the conqueror at an impressive length of 1,200 pages. In these spaces, writers extend the invitation to include other tongues and thereby challenge (and embrace) linguistic borders.

Paired with the notion of opacity, this methodological framework allows for a more ethical positionality and epistemological approach—with humility and by way of reciprocity. Autoethnographic genres may allow those working in alliance with marginalized groups, and thereby deeply personally invested in the group, to attend to the ethnographic imperative—with vigilant resistance of “willful ignorance.” Seemingly, there is much potential here for those of us wanting to respond to the ethnographic imperative and collaborate with Others. But is this method adequate for representing nonhuman Others?

Many of us have felt the imperative to represent animals, to resist cultural constructions of them, and the dire consequences of those constructions. Based on her most recent publications, Donna Haraway has responded to this very imperative. Her chapter on agility with Cheyenne in *When Species Meet* is an autoethnographic chapter, in many ways. Here she explores how she is changed by the agility culture (and there is one), dog culture, and the “culture” she and Cheyenne establish together. Cheyenne also appears in Haraway’s manifesto—where Haraway appropriates this genre to attend to the ethnographic imperative born of a cross-species alliance. But how do we engage in a critique of Haraway’s representation that obtains between ethical obligation and academic scholarship? In other words, how do we know Haraway has fulfilled her ethical obligations in representing Cheyenne? What guides do we have for the critique of

autobiographical animal skins? How might we gauge our own autoethnographic process and approach? What autoethnographic frameworks exist to represent “the arts of the contact zone” with the *other* Other, the animal Other?

The Call for New Frameworks

Currently, there are only a handful of frameworks in existence, from various theoretical perspectives, that provide straightforward guidelines for conducting autoethnographic research and producing representational texts (McIlveen n.p.). All of them were expressly designed for the study of human cultures. Notably, I am not alone in recognizing this gap in the scholarship. Eduardo Kohn has also called for a more inclusive framework, one that not only allows us “to give voice, agency, or subjectivity to the nonhuman animal—to recognize them as others,” but also one that “[forces] us to radically rethink these categories for our analysis as they pertain to all beings” (Kohn qtd. in Kirksey and Helmreich 563). Notably, the field of anthropology has begun to respond, and in no small way. As recent as November 2010, the prestigious American Anthropological Association published a special issue of *Cultural Anthropology* titled “Multispecies Ethnography.” The issue announces the arrival of “a new genre of writing and mode of research” and recognizes the work of “multispecies ethnographers,” like Kohn and Haraway, who “are studying the host of organisms whose lives and deaths are linked to human social worlds” and how these organisms “shape and are shaped by political, economic, and cultural forces” (Kirksey and Helmreich 545). While the rubric of multispecies ethnography is intended to recognize cultures of other species, as well as the interplay of multiple species, there are still no practical guidelines for the application of ethical standards to field research conducted with these other cultures and to the

written representations of them. In other words, we still do not know what it looks like to do this work and do it ethically. For those who are interested in writing justly about, with, and for the animal Other, there is an urgent need for guidelines and heuristics.

Notably, there is much debate by autoethnographic theorists about the acceptable “rhetorical structure of an autoethnographic narrative” and the analysis of such narratives, especially in terms of writing style with relation to “autoethnography’s potential for rigor as a qualitative research method” (McIlveen n.p.). Leon Anderson, a cultural anthropologist and autoethnographic theorist, is highly invested in the fidelity of the autoethnographic genre. In his article “Analytic Autoethnography,” he proposes five key features that he believes these works should entail to preserve autoethnography, in his words, “as a viable and valuable subgenre in the... ethnographic tradition” (Anderson, “Analytic” 378). Each of his five features is more fully developed in the methods chapter that follows and in the guidelines appearing in chapter four. However, a brief look at one of Anderson’s requisite features—analytic reflexivity—might be helpful for understanding my rationale for choosing his framework.

According to Anderson, analytic reflexivity “involves an awareness of *reciprocal influence* between ethnographers and their settings and informants,” what he sums up as a “mutual informativity” due to a “[deep] level of reciprocity between the researcher and other group members” (“Analytic” 382-383; emphasis mine). He adds, with no uncertain terms, that “autoethnographers must assiduously pursue other insiders’ interpretations, attitudes, and feelings as well as their own” (Anderson, “Analytic” 389). Clearly, accentuating the voices of Others by way of reciprocal communication is one of the virtues of the craft. Here, I recognize parallels with animal studies: reframing knowledge

in larger universes of communication, response, and exchange. Therefore, while Anderson's framework was not designed for animal cultures, his features seem to provide scaffolding for posthumanist guidelines. In other words, they appear to attend to values such as vigilance and responsibility with regard to human Others.

Existing Autoethnographic Models

It is also important to note that Anderson's is an analytic framework. Generally speaking, the autoethnographic approach falls on a spectrum that ranges between evocative (poetic, narrative) and analytic (academic, scientific). On one end, the evocative tends to create more of an "emotional resonance with the reader" because of the autoethnographer's exploitation of "narrative and expressive skills" (Anderson, "Analytic" 377). On the other, the analytic autoethnographer steadfastly remains dedicated to a more conventional and scientific epistemology and tone. Anderson voices grave concerns about the potential for solipsism he believes is inherent in the evocative approach, which has also been referred to as "emotional autoethnography" ("Analytic" 374).

Fellow autoethnographic theorist Carolyn Ellis is a major proponent of the evocative approach, and offers guidance for such an approach in her book, *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel About Autoethnography*, which (just as her title suggests) stylistically takes the form of a novel. While I do not fully embrace Anderson's level of concern for all applications of evocative autoethnography, nor the idea that a narrative cannot also be analytic, I do share his concerns about solipsism and hyper-sentimentality when it comes to speaking for animal Others, particularly in light of

critical anthropomorphism. Since Wolfe requires a radical rethinking of how we think about the animal, an analytic approach seems more consistent with his posthumanist call to action. Thus, an analytical model that requires metacognitive thinking (or keeping ourselves in check) seems quite appropriate for the task at hand. In consideration of this, I preferred an analytic framework to an evocative one. While I realize the risk of over-sentimentalizing animals is present even when working within a posthumanist framework, I also realize the level of difficulty in the challenge here. The attachments many of us have with animals are often highly emotionally charged, so keeping those emotions at bay as we attempt to represent these companions, as respectfully and authentically as possible, might serve to be extremely challenging. Therefore, I sought an arguably more stringent framework over ones that might have provided for more creative license.

Again, while there is much debate by theorists about approach, currently there are very few explicit guidelines for autoethnographic research and writing. However, in addition to Ellis' framework, I found two other models. The first (and most recent) model I considered is Tessa Muncey's *Creating Autoethnographies* published in 2010; however, in general, I dismissed her model because it appears to privilege an evocative approach and there is only brief (and often simplistic) theoretical reasoning provided throughout the text. Also, as a healthcare worker and educator, Muncey seems relatively unknown by theorists (such as Ellis and Anderson) largely devoted to exploring the validity of autoethnography as a researcher methodology.

The second (and final) model I looked at is by another relative newcomer to this scholarship, multicultural education scholar Heewon Chang. Interestingly, the approach

represented in her book *Autoethnography as Method* seems quite similar to Anderson's analytic approach. While Anderson's article does not provide the level of detail nor as many concrete examples as Chang does to support the guidelines in her book, to add credence to my work, it seemed imperative that I draw from a prominent theorist such as Anderson, who is well established in autoethnographic circles.²⁵ Therefore, I merely took inspiration from Chang's very detailed work²⁶ and opted for Anderson's features of analytic autoethnography, believing this framework to be better suited for my purposes. In short, I chose a model that appears to offer both credibility *and* basic guidance for critical inquiry—a model I could re-vision for the specific kind of critical awareness required of posthumanist inquiry.

The "Auto" of Autoethnography

Since I am proposing a posthumanist framework, postmodernists and posthumanists might feel compelled to complicate the "auto" of autoethnography, as it is well known in these and other circles that Derrida scrutinizes the idea of an "auto" that the human has assigned him or her-self as the author, creator, knower (qtd in Wolfe, *Posthumanism* 119). Derrida insists "we are not the 'auto-' of autobiography that humanism 'gives to itself'" (qtd. in Wolfe, *Posthumanism* 119)—which, of course, is a deconstructionist point of view. However, while the deconstruction of who "we" are when we call ourselves "we" is necessary, Wolfe's synthesis of systems theory (as

25. Anderson "has served ... as associate editor and editorial board member for several journals, including *Social Problems*, the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, and *Symbolic Interaction*" ("Leon" n.p.). He is the author of a "qualitative methods textbook, *Analyzing Social Settings*," and is currently the Chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Ohio University ("Leon" n.p.).

26. Perhaps not surprising based on her pedagogical background, Chang provides extensive writing exercises and examples, thereby inspiring similar development of my guidelines.

articulated in chapter one) indicates that we must also recognize that a reconstruction process follows this deconstruction. Thus, we reconstruct our very being based on the semiotic encounters with other "selves" that thereby come to constitute "us." What both Wolfe and Haraway dispute (as would Derrida most likely) is the notion of autopoiesis as a system that self-organizes without the influence of other organisms (Haraway, *When* 317n46).

In their view, autopoiesis is a self-referencing system embedded within a larger system through which it *recursively* communicates with other autopoietic (self-referencing) organisms. When the system is in "self-referential mode" (or closure), it is in selection mode—deciding that which is meaningful (Wolfe, *Posthumanism* xxi). From this perspective, autopoiesis necessitates self-reference as part of this recursively semiotic process. For Wolfe, autopoiesis represents a repetitious "openness from closure" (*Posthumanism* xxi). Wolfe's principle dictates that the system is open to semiotic exchanges with other autopoietic beings, what Haraway describes as being open to "nourishing flows of matter and energy" (*When* 32). This is analogous to Haraway's "becoming with"—the process of co-constructing ourselves with other beings, such as "becoming-with-dog," or "becoming-with-human" in the case of the dog. If autopoiesis can be viewed as a process of semiotic selection, sifting through utterances and "noise," selecting only that which is deemed meaningful, autoethnographic texts, then, can be viewed as the autopoietic process materialized. To put it another way, an autoethnography is a textual representation (albeit, highly stylized) of the recursive acts of semiotic-material beings within their worlds. Hence, my use of the "auto" in autoethnography denotes the autopoietic process, in that the "I" self-references it-self,

and *not* that it self-organizes. With a nod to Derrida, I use parentheticals to symbolize the recursivity of the self: posthumanist (auto)ethnography.

Toward Posthumanist Frameworks

Autoethnography requires a deep engagement with the culture under study, involves consistent and significant self-reflection, and speaks to how “self” affects and is affected by the setting.²⁷ Again, while Anderson’s framework provides for the ethical study and representation of Others through autoethnography, in its current state it does not fully accommodate the study and representation of other animals. Simply put, Anderson’s framework is not designed to help shift us from a humanist paradigm. Therefore, in the next chapter, I delineate my methods for revising Anderson’s features to be more applicable to animals and thus provide a posthumanist stratagem.

Since posthumanism is critical theory, *posthumanist* (auto)ethnography should be considered a more inclusive form of critical (auto)ethnography. A posthumanist framework, then, might allow us to question “the humanist schema of the knowing subject” (Wolfe, “Human” 569) by not simply “tacitly [extending] a model of human subjectivity to animals” as if the animals were humans possessing a kind of “personhood in diminished form” (Wolfe, “Human” 572); but, rather, by interpreting communication with the animal Other with the utmost humility and respect for him or her as a knowing subject. As a hybrid interdisciplinary method, autoethnography provides the necessary scaffolding for designing an interspecies framework. It is my deepest hope that by

27. In the field of sociology, it is interesting to note that (considering their work with animals) “interdisciplinary symbolic interactionists” are the predominant champions of “the practice of autoethnography” (Anderson, “Analytic” 373).

appropriating Anderson's features of analytic autoethnography, revising them to reflect posthumanist values and the notion of opacity, that we might have a practical application for attending to the question of the animal—a set of guidelines that might allow us to interrogate the representational politics of other animals, and to represent other animals with vigilance, responsibility, and humility.

For posthumanist autoethnographers, ethical intentions guide the writing about sentient beings, especially as we consider “how [these beings] experience the world, the intensity of our emotional attachments to them,” and why such consideration matters (Wolfe, “Human” 569). As Anderson himself reminds us, our “narratives matter. The stories we tell and the ways we tell them are at the heart of ethnographic writing” (“Apples” 457). It is just such consideration of the companions in my life, Jaxon and Bleu, that is at the “heart” of my work here—because, echoing Barad, they are matter that matters.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Rationale

“If we appreciate the foolishness of human exceptionalism, then we know that becoming is always becoming with—in a contact zone where the outcome, where who is in the world, is at stake.”

~ Donna Haraway

“The stories we tell and the ways we tell them are at the heart of ethnographic writing.”

~ Leon Anderson

The principles of autoethnography are reflected in Leon Anderson’s “key features” of analytic autoethnography, as they insist on the fastidious study and representation of Others. So, while Anderson’s framework was not specifically designed for the study of animals, it does provide viable scaffolding for an interspecies framework. In fact, this thesis project first took root as I recognized how postcolonial scholars were using the genre to resist savage practices (the animalizing of humans and animals); and it began to bud as I recognized a strong correlation between Anderson’s features and Donna Haraway’s “becoming with.” Kindred concepts such as, reciprocal influence, mutual informativity, and cocreation of knowledge, immediately inspired a revision project that became the purpose of this thesis: offer a more inclusive autoethnographic stratagem—one that recognizes animal cultures. Since much of the theory I draw from is very abstract, in chapter four I use excerpts from one or more autoethnographic mainstream texts about animals to exemplify the stipulations of each guideline in a more concrete way. Therefore, this chapter will provide a summary of Anderson’s features and delineate my methods for revising them. This is followed by the rationale for using mainstream

texts to illustrate the guidelines, criteria used for selecting and omitting texts, as well as limitations of the sample. Notably, I will explain the hybrid form of critical discourse analysis that informed this selection process, one that I am prepared to call, posthumanist discourse analysis (PHDA). Finally, at the end of this chapter, I summarize each of the six texts comprising the resulting corpus. In each summary, I reveal the author's purpose for representing an animal and my reasons for including that specific text.

Key Features of Analytic Autoethnography

Anderson's five features include (1) complete member researcher status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) visible and active researcher in the text, (4) dialogue with informants beyond self, and (5) commitment to analytic agenda. The first feature pertains to positionality. It requires complete immersion in the culture under study as to capture an "experienced" understanding as a member of that culture, and thus achieve complete member researcher (CMR) status (Anderson, "Analytic" 379). With human autoethnographic studies, more often than not, the researcher has found him or herself organically within the culture in question, rather than adopting it and then needing to earn CMR status. The second feature, analytic reflexivity, is relevant to both the research process and analysis. Simply put, there must be an awareness of self as both affecting and affected by the research. In other words, analytic "reflexivity involves an awareness of reciprocal influence between ethnographers and their settings and informants" (Anderson, "Analytic" 382), or "mutual informativity" (Anderson, "Analytic" 383). Thus, "the autoethnographer's understandings, both as a member and a researcher, emerge not from detached discovery but from engaged dialogue" (Anderson, "Analytic" 382) with other members.

Visible and active researcher in the text is the third feature, and means exactly that—the researcher must be highly visible in the resulting text. Anderson claims “such visibility demonstrates the researcher’s personal engagement in the social world under study” (384). The fourth feature requires the researcher collect data beyond their own observations, and thereby must conduct interviews, or utilize other artifacts or texts to supplement their analysis. Finally, a commitment to an analytic agenda, which Anderson contends is “the defining characteristic of analytic science” (Anderson, “Analytic” 387). As such, this fifth feature requires the “use [of] empirical data to gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves” (Anderson, “Analytic” 387). In sum, this feature requires the researcher contribute more generally to social knowledge by refining, elaborating, or re-visioning theoretical understandings.

Posthumanist Re-Visioning

My process for revising Anderson’s framework began with an annotated outline of his features and their main points. What I wanted to know, in simple terms, was if it was possible to fulfill the requirements of these features with animals. Therefore, under each feature, I posed questions about what I foresaw might complicate this. My initial questions were as follows:

- *Can one ever become a complete member researcher across the species divide?*
- *Can different species engage in “dialogue” that can be translated into fair representation? And if so, how?*

Then, I cross referenced this list with animal studies theory—including Wolfe’s notions of animal subjectivity and Haraway’s “becoming with”—to make an initial assessment as to how this framework might translate, if at all, to the study of animals through the lens

of postcolonial autoethnography. Preliminary research on interspecies communication was necessary, which I conducted using the research databases at Colorado State University's (CSU) library. Again, the purpose of this research was to determine if there were viable answers to my initial questions.

Chapter one reveals much of the scholarship that convinced me it could be done, including symbolic interactionism, critical anthropomorphism, the levels of response, perspectivism, and the notion of opacity. These theories and perspectives provided for the systematic analysis and revision of each of the guidelines. Using one or more of these theories and perspectives, I revised my initial outline of Anderson's features and each of their stipulations. Most features required additional criteria and all required finessing in order to be more species inclusive, respectful to animal Others, and posthumanist. For instance, analytic reflexivity (the second feature) requires the author reflect the dialogue with the Other. Thus, I revised this feature to accommodate symbolic interaction and intersubjectivity. Also, I bring critical anthropomorphism to bear on this feature, reminding researchers to avoid making absolute claims about the animal's feelings, thoughts, and perceptions, and instead make respectful approximations based on consistent interaction and patterns of behavior.

My overarching goal was to reflect the notion of opacity and attend to posthumanist concerns. In other words, I revised the features to reflect vigilance, responsibility, and humility with respect to animal Others. Thereby, the guidelines might now "compel us to adopt an attitude of permanent vigilance against the temptation of certainty" (Maturana and Varela qtd. in Wolfe, *Critical* 78) and against "willful ignorance" (Derrida qtd. in Wolfe, "Rites" 66), so that we become vigilant in the analysis

of our discursive practices and representations of animal Others. My hope is that they require us to vigilantly interrogate ourselves as interlocutors, particularly for implicit “common sense” assumptions that serve to reinscribe oppressive ideologies (Stibbe 148). Finally, they may remind us to approach and represent these Others with the humility and respect they deserve.

Rationale: Why Mainstream Texts?

To fully articulate the guidelines I propose in chapter four, and how they insist on an ethical approach to the animal Other, I point to features and language use within a selection of mainstream texts that claim to represent an animal’s perspective. However, to be very clear, the focus is not the texts themselves. The guidelines are my central focus, and therefore my intention here is provide the most complete picture possible of them. For this purpose, I use the texts to provide concrete examples of each guideline. In other words, the texts serve to answer the question, what might this feature look like if actualized by an author? Here, I draw upon my hybrid conceptual framework, posthumanist discourse analysis, in offering a concentrated and pragmatic critique of specific features of these texts in relation to one or more of the guidelines. I do so with the explicit understanding that many of these authors set out to write memoirs, personal narratives, or other genres of life writing, rather than autoethnography. That said, I do include one text that identifies itself as ethnography and indicates the systematic use of autoethnographic methods (*Cat Culture* by Alger and Alger). While most are not representative of systematic autoethnography, all are autoethnographic. I align myself with Sarah Wall and hold that any genre has the potential to be considered autoethnographic, while not necessarily autoethnography (2). I consider my select group

of texts to be “autoethnographic” (as defined in chapter two) as they are all modes of life writing and contain a strong component of cultural examination and discussion. Each author (or authors) speaks to reciprocal influence, or describes (while not always using the term) an intersubjectivity experienced with an animal. Also, some of the texts I identify as autoethnographic were written in collaboration with marginalized Others (but not necessarily by the Other), and some may or may not be explicitly politically charged, based on the intended audience and chosen genre.

Again, while I have identified these texts as autoethnographic, the authors had no explicit intentions of performing autoethnography or representing the genre. As such, I certainly do not hold them to a standard that may not have seemed relevant to their genre of choice. Most of them were undertaken with affection, or even devotion. However, we can take measure of these texts against some standards since these standards illuminate how humanist and “common sense” assumptions are embedded in mainstream ideology, how these oppressive ideologies have become naturalized in our society. In other words, these texts illustrate the problems and potentials of representing animal Others. Thus, taking measure of these texts will help us imagine how the guidelines I propose might be used to evaluate the representation of animals—a set of standards called “a multispecies representation ethic” that demonstrates awareness of posthumanist (auto)ethnographic criteria. We can also call for the use of these standards in future texts of various genres, including our own. Regardless of the mode, genre, or form, “we must still be accountable for the consequences of our representations and the implications of our message—because they matter” (Madison 5). In fact, I will hold myself accountable in my future attempts to represent the animals in my life, Jaxon and Bleu, as having a model for doing

so has been the impetus behind my thesis project all along: guidelines for the ethical representation of *them*, out of respect for them.

Because cultural constructions of Others “are intimately bound up with language and discourse” (Stibbe 147), the importance of holding ourselves accountable for our representations of animal Others, cannot be not be overstated. Avoiding humanist rhetoric is of key importance. In a Wolfean sense, humanism is an “ideology [that] often manifests itself”... by being implicit (Stibbe 148). Therefore, humanist rhetoric is sometimes unintentional—this is the crux of representing animals with whom we share bonds. Most of the authors in the mainstream texts included herein wrote about an animal in his or her life and the ethnographic imperative was often to pay tribute to that individual, an animal that the author cared deeply about, with whom the author had co-created a meaningful life. This issue points to the direction of my work. While some scholars, postcolonial feminists in particular, have been understandably resistant to “set methodologies” that might serve to standardize forms of life writing (Spigelman 83), I argue that because of the nature of ideology—that which is insidious and “believed” to be True—we need a heuristic that prompts the interrogation of our own language use if we hope to shift from such a pervasive humanist paradigm. Posthumanist values tell us we need to excavate our own thought processes, beliefs, and “common sense” assumptions buried in our language, so that all we have assumed to be self-evident about animals is called into question, even about the ones who share our lives. This is a challenging endeavor, and, considering the human-animal continuum that is largely still at work in our society—our sliding of animals and humans in more “animalized” or “humanized” positions that inherently determine levels of ethical concern—I argue we need guidelines.

Our representations of animals affect how they are socially constructed, which, in turn, “influences how they are treated by human society” (Stibbe 147). Cultural constructs are largely shaped and influenced by popular culture, so I looked to mainstream texts that might best reflect our current constructs of animals and the nature of our bonds with them. This choice is consistent with the goals and methods of autoethnography. As a systematic form of study, autoethnography requires the contextualization of the individual experience within larger cultural trends. Posthumanists, like postmodernists, believe culture “consists of everyday discursive practices” and therefore “see artifacts of popular culture as legitimate data for critical analysis because they are places where struggles take place over which meanings and ideologies will dominate” (Foss 213). From this perspective, by selecting texts written by mainstream society and read by broader audiences, I have access to texts that have a more predominant influence on our society’s constructions of animals, compared to texts, for example, written by scholars and strictly read by academic audiences. In short, my articulation of the guideline criteria will involve some of the texts currently shaping our society at large. Since “discourse can be considered a way of talking or writing about an area of knowledge or social practice that both reflects and creates the structuring of that area,” I used a modified form of critical discourse analysis for this process. Therefore, before fully delineating my selection process, I will pause briefly to sketch this additional, conceptual framework.

Posthumanist Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) “is an outgrowth of critical linguistics that emerged in the early 1990’s under the guidance of Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough,

Ruth Wodak, and other European scholars” (Huckin n.p.). According to van Dijk, CDA is a conceptual framework that examines “the role of language, language use, discourse or communicative events in the (re)production of dominance and inequality” (qtd. in Stibbe 149). In “Language, Power, and the Social Construction of Animals,” Arran Stibbe combines CDA with the “theory of fact construction” to analyze a “corpus of texts” about animals in order to expose the “ideological assumptions embedded in everyday discourse” (145). The importance of this is that once we “become aware that a particular aspect of common sense is sustaining power inequalities ... it ceases to *be* common sense and may cease to have the capacity to sustain power inequalities” (Fairclough 85; original emphasis). Revealing “common sense” assumptions, then, allows us to challenge oppressive ideologies embedded in our representations of Others. Thus, CDA is yet another component of doing this work, especially considering, as Wolfe illustrates, how deeply embedded humanist ideology is in Western culture.

Markedly, Stibbe couples CDA with another theory (“fact construction”) to best suit his purposes for analyzing texts within a specific sociopolitical context. He then performs a “detailed linguistic analysis” of a corpus of textual artifacts, including magazine articles and other public documents, by focusing on “linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, textual structures, and punctuation to reveal hidden ideological assumptions on which discourse is based” (Stibbe 149). For instance, he looks at how the use of pronouns can reinforce “us and them” binaries, such as using “it” to refer to an animal but using personal pronouns—him or her—to refer to people (Stibbe 151). Following Stibbe’s lead, I couple CDA with posthumanist theory to suit the specifics of my analysis; hence, posthumanist discourse analysis (PHDA). While my work also

strives to reveal hidden ideologies, I will not be conducting a highly detailed linguistic analysis as Stibbe does. Instead, the guidelines for posthumanist (auto)ethnography serve to bound the linguistic analysis, as the guidelines themselves already provide the basic structure for this work. Since articulating some of the guidelines may involve the use of PHDA to reveal how the authors have or have not satisfied the criteria *specifically* because of their language use, the guidelines serve to challenge “common sense” assumptions and hidden ideologies.

My articulation of the criteria will serve to illustrate the kind of linguistic features that either enable us to, or prevent us from, representing animal Others in respectful and opaque ways that conform to the goals of a posthumanist approach. Thereby, the guidelines prompt us to interrogate our own writing in similar ways. Again, the ultimate aim of my work is to exemplify how the guidelines can serve to challenge the dominant ideologies that might result in our representing an animal in a humanist and therefore oppressive way.

Text Selection

First Sampling: The mainstream texts in my corpus were found over weeks of research. However, I began by looking for systematic autoethnographies studying animal culture, that is, texts written by scientists for an academic audience and expressly presented as ethnographic studies of animal culture. Using the research databases at CSU’s library, I found a relatively small collection of ethnographies involving autoethnographic methodology, including *Understanding Dogs: Living and Working with Canine Companions* (Sanders), *If you Tame Me: Understanding Our Connection with*

Animals (Irvine), and *Cat Culture* (Alger and Alger). Of these, Sanders is the only one that identifies his entire text as “auto-ethnographic” (xii; original), whereas Irvine and the Algers claim to employ autoethnographic methods as part of larger research strategies (Irvine 187; Alger and Alger 219). However, the purpose of these sociologists’ texts is largely to inform their field, on what it can learn about humans by studying human-animal interaction. I wanted texts specifically focused on what human-animal interactions mean to *animal* cultures. This is in keeping with the tenets of postcolonial autoethnography—a place of resistance for the Other. While there should be some broader social implications drawn in autoethnographic texts, voicing the Other should be the *main* purpose of the text, and here the Other is nonhuman. Even Sanders’ text is dedicated to how human culture is affected by dogs.

Also, while all of these authors included personal anecdotes in their texts, they did not seem to capture my lived understanding of “the intensity of our emotional attachments to [animals]” (Wolfe, “Human” 569). So, while I was looking for texts that satisfy Anderson’s features, which in this case meant significant self-reflection, I also wanted texts that spoke to this emotional intensity that can form in interspecies cultures. Since these ethnographic texts only did this to a varied and limited degree, I began to mine my personal bookcases that were lined with stories dedicated to bonds shared with animals. Based on her essay “Theory: Gone to the Dogs,” literary scholar Priscilla Patton might identify these stories as being informed by “observational and intuited knowledge about animals,” some of which represent a pointed “overlap in the approaches of

scientists, theorists, and ordinary people” (577).²⁸ I originally bought these texts because I was interested in seeing how these authors represented their bonds with animals, hoping they might serve as a model for me. So I was drawn to how these texts were about *an* animal's life versus the lives of animals in general.

Then I cast a wider net for more mainstream texts beyond my own collection. In addition to the CSU library, I sourced three local bookstores and the Internet—Google searches, as well as searches using bookstore websites, produced a plethora of texts. In total, I considered approximately 150 texts, including videos (i.e. *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill*, directed by Judy Irving), fine art photography books (i.e. *Street Dogs*, by Traer Scott), and children's books (i.e. *Elbee of Eldridge Avenue*, by Luanne Myers). This phase of the selection process involved an inductive form of generic criticism, in which I determined if each text met a generic description of what constitutes autoethnography as a genre. So, at this point I only included a text if it appeared, on the surface, to share some rhetorical similarities. Thus, to be considered autoethnographic, the text had to focus on how the author came to intimately know and was ultimately shaped by another culture. Of course, for my purposes, the other culture had to be one created *with* an animal through significant interaction.

Second Sampling: Autoethnography is challenging, yet rewarding work, as researchers work dual roles in liminal spaces as cultural members and researchers. In fact, “this liminal state of being betwixt and between [can be] emotional and

28. In this essay that appears in one of the most recent issues of *JAC* (volume 30), Patton criticizes the way these stories tend to humanize animals, even challenging Haraway's *When Species Meet*, purporting that “Animal Studies ... prefers stories that cast animals as benevolent innocents” (578). While Patton makes many valid points that I am in agreement with, I would challenge her reading of Haraway who takes pains to remind her readers that animals should not be humanized nor angelicized.

uncomfortable” (“Liminality” n.p.). Interspecies communication often occurs in liminal spaces. My own life experience tells me that people living and responding to animals interact in a kind of liminal space—a material-semiotic interstice. Haraway speaks of these spaces where “species meet,” which is why “becoming with” spoke to me. With this in mind, as I sorted through the multitude of texts collected in my first sampling (approximately 150), the most important criteria was that the text focuses on an interspecies culture created in this liminal space. So, in the second phase, I chose texts that reveal the extraordinary things that can occur in these spaces, where lives are shaped by personal interaction with other animals. I wanted stories that spoke to me, that represented a “becoming with” Other and an “articulating world” (Despret, “Body” 131).

Notably, at this point, Anderson’s features guided my selection process more systematically. With my sample down to approximately thirty texts of various modalities, I assessed how well each one satisfied one or more of Anderson’s features and/or my modifications of his features. I was looking for model examples of each feature (or guideline) actualized in one or more of these texts. This purposeful sampling often required analysis of the author’s language in terms of humanist rhetoric such as exclusionary logic or “common sense” assumptions, so PHDA was useful for this part of the selection process. For instance, if an author interprets for an animal and makes claims with absolute certainty about what the animal is thinking or feeling, I made note of that text’s potential for serving as an example. Conversely, if an author is cautious about making claims of certitude (as author Stacey O’Brien often is in her text, *Wesley the Owl: The Remarkable Love Story of an Owl and His Girl*), I also made note of this language

use and its potential. Again, these examples would serve the purpose of illustrating the criteria of the guidelines more fully.

Complete Member Research Status: Relation to the Animal

Based on the requirements of this feature, texts were only selected if they involved a relationship with an animal intimate enough that it was possible for the author to capture an “experienced” understanding of that culture. Therefore, I assessed the nature of the relationship of the author to the animal being represented. Omitted from my selection were any texts in which the author merely collects scientific data about an animal and then represents that species. I was interested in texts representing close bonds formed between humans and animals. Therefore, if the author merely observes animals in the wild, the text was not included.

Analytic Reflexivity: Purpose and Perspective

Since I am developing criteria for how to ethically provide fair representation of the experience of the alingual animal, I chose texts that focus predominantly on representing the animal’s experience of “reality” rather than the human experience. Thus, I ruled out texts in which the main focus was the human animal, no matter how autoethnographic those texts might be. Abigail Thomas’ *A Three Dog Life: A Memoir* focuses on her struggles to recreate a life with her husband after an accident leaves him with traumatic brain injury. Her book does not qualify because it is only ostensibly about dogs when it is really about Thomas’ own struggles to deal with a complicated life. In contrast, the Algers attempt to expand “our knowledge of animals from their own perspective” (xiii), making this text eligible. Also, PHDA helped me identify humanist

rhetoric in texts, particularly when authors attempted to represent the point of view and feelings of the animal. This framework helped me identify exemplary posthumanist rhetoric, as well.

Visible and Active Researcher: Life Writing

The self-reflection component of autoethnography indicates the level of personal investment with the culture under study, which means I only selected texts that were forms of life writing. For instance, Elizabeth Marshall Thomas frames her book, *The Tribe of the Tiger: Cats and Their Culture*, with an introduction and a conclusion about her own cats. However, the focus of the text is various species of cat around the world, so there is almost no explicit presence of the author, active engagement with the cats, throughout the text. Thus, this text was omitted

Dialogue with Other Informants

The fourth feature requires data collection beyond personal observations. Therefore, some texts were chosen because they include a bibliography or reference section, or other forms of data. Also, texts that included images were given preference because images constitute additional artifacts. O'Brien, for example, includes black-and-white photographs throughout her text, *Wesley the Owl*. In fact, all of the texts in my final selection incorporate some images, although some more than others.

Commitment to Analytic Agenda

This final feature requires the “use [of] empirical data to gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves” (Anderson,

“Analytic” 387). Therefore, it requires authors speak to their insights into some broader set of social phenomena. Irene Pepperberg’s text, *Alex and Me: How a Scientist and a Parrot Discovered a Hidden World of Animal Intelligence—and Formed a Bond in the Process*, was included because the author re-visioned social and scientific theoretical understandings, thereby contributing more generally to social knowledge; in fact, she does so fairly consistently throughout her text.

Final Sampling: From the second sampling of approximately 30 texts, the final six texts were chosen because they appeared to allow me to demonstrate principles of one or more of the guidelines. While these texts were predominantly chosen based on their potentiality for illustrating the guidelines, I believe this purposeful sampling represents many of the varied approaches to autoethnographic life writing about other animals in popular culture today. Notably, while many of the multimodal texts I sampled were very interesting and allowed me to exemplify some of the guidelines, I purposely limited the final sampling to print texts. Additionally, the final six were purposefully selected so that collectively they allowed me to represent a wide range of audience *and* interspecies cultures. For instance, among the thirty texts was Mark Bittner’s *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill: A Love Story...with Wings* in which the author describes how a flock of nonnative wild parrots helped him find his life’s purpose in the urban hills of San Francisco. His text reveals how he slowly earns the flock’s trust, the interspecies rapport that emerges, and his discoveries about the birds and the meaning of life.²⁹ However, Pepperberg’s *Alex and Me* was chosen over Bittner’s text because, while both allowed me to represent an interspecies culture of human-with-parrot, and both were national

29. Bittner’s interest in the flock heightens after he learns that ornithologists are not studying the acculturation of these nonnative cherry-headed conures.

bestsellers, *Alex and Me* was written by a scientist (Pepperberg) and, thus, potentially drew a larger scientific audience than *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill*.

Therefore, my resulting sample potentially represents a wide variety of audiences in popular culture because I chose texts that spanned the evocative (poetic) and analytic (scientific) tone, and texts that involve a variety of species—including cat, dog, owl, parrot, and wolf.

Omissions

Since my interest was exemplifying the guidelines, many texts were omitted because they did not provide example of one or more of the guidelines applied either effectively or ineffectively. In addition to the omissions noted above, texts that fit any of the following descriptions were omitted from the final corpus:

- Texts that primarily focus on presenting the human versus the animal.
- Texts meant to serve strictly scientific purposes for scientific audiences (with the exception of *Cat Culture*).
- Purely fictionalized texts about animals were not included, even though some posed very interesting questions about human exceptionalism.³⁰
- Texts published before the year 2000.
- Texts featuring farm animals were excluded. While bonds with farm animals would have undoubtedly brought a valuable dimension to this thesis, highly politically-charged issues such as the severe oppression and irrefutable suffering in industrial farming operations would require a discussion that is outside the scope of this project.

30. See Verlyn Klinkenborg's *Timothy: on Notes of an Abject Reptile*, a cult favorite based on actual events about a tortoise who reflects on the nature of mankind.

- Texts written explicitly for and/or by children. While these texts represent another interesting line of inquiry, it is beyond the scope of my project.

Limitations of the Sample

This project is in no way representative of the full range of texts that claim to represent animals. I understand that a sample, by definition, does not present a comprehensive view, and therefore I fully acknowledge the inherent limitations of my sample of texts (corpus). One limitation is the restriction to print texts, which excludes narratives in a multitude of media, such as new and emerging technologies. These modes likely reveal different rhetorical strategies (and potentially different ideologies) and might even suggest a better mode for posthumanistly representing the animal Other.

Other texts that might have been included in the sample are those representing human bonds with additional species, such as horse, pig, coyote, and even lion.³¹ The representational rhetorics used to describe such a variety of interspecies communication and contexts might have added fruitful and valuable discussion. Again, some texts were omitted because I already had a text representing a particular species, one I felt exemplified the criteria better. Nonetheless, by selecting only six texts across a variety of species, contexts, and intended audiences, I have excluded hundreds of others, which subsequently may limit the degree to which I can effectively exemplify the guidelines, and thereby my argument.

31. See *Chosen By a Horse: A Memoir* (Richards), *The Good Good Pig: The Extraordinary Life of Christopher Hogwood* (Montgomery), *The Daily Coyote: A Story of Love, Survival, and Trust in the Wilds of Wyoming* (Stockton), and *A Lion Called Christian: The True Story of the Remarkable Bond Between Two Friends and a Lion* (Bourke and Rendall).

The Corpus

What follows is a synopsis of each text in which I speak to the author's intended purpose, the species of animal (or animals) represented, as well as the nature of the relationship with the author or authors. I also indicate if the author includes additional forms of representation (i.e. illustrations and images) or a notes or reference section, because these documents are relevant to qualitative research methodology, which often involves observation (and participation), interviews (or other forms of member checking), and additional artifacts (such as research documents, texts and other forms of evidence). Finally, in light of my purposeful sampling, I note the reason each text was chosen and why I believe it useful and/or a generative example for my purposes.

The Lost Pet Chronicles: Adventures of a K-9 Cop Turned Pet Detective

by Kate Albrecht (with Jana Murphy)

Coauthor Jana Murphy assisted Albrecht in the structure of her personal narrative about carving out a career searching for lost pets with the aid of her companion animals. Albrecht describes how each of her three dogs and three cats comes into her life, and how an openness to their individual personalities informed and shaped their roles in her detective methods. The text is dedicated to the various investigative searches that Albrecht and her dogs conduct, the outcomes of those investigations, as well as the general public's response to her pet detective work. Collaborative relationships between Albrecht and her animals (mainly her dogs) are enhanced as she studies their behavior, which in turn informs her investigative techniques. Albrecht commits a twelve-page epilogue to tips on recovering lost dogs and cats. A small sample of full-color, glossy photographs of Albrecht, her animals, and investigative evidence are included in the

book. This text was chosen because animal knowledge informs human knowledge—knowledge that is applied by a police detective, a profession requiring highly systematic and objective methods, and thereby expands my audience to include readers interested in working dogs. Also, this text allows me to exemplify analytic reflexivity and anthropocentrism. Published by Bloomsbury.

Cat Culture: The Social World of a Cat Shelter

by Janet and Steven Alger

As sociologists, the Algers are disciplined in qualitative methodology. Their book details the findings of their ethnographic study of cat culture conducted at a shelter where they had volunteered for years prior to the study (Alger and Alger xii-xiii, 219). Using a symbolic interactionist perspective, the Algers claim to present multiple points of view in their text, including those of the researchers, the shelter volunteers, and the cats. While the tone leans towards the analytic because of the intended scientific audience, the text is readily accessible to the nonscientific reader, and includes personal anecdotes. The stated purpose of the text is to expand “our knowledge of animals from their own perspective” (xiii), and thereby challenge assumptions about animal subjectivity. In addition to photographs of the cats on the front cover, black-and-white images are interspersed throughout the text. As would be expected due to the intended audience, an extensive notes and reference section are included. I chose this text because it is an ethnography that employs autoethnographic methods. Written by scientists with an analytic tone, it expands the audience range of my sampling to include those interested in the results of systematic studies. Published by Temple University Press.

Shadow Mountain: A Memoir of Wolves, A Woman, and the Wild

by Renée Askins

As her subtitle suggests, Askins' memoir weaves reflections of her life as a conservationist, bonds with canidae, and philosophy on nature. Her conservation efforts include the founding of the grassroots organization Wolf Fund, and the successful reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone National Park. Askins is well-versed in the works of celebrated poets, whose lines about nature, wildness and beauty are in concert with her own. Askins recalls her travels and bonds with animals in evocative prose, primarily from her perspective, only interpreting for animals with which she bonds most deeply. As a scientist she resists translating much of the communication, behavior, and vocalizations that she is uncertain about, merely making note of them and her curiosity. Askins does not, however, hold back in describing the emotional bonds with her companion animals, nor the grief she experiences in losing the wolf she raises to another research center—the book is dedicated to this wolf, Natasha. In addition to voicing the aforementioned animals, the purpose of her book is to voice “the wild” at large in the form of insights and advice to conservationists in terms of approaching their objectives with more effective tactics, strategies, and rhetoric. Notes, wolf conservation resources, and a selected bibliography are included. This text was chosen because it is by a scientist, and, while it is analytical, it is also evocative in approach and tone. Askins allows me to exemplify multiple guidelines, including complete member researcher status, visible and active researcher in the text, and commitment to analytic agenda. Published by Anchor Books (a division of Random House, Inc.).

Cesar's Way: The Natural, Everyday Guide to Understanding and Correcting Common Dog Problems

by Cesar Millan (with Melissa Jo Peltier)

Best known as “The Dog Whisperer” on the National Geographic Channel, Millan aims to help dog owners communicate better with their animals in order to improve the lives of humans, and especially the live of dogs. Millan’s theories are informed by a lifetime of living closely with dogs. He works and plays with dogs daily, observing and interacting with them. His book is meant as a training guide; however, his famous motto is: “I rehabilitate dogs. I train people.” Millan claims he has to rehabilitate dogs because humans do not understand their dogs and often humanize them. Millan repeatedly points out that humanizing dogs is not respectful and suggests that owners try to see from their dog’s point of view—in other words, shift from a humanist paradigm. Every chapter includes black-and-white photographs and/or cartoons. A bibliography and notes section are included. Millan’s text was chosen due to its mainstream popularity (and subsequent influence on current societal ideology), and also because it allows me to illustrate multiple guidelines including, complete member researcher status, analytic reflexivity, and dialogue with informants beyond self. Published by Harmony Books.

Wesley the Owl: The Remarkable Story of an Owl and His Girl

by Stacey O’Brien

While working at California Institute of Technology’s (Caltech) Owl Lab, O’Brien adopts a fledgling owl that could not be rehabilitated back into the wild due to an irreversibly damaged wing. So the story begins for O’Brien and Wesley the owl, about how they come to communicate and adapt to one another, forming a strong bond. O’Brien consistently labors to tell their story from both perspectives—hers and the owl’s.

In fact, she often includes his multifarious vocalizations as dialogue in an attempt to reveal reciprocal communication between species. O'Brien layers her book with interesting facts about owls and her insights based on her observations of Wesley, all in an engaging, narrative voice. Black-and-white photographs are interspersed throughout, mainly highlighting the early part of Wesley's life (although all of his eighteen years were spent with O'Brien). An extensive section included at the end of the book provides unusual facts about barn owls. O'Brien's text was chosen because of the unusual interspecies culture represented (human and owl), and because it exemplifies several guidelines (such as analytic reflexivity) both ineffectively and effectively. In fact, some of the animal representation in this text is quite (however unintentionally) posthumanist and opaque. Published by Free Press (a division of Simon and Schuster, Inc.).

Alex and Me: How a Scientist and a Parrot Discovered a Hidden World of Animal Intelligence—and Formed a Bond in the Process

by Irene M. Pepperberg

Animal psychologist Irene Pepperberg recounts her scientific research on nonhuman communication with an African Grey parrot named Alex. The collaborative duo and their accomplishments are widely celebrated, as Alex demonstrates an ability to use human language (words and phrases) in order to identify and categorize objects, as well as to engage in conversation. Despite the resulting notoriety, tellingly, Pepperberg frames the memoir with *the loss* of her feathered partner. Having published a scientific account of their work eight years prior (*The Alex Studies*), clearly this book is not meant as a scientific account, but rather to memorialize Alex and the bond that formed between them during their thirty years together (*Alex 9*). Throughout her book, Pepperberg strives to present both of their perspectives, including not only Alex's behavioral and lingual

responses, but also describes the psychological effects on each of them during trying events. Glossy black-and-white photographs of Pepperberg and Alex center the book. This text was chosen because it was written by a scientist (as previously mentioned above) based on interaction with another species within both scientific (laboratory) and naturalistic settings—the only text of the six that does this. Also, it provides a particularly thorough example of the fifth guideline, commitment to analytic agenda. Published by HarperCollins Publishers.

Chapter Four: Guidelines for Posthumanist (Auto)ethnography

“The language of becoming, or of the human and animal becoming something together, inspires fresh analogies for responding effectively and ethically in forms of otherness within the human species.”

~ Priscilla Patton

“Writing, like human language, is engendered not only with the human community but between the human community and the animate landscape, born of the interplay and contact between the human and more-than-human world.”

~ David Abram

In this chapter, I present a set of guidelines adapted from Anderson’s five key features for analytic autoethnography. I appropriated and revised his framework to reflect posthumanist values so that it might allow us to attend to the particular considerations required for the ethical (opaque) approach and representation of other animals. These guidelines are meant to guide researchers and writers³² as they consider how an animal experiences the world and how best to represent that experience in relation to that animal. As such, I offer a heuristic for representing animals with respect to difference and humility. Further, I implicitly suggest its general application to representations of animals beyond autoethnography and autoethnographic genres.³³ Notably, the guidelines I propose might also be used to evaluate representations of animals—a set of standards called “a multispecies representation ethic” that demonstrates awareness of posthumanist

32. In this chapter, I will use researcher, author, writer, and autoethnographer interchangeably.

33. In addition to genres of life writing, the inherent principles of these guidelines might also be applied to other representations of animals, i.e. new media.

(auto)ethnographic criteria. Therefore, as I explain the terms of each guideline, I will analyze excerpts from one or more of the mainstream texts introduced in chapter three as to the degree the animal representation in those excerpts meets the standards of that guideline. This analysis will indicate how some representations of animals perpetuate, even if unintentionally, notions of human exceptionalism and work to reinscribe an ontological divide between humans and animals. In this case, I will propose alternative representation. Since articulating some of the guidelines will involve posthumanist discourse analysis (PHDA), these discussions will also serve to illustrate the kind of linguistic features that might prevent or enable meeting the criteria; concomitantly, the guidelines prompt us to interrogate our own approach as researchers and writers in similar ways. Immediately following the guidelines is a chart that summarizes the principles of each guideline.

Again, the ultimate aim here is to exemplify how the guidelines can serve to challenge the dominant ideologies that might result in our representing an animal in a humanist and therefore oppressive way. The five guidelines I propose for posthumanist autoethnography include: (1) *Complete Member Researcher Status*, (2) *Analytic Reflexivity*, (3) *Visible and Active Autoethnographer in the Text*, (4) *Informants Beyond the Self*, and (5) *Opaque Analytic Agenda*.

Complete Member Researcher (CMR) Status

This guideline speaks to issues of positionality. First and foremost, it requires the researcher be completely immersed in the culture under study. According to Anderson there are two categories of CMR: opportunistic and convert (Adler and Adler qtd. in

Anderson, “Analytic” 379). For the opportunistic CMR, “group membership precedes the decision to conduct research on the group” (Anderson, “Analytic” 379). This means that researchers of this type “may be born into a group, thrown into a group by chance circumstance, ... or have acquired *intimate familiarity* through occupational, recreational, or lifestyle participation” (Anderson, “Analytic” 379; emphasis mine). Cesar Millan, for example, who is best known as “The Dog Whisperer” on the National Geographic Channel, establishes a positionality of opportunistic CMR (though not using this terminology) in his book *Cesar’s Way: The Natural Everyday Guide to Understanding and Correcting Common Dog Problems*. While Millan’s book is offered as a training guide, it begins with his “personal story of a life shaped by dogs” (23). The dogs he studied as a young boy lived cooperatively on his grandfather’s farm where Millan’s family spent “every vacation and weekend” (23). During these formative years, Haraway might say that Millan’s life was entangled with the lives of these farm dogs, because for him “having dogs around was like having water to drink” (Millan 22). As the author recounts:

The dogs felt like part of our family. [...] They happily interacted with us, but they also had their own distinctive lifestyle—their own “culture,” if you will. These “working dogs” on our farm were my true teachers in the art and science of canine psychology. [...] I found joy in simply observing them. (Millan 24-25)

Millan’s social world has intimately included dogs ever since. The fact that this “intimate familiarity” (Anderson, “Analytic” 379) preceded any formal observation identifies Millan as an opportunistic CMR.

The convert CMR, “on the other hand, [begins] with a purely data-oriented research interest in the setting but [becomes] converted to complete immersion and membership during the course of the research” (Anderson, “Analytic” 379). Renée Askins, author of *Shadow Mountain: A Memoir of Wolves, A Woman, and the Wild*, is a convert CMR. Her thesis “research project” brought her to the “wolf research facility” where she first encountered and later bonded with wolves, *a* wolf, actually—Natasha (11). While Askins also represents the dogs in her life, the central focus of her text is how the interaction with Natasha and other wolf packs profoundly affected their lives, as well as Askins and her life’s purpose. Since the research project preceded the human-wolf bond, Askins is a convert CMR. Interestingly, the two types of CMRs are equally represented by my corpus: Albrecht, the Algers, and Millan are opportunistic CMRs; Askins, O’Brien, and Pepperberg are convert CMRs. This equality, however, is not representative of what is found in social science research, as the convert CMR is typically less common (Anderson, “Analytic” 379).

Regardless of type, complete membership requires the researcher be immersed enough in the culture to be able to approximate “the emotional stance” of the Other (Anderson, “Analytic” 380). As obvious as this may seem, if taken seriously, this guideline may appear highly problematic in terms of providing an insider’s perspective for cultures of other species. One might ask, *can a researcher ever become a complete member in cultures across the species divide? Can a human provide an insider’s perspective in this case?* The answer is yes, but it requires something more than just observing an animal or owning a pet. It requires Haraway’s “becoming with” and Glissant’s acts of “giving-on-and-with” the Other—close, yet respectful alliance. Here,

the researcher is immersed in the culture, or social world, being co-created through an alliance with the animal Other. In other words, the researcher is not immersed in animal culture, but in an interspecies culture—a culture constituted by members *becoming with* or shaping one another. In these liminal spaces, the researcher and Other are “betwixt and between,” engaged in a process of acculturation—where both parties exercise agency in response to one another.

Consequently, it is the emotional bonds that form between researcher and Other that allow the researcher to capture an “experienced” understanding of the interspecies culture. In other words, the researcher has a stake in the interspecies culture beyond data collection, and thereby is personally invested in the interspecies culture under study. While “being a complete member typically confers the most compelling kind of ‘being there’ on the ethnographer” (Anderson, “Analytic” 379), Haraway and Jarratt might tell us that being a CMR confers the most compelling kind of “becoming with” or a “standing alongside” on the posthumanist ethnographer. In such alliances with an animal, the researcher and the Other adapt to a life that is mutually satisfying—meeting both animals’ needs, for the sake of the relationship. This does not always happen in our culture, even with companion animals, as Millan’s book attests. However, all of the texts represented herein reveal such alliances to varying degree, some of them quite extraordinary and unusual. For instance, Wesley is a barn owl whose story is told with the help of Stacey O’Brien, who created a life together with Wesley, as represented in their book, *Wesley the Owl: The Story of an Owl and His Girl*. Barn owls are hardly pets, and after committing to raising this owlet who could not be rehabilitated back into wild, O’Brien restructured her home, her routines, and the contents of her freezer to

accommodate what owls need—because he meant something to her. They were becoming an interspecies family. For his part, Wesley may have altered his vocalizations in an attempt to better communicate with O’Brien. Wesley also, on his own accord, became very vulnerable to O’Brien, sleeping for long periods of time with his “delicate golden wings,” spread across her shoulders, which were moments of mutual trust O’Brien says she “wouldn’t trade ... for anything in the world” (205). This was human-with-owl, and owl-with-human, becoming.

As a complete member, the researcher is well positioned to provide an insider’s perspective of the culture under study, at least in theory. But at what point is a researcher intimate enough to approximate the emotional stance of another social being—human or nonhuman? Smuts’ theories about intersubjectivity are helpful here. As delineated in the first chapter, her work provides insights into the nature of relationships between and *across* species. Her seven levels of response, a “framework for conceptualizing the ways that humans and animals can relate to one another,” are particularly helpful (Smuts, “Encounters” 293-294). This framework is based on the premise that social beings of different species “co-create systems of communication and emotional expression that permit deep ‘intersubjectivity,’ despite [...] very different biological natures” (Smuts, “Encounters” 293). In other words, these are levels of becoming with, levels that might be used to gauge when we have become a complete member of an interspecies culture and thereby able to approximate and represent the emotional stance of the Other.

The texts in my corpus portray a range of response levels. In fact, some authors reach different levels with each of the animals represented in a single book, largely due to differences in species and context. Askins, for example, appears to reach the fifth level

with Natasha, and the sixth with her dog, a companion animal. However, she also observes wild animals at Yellowstone National Park who flee the scene when they detect her presence, indicative of a response level one.³⁴ Millan quickly reaches the fifth level with the dogs he “rehabilitates” in his book *Cesar’s Way* because, while the relationships aren’t necessarily motivated by mutual affection, they involve direct interaction, cooperation, and “move beyond merely understanding each other’s standard signals” (Smuts, “Encounters” 307). Millan helps pet owners move beyond mere affection and begin to respond *with* their dogs. According to Smuts, intersubjectivity is possible “at levels six and seven” (“Encounters” 308). This suggests that at these levels an autoethnographer is likely to be considered a CMR, able to approximate the emotional stance of the Other, as well as provide an insider’s perspective as a member of an interspecies culture. Nevertheless, these levels should not be viewed as hard-and-fast lines—for “situated knowledges” created in semiotic-material worlds blur such lines and establish their own rules of engagement (Haraway, *When* 26, 389n12; Kohn 5). I demonstrate these levels so that as we contemplate our own positionality, as conscientious members of an interspecies culture, we might have a sense of how intersubjectivity or blurring of *umwelts* (the phenomenal worlds of beings) has appeared to other authorial representatives.

However, even at the sixth or seventh level, is the researching author (autoethnographer) immersed enough to panoptically represent the animal’s perspective? Further, can this be achieved with the humility required of an opaque stance?

34. This response level is quite appropriate (and, arguably, most desirable) in terms of close proximity within this context.

Analytic Reflexivity

Analytic reflexivity requires the author refer to the awareness of self as both affecting and affected by the research and the context. Thus, he or she must reflect on how self and Other are engaged in “mutual informativity” (Anderson, “Analytic” 383). This means the author must speak to how each of the participants is being shaped or affected by interaction with the other and how this interaction changes what they “know” about the world (Anderson, “Analytic” 383). This obligates the author to express how he or she has come to better understand the species of animal he or she is engaging with, as well as how he or she has come to understand him or herself. In light of becoming with, this means the author is speaking to the culture created *with* the Other—an interspecies culture. In short, the author must reflexively represent the culture and reciprocal effects between self and Other from multiple perspectives—for self and Other. This returns us to the question posed at the end of the first guideline: Can a researcher represent the perspective of an animal both with certainty *and* humility?

Millan claims to provide the perspective of dogs in *Cesar’s Way*. His book represents a unique niche in my corpus because it was not inspired by a bond formed with a specific individual animal (like O’Brien’s *Wesley the Owl* or Pepperberg’s *Alex and Me*), or a select group that he studied and bonded with (such as the Alger’s *Cat Culture* and Askins’ *Shadow Mountain*). While Millan does name animals he works with and who have shaped his technique, *Cesar’s Way* was written for dog owners as a “guide” for “correcting common dog problems,” per the full title of his book. Therefore, one might expect Millan to represent the perspective of dogs in general, which he does, with the explicit purpose of helping humans improve their relationships with their dogs through

better communication. Analytic reflexivity requires the representation of the animal's point of view, in addition to the communication between social beings and how it results in new understandings. Millan speaks to both in his book. However, based on connections I see to Kennedy's animal rhetoric and other theories informing this thesis, I will first encapsulate Millan's theory about interspecies communication before analyzing Millan's representation of dogs in terms of satisfying the criteria of this guideline.

In order for humans to better understand their canine companions, Millan insists that a paradigm shift is necessary—from interpreting dog behavior through the lens of human psychology to dog psychology (84). Simply put, humans often do not understand how dogs experience the world because they humanize them, and therefore, are not trying to understand dogs as dogs (Millan 56). As a result, Millan contends, we (often unintentionally) create mental imbalances in our dogs because we do not understand how to read our dogs, or how they read us. Millan's fans readily recognize his slogan—"I rehabilitate dogs. I train people." This also happens to be a call to action, because in Millan's view the humanization of dogs is the real issue that needs to be addressed. He argues that when dogs are humanized, meaning they are primarily viewed and treated like humans, they are often not provided with what they need as dogs (57, 84). Therefore, Millan understands, in a very material way, Wolfe's "logic of the pet" and how pets often suffer for their preferential placement on the human-animal continuum. According to Millan, humanizing pets affects their behavior, typically in negative ways that earn them the label of "problem dog." While Millan is willing to work through "dog problems," he emphasizes the fact that these "issues" are the result of human behavior and conceptions (143). In fact, Millan repeatedly points out that convincing humans to shift their mindset

often poses a bigger challenge than rehabilitating “problem” dogs. Therefore, in essence, Millan’s book represents dogs from their perspective so that humans might learn to appreciate this difference in viewpoint and potentially communicate better with their dogs. Shifting from humanist frameworks and appreciating heterogeneity³⁵ are, as I have shown, Wolfean posthumanist values.

Millan claims the ability to represent the perspective of dogs because he understands the nature of interspecies communication, a theory he delineates in his book. Reminiscent of Kennedy’s animal rhetoric, Millan insists that energy is “a language all animals speak without even knowing it, including the human animal” (61). Moreover, he identifies energy as a “universal, interspecies language” (Millan 61)—and the key to interspecies communication. From this extended perspective, communication is not only possible among social animals, but across the species divide due to an interconnected synthesis of energy and body language (Millan 7), which recalls Smuts’ theory of embodied communication. Understanding embodied communication is often the crucial lesson for the humans Millan “trains”—they become aware of the ways they are communicating with their dogs via energy and body language versus (merely) lingual communication. “Your dog is constantly observing you, reading your energy,” Millan explains. “The energy [feeds] the body language, and in turn, the body language [reinforces] the energy” (Millan 74).

35. In chapter one I speak to Wolfe’s attempt to prompt the reconsideration of how we humans differentiate ourselves from others and why by asking us to “...endeavor for a mode of thought that values the heterogeneity of ways of being in the world for their difference, their uniqueness, their non-genetic nature” (“Discovering” n.p.). Wolfe uses the term heterogeneity, then, to mean difference in kind.

Inversely, Millan believes “you can learn to interpret your dog’s body language by the visual cues he or she gives you, but it’s important to remember that different energy can determine the context of a posture” (74). In Millan’s view, “the energy always creates the context” (74), which seems in keeping with Cavell’s claim about paralinguistics, that the energy behind what you say and how you say it creates the context. In his book, Millan speaks for dogs by explaining how they communicate with each other and with humans, in an attempt to improve dog-human communication. Millan’s notion of energy as the mode of communication between species suggests that these exchanges of energy are the key ingredients to intersubjectivity and “mutual informativity” in the semiotic-material worlds of dogs with humans. Becoming with occurs through these “transformations of energy” (Birke and Parisi 65).

What is important in terms of this guideline—analytic reflexivity—is that, in essence, Millan claims the ability to interpret dog rhetoric (hence the title “The Dog Whisperer”) and thus the ability to represent a dog’s perspective, unequivocally. Here, one might argue that it is disrespectful of the animal Other to imagine that a human can present an animal’s perspective. Opacity provides that the author, at all times, represent Others with humility. This is only possible if authors embrace Glissant’s “twin suggestions—to give up the search to discover what lies at the bottom of natures, and to instead let [their] understanding give-on-and-with—push [them] to not only politicize relations with difference, but to recognize the potential violence that can exist even within alliance” (Lindner and Stetson 57). Millan, undoubtedly, labors to “politicize relations with difference.” He politicizes social constructions of dogs (and different breeds of these Others) that are commonly detrimental to them.

However, to meet the criteria of this guideline, Millan also needs to embrace the notion that, even in alliance with the Other, the alliance itself “does not imply a panoptical or nonproblematic positionality” (Anderson, “Analytic” 380). To avoid misrepresenting and robbing the Other of power, authors must stay mindful of the possibility that they are over-determining their ability to “know” the Other. Millan, however, blatantly promises readers a canine perspective of the world. “After reading this book,” he says, “I want you to gain a deeper understanding of how your dog sees the world—and what he really wants and needs in order to live a peaceful, happy, balanced life” (Millan 4). Therefore, while Millan seems to understand what is at stake here for dogs in terms of their humanization, he may not be aware that he is disrespecting his alliance with them when he claims to speak for them (all of them) with certitude, even though he attempts to do so from a position of respect (22). If Millan were to embrace the notion of opacity, he might shift his language to match his stance—so that he speaks alongside dogs, versus for them. Instead of claiming to understand dog rhetoric, he might claim to understand dog-with-human rhetoric, and thereby be discursively representing the kind of alliances he promotes in his book.

Sociologists Janet Alger and Steven Alger also claim to represent the perspective of animals in their book, *Cat Culture: The Social World of a Cat Shelter*. These scientists claim to present new knowledge about cats, learned with cats, from the perspective of the cats gained by way of an ethnographic study, involving autoethnographic methods (xii-xiii, 219). “Our intent,” say the Algers, “was to expand our knowledge of animals from their own perspective” (xiii). This claimed feline perspective is also panoptical, and thereby problematic. The Algers base their final analysis on data that is representative of

patterns of feline behavior sustained routinely with other members of the shelter where the Algers observed and interacted with the cats themselves. This meets part of the criteria of analytic reflexivity—basing analysis on patterns observed over time—and serves to avoid accusations of anthropomorphism. This notwithstanding, while the Algers were likely able to approximate the emotive stance of the cats they were in alliance with, their claim, not unlike Millan’s, projects a troublesome certainty. Even though scientific knowledge is often accepted as irrefutable truth in our culture, scientific representations about animals are no exception to this guideline.³⁶ From this vantage, the Algers might revise their claim as follows:

Original claim:

Our intent was to expand our knowledge of animals from their own perspective.

Opaque revision:

Our intent was to expand human knowledge of cats-with-humans based on our astute approximations of their experience formed in close alliance with them in a cat shelter.

This revision is more in keeping with an opaque alliance because the new knowledge is now presented as context and species specific,³⁷ and there is less certainty in this statement. Again, this is a critical guideline because it obligates authors to represent animal Others with humility, with the willingness to give up the need to (claim to) know. Perhaps the key is to never become too comfortable with approximating the emotive

36. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis, this social phenomenon of accepting that animals can be fully known by scientists and that scientists produce irrefutable facts about them requires interrogation. Many of us living in alliance with animals often find our observations contradict with what is “known” or claimed as fact by science.

37. The importance of this specificity will be discussed at length in the fifth guideline (Opaque Analytic Agenda).

stance or experience of the animal Other. In sum, opaque representations do not presume the subjectivity of the animal in totality, but are instead approximations based on an intimate and respectful alliance with the Other.

Analytic reflexivity also “potentially [allows for] “deeper informative reciprocity between researcher and other group members” (Anderson, “Analytic” 383) because of a required level of personal engagement with the animal Other. One of the many goals of this guideline is that the author represents how the setting is influencing him or her and the animal Other, as well as how they are shaping one another. This means that the author should reflect on how new knowledge is *co-shaped* through communication and interaction *with* the Other. Authors should describe the reciprocal communication and interaction that results in these new understandings—these situated knowledges or liminal spaces of mutual informativity. In other words, authors should describe the symbolic interaction and communication that occurs.

Millan’s work illustrates what can happen when the social goals of symbolic interaction are not aligned. This is why the dogs represented in his book are often in need of “rehabilitation,” as he puts it, at his Dog Psychology Center (Millan 2). Because they have labored so hard for so long at meeting human social goals, these dogs need to reconnect with what dog goals are through interaction with other dogs. Millan claims that at the center “dogs have the support and influence of their own kind so they can relearn how to be dogs” (14). Here, it is worth mentioning again, that knowledge gained from interaction with animals is co-constitutive—both parties are contributing and learning. Millan clearly states that the dogs on his grandfather’s farm “were [his] true teachers in

the art and science of canine psychology” (Millan 25), and he continues this education at his center for dogs.

O’Brien provides an excellent example of extensive reflection on the nature of reciprocal communication and mutual informativity between species in *Wesley the Owl*.

Consider the following excerpt, for instance:

Ever since he was an owlet I’d been giving Wesley verbal explanations for everything I did. Now I could ... say, “Wesley do you want some mice?” If he was full and didn’t want any, he’d turn his head away. [...] Eventually, Wesley’s responses became more complex. He could answer a whole series of questions with his version of yes: lowering of the eyelids, direct eye contact, and sometimes excited audible responses; or no: turning his head away and not looking at me. (O’Brien 91)

As a trained biologist, O’Brien is quick to explain that, “from a strictly scientific point of view, Wesley wasn’t speaking a vocal language,” but that she thinks

some of [Wesley’s] consistent actions could be considered a kind of primitive sign language, as well as his consistent sounds, if language is defined as a system of communication that works consistently between two sentient beings. (92)

O’Brien then theorizes as to how Wesley’s brain might have “developed a rudimentary language” in order to “adapt to an environment where this skill would be useful” (92) and how their interactions were the reason for that: human-with-owl, owl-with-human. Her analysis, like the Algers’, is based on patterns of behaviors and routines. Note how in the excerpt above O’Brien is clear about the behavior being “consistent.”

Further, in her estimation, “Wesley began to adapt his natural owl vocalizations to make new sounds to mean a variety of things” (O’Brien 93). At this point, O’Brien was using her “training in music” to note acute differences in pitch and tone so that she might

better perceive even the slightest variation by Wesley—because she wanted to respond to him properly, for the sake of their relationship. As O’Brien explains:

because [Wesley] modeled the value of attention to very subtle differences, I was able to observe that Wesley was changing vocalizations significantly. He continued to alter them from normal barn owl sounds to new variations modified to fit specific scenarios. [...] Over time it became easier for me to know exactly what he was referring to. (94)

Therefore, as this guideline requires, O’Brien illustrates how she and Wesley engage in reciprocal communication for their mutual benefit. She and Wesley also demonstrate how different species can learn from one another, through consistent and respectful interaction, a meeting in the middle—in a liminal space co-shaped by a hybrid language of human-owl rhetoric, embodied in feather and skin. It would seem that response, trust, and profound respect are key ingredients of *becoming with*. It would also seem that O’Brien takes the words of Professor Ronan Penfield, the head of the “Caltech Owl Lab” (9), to heart, who tells her: “To that which you have tamed, you owe your life” (209). She dedicates herself to cocreating a life with Wesley.

However, my posthumanist lens tells me that “wild” animals, such as Wesley, living in alliance with human animals are not so much tamed (a word which implies agential oppression with humans dominating an animal’s “wildness”), as these animals co-create themselves in the liminal space found between the wild-civilization binary. From this vantage, we might consider the possibility that Wesley adapted his behaviors for the sake of the alliance with O’Brien—perhaps he wanted to communicate with her, and not because he was “tame” but because he came to care about her. Even if this is not

the case, I suspect Haraway would agree with my revision to Penfield's maxim: *To those you are becoming with, you owe your life.*

Considering O'Brien's dedication to her alliance with Wesley, we might be inclined to overlook the claim in the excerpt above: "Over time it became easier for me to *know exactly* what he was referring to" (94; emphasis mine). However, "to know exactly" represents a very strong claim of certainty, and PHDA requires our *vigilant* attention to representations of Others. Similar to Millan's claims of certainty, O'Brien's conviction here belies the heart of the alliance formed between her and Wesley, because she disrespects him in making such absolute claims of knowing him. A seemingly subtle revision to her rhetoric would make all the difference in light of opacity: *Over time it became easier for me to know what he seemed to be referring to.* Again, this revision is more in keeping with an opaque stance because of the lack of certitude. It is more speculative and thereby more respectful to Wesley and the way he might perceive their interactions.

Kat Albrecht provides another example of reciprocal communication in her story of a career searching for lost pets with the aid of her companion animals in *The Lost Pet Chronicles: Adventures of a K-9 Cop Turned Pet Detective*. Albrecht describes how each of her three dogs and three cats comes into her life, and how her openness to their individual personalities allowed for rich alliances to form. When her dog A.J. takes off from a K-9 "training camp during a stormy weekend," Albrecht gets the idea to send her dog Rachel (who was already trained as a "search dog") after A.J. (2). When Rachel returns triumphantly "with A.J. on her heels," Albrecht makes the connection to search and rescue of missing pets (2). Therefore, after this incident, Albrecht trains with two of

her dogs as they attempt to help people find their lost pets. Albrecht's understanding of each animal's skills, preferences, and communication styles shapes the specific role some of her animals will play and suggests how some might inform her detective methods, though some more than others.

Further, as Albrecht grows more astute at reading each dog's body language, Rachel's in particular, Albrecht's investigative techniques and success rate grow, as well. While Albrecht implies that there is a direct correlation between these successes and how diligently she observes her animals' behaviors, she seems reluctant to explicitly acknowledge it. For example, during the search for two lost cats, Rachel continually returns to the backyard of the client's house when scenting blood believed to be from one of the cats. Albrecht surmises that since Rachel is only focused in the yard, and she's scenting blood, that the cat is "either in the immediate area ... or was carried away by a predator," which in the latter case made the scent "too weak ... for [Rachel] to follow" (126). After giving Rachel a "tuft of fur" from the other cat, Rachel's body language becomes more "animated," indicating to Albrecht that Rachel is tracking a live animal (Albrecht 129). "I felt the familiar warmth of pride," Albrecht says as she watches Rachel, "that my dog was so astute at her work" (128). Apparently, Rachel is astute at her work because she finds this second cat, who happens to be near the decomposing body of the first, just as Rachel's body language seem to suggest to Albrecht right before the animals were found (129-130). In other words, Albrecht had a sense as to what she would find based on Rachel's "astute" search and then her embodied communication.

On another investigation involving the search for a lost dog, Albrecht describes her role in relation to Rachel's: "My job was to turn around and, *relying on* Rachel's

body language, determine the spot where [the missing dog] had turned” (196; emphasis mine). Here, they are trying to determine the direction the missing dog went. However, when Albrecht thinks that Rachel appears to get distracted and refuses to “get ... back to scent,” Albrecht employs Chase, another one of her dogs, who also fails, stopping at the same location Rachel did (196). Several hours later, the owner reports that he was able to find the dog near where Rachel and Chase appear to lose scent—the missing dog had been hit by a car (Albrecht 199). “Rachel, as usual,” Albrecht proclaims, “had done her job with precision (199). Albrecht now realizes that Rachel may have lost scent, but she was on track. “Although we didn’t track right up to [the missing dog],” Albrecht admits, “my search dogs established the correct direction of travel and helped [the client] define and focus his search area” (199). In both investigations, then, Albrecht represents her dogs as being the “knowing” ones, whose behaviors and instincts she learns to trust (128), even admitting she has misread their body language at times. Further, by learning to read and trust Rachel’s embodied communication and thereby her instincts, Albrecht’s instincts improve as well. Clearly, Albrecht’s work is influenced not only by her law enforcement background and knowledge of animals, but *also* by animal knowledge. In these alliances, knowledge is being co-shaped through reciprocal communication.

However, what is curious about these anecdotes throughout her book is that Albrecht only implies the correlation between her success rate and her dogs’ knowledge. More specifically, she appears uncomfortable with using the word “knowledge” in reference to her dogs. During one search, Albrecht claims: “I would conduct the search based upon *my* knowledge and experience” (117; emphasis mine). Later, after Albrecht abandons the search because the owner is resistant to where Rachel was leading them,

Albrecht explains, “There were limits to what my knowledge, Rachel’s skills, and our work together could accomplish” (118). So, Rachel’s work is informed by her skills, and Albrecht’s by her knowledge. In fact, from the very beginning of their career together, Albrecht seems to take this stance. “I felt assured” Albrecht says, “that the combination of *Rachel’s search skills*, my training in solving investigations, and *my knowledge* of missing-persons search strategies and procedures would be enough to make our work successful” (109; emphasis mine). A posthumanist representation of Rachel’s contribution would be to recognize her *knowledge* along with her ability to translate (or code-switch) that knowledge in a way discernable to Albrecht. Perhaps Albrecht’s admission in the excerpt below provides some insight here:

Making the transition from respected police officer with proven search dogs to the laughable occupation of ‘pet detective’ would likely elicit teasing, smirks and total rejection from my peers. (Albrecht 102)

Thus, Albrecht may be protecting her ethos in qualifying Rachel’s and her other dog’s knowledge as “skills,” which is understandable considering the circumstances and her intended audience. Regardless of the logic behind such rhetorical choices, Albrecht’s representation of reciprocal communication with an animal does not meet the criteria of this guideline. If the author were to take a posthumanist approach, she would acknowledge her animals’ knowledge as such because posthumanists recognize the subjectivity of other animals. She would speak more fully and explicitly to how her dogs’ knowledge and instincts informed her own.

As a memoir about her life turning police detective to pet detective, the purpose of Albrecht’s book is to tell her story. Therefore, as one would expect, her perspective

and her story are privileged. Here we have an example of the difference in central focus between the two genres: memoir and autoethnography. While the purpose of memoir is to represent a series of life events through an understanding of oneself, the main purpose of posthumanist (auto)ethnography is to represent both self *and* Other through an understanding of the shared alliance with the animal Other. So, if Albrecht's text were less memoirist and more posthumanist (auto)ethnographic, she would have speculated about how her dogs viewed their investigations, perhaps even her responses or lack of response to their communication. It follows then, that analytic reflexivity provides a crucial reminder to the author to labor at providing the Other a voice. Also, when making observations, the author should avoid making observations using humanist frameworks, such as anthropocentrism—"viewing everything in terms of human experience and values" ("anthropocentric" n.p.). To avoid anthropocentrism one must attempt to understand how the animal experiences the world and avoid assigning human values to the perceived perspectives and responses of animal Others. In this case, Albrecht would not only speculate about how her dogs' experienced their investigations, but from their perspectives—in terms of their values and what matters to (individual) dogs. For example, how might it be different to track a cat versus a dog? Or a human animal, for that matter? How might A.J.'s experience be different from Rachel's?

In the same vein, analytic reflexivity reminds authors to labor at providing the Other a voice versus using the animal to represent a metaphorical self. In other words, authors should avoid expressing *him* or *herself* again through the animal's voice, and avoid projecting human qualities onto animal Others (anthropomorphism). Instead, they should labor at becoming critically anthropomorphic by using PHDA to ensure that their

representations of animals are grounded in empirical data beyond their own observations, so that they might make the most informed, respectful statements possible using human language (Irvine 69). As humans, it may be difficult, if not impossible, to describe others without ascribing some degree of human being-ness (or *anthropo*) when our understanding of the world is human. Also, as other beings live and collaborate with human others in respectful alliance, they are *becoming with* us. Therefore, in the context of becoming with, it would not be surprising to see human influence on an animal's behavior or ways of knowing the world. This does not, however, exempt us from attempting to represent animal Others as respectfully as possible, and avoid reducing them in order to tell *our* story.

Albrecht provides an example of anthropomorphism in her book. In the following excerpt, Albrecht describes interactions with Sadie soon after this fourteen year-old dog is recently donated to her:

Sadie has a stubborn “alpha dog” refuse-to-obey-the-owner streak that took me by surprise. If she was just about to lie down and I gave the “down” command, she would freeze in defiance and refuse to budge. If something was not *her* idea, then it wasn't a good idea at all. (Albrecht 222-23; original emphasis)

First, Albrecht's use of quotation marks (or scare quotes) to qualify alpha dog is an interesting rhetorical choice. By doing so, she seems to indicate that she either does not believe canines adhere to this hierarchy or that her readers might not. We can also identify claims and anthropomorphic language in this excerpt. Not only does Albrecht ascribe human qualities to Sadie's actions, she also describes these actions with certainty—*this is what happened and why*. Albrecht's interpretation of Sadie refusing to lie down merely because it was no longer “her idea” is an anthropomorphic claim, in that,

refusing to do something out of spite because someone else suggests it seems like a response of the human ego. If Albrecht understands this behavior to be due to “alpha nature,” then she needs to make that clear and support that reasoning. Currently, Albrecht appears to be projecting human qualities and perspective on to a dog.

If adhering to an opaque, posthumanist approach, Albrecht might instead provide alternative explanation for Sadie’s response to her demand, particularly some speculations made from her dog’s perspective. Here are some questions she might have explored or clarified in the text: *Had Sadie experienced abuse by a previous owner who had also used the command “down” in an abusive context? What was Albrecht’s temperament at the time she gave the command—was she potentially exerting stressful, anxious energy that Sadie was sensing and consequently responding to? What tone did Albrecht use in giving the command, thereby taking paralinguistics and kinesics into account?* Many assumptions seem to be made here and many questions are left unanswered. While Albrecht’s interpretation could likely be accurate, as a respectful representative she needs to substantiate such claims, and she needs to make it clear that she is *attempting to interpret* the events from Sadie’s point of view, or sense of events.

This is an example of how easy it is to “read” animals from a human perspective—to anthropomorphize Others—and thereby disrespect them and the alliance. Authors should strive for rich and respectful interpretations by attempting to shift the human lens to a dog (or other species) lens, and approximate with humility, signaling that humility with qualifiers, questions, and other indicators of the tentative nature of the interpretation. Authors also need to embrace the fact that we will likely get it wrong for, as Kohn tells us, we can never really know what other selves think. Thus, this guideline

serves to remind us to be more vigilant about our language use and frame of reference when representing animal Others. If we must be careful about the motives we impute to human others, we must be doubly careful about the perspectives and ideas we impute across species.

Analytic reflexivity requires the author describe how he or she and the animal Other come to understand one another, while the animal's story remains the central focus of the text. O'Brien describes, in great detail, Wesley's vocalizations and behaviors and how they come to understand one another. In doing so, O'Brien dedicates herself to voicing the animal Other, as she often approximates many of Wesley's multifarious vocalizations as dialogue:

...Wendy and I erupted in cheers. Wesley joined in with a loud exclamation of excitement that sounded like, "Deedle Deedle DEEP DEEP DEEP DEEP deedle deedle," turning toward us with bright eyes as if accepting the praise, and flapping his wings. (49)

Note O'Brien's language use in the excerpt above—"sounded like" and "as if." Here, she is clearly taking great care to yield to Wesley and to her own "not knowing" and showing her humility out of respect for him. Her speculative language here suggest that O'Brien realizes she may not fully understand what Wesley is communicating and why. This is how the respectful writer signals approximations and speculations.

In fact, her resistance to omniscience here fulfills the aforementioned requirement of this guideline: the ethical obligation here refuses to reduce the way another animal experiences, perceives and knows the world to human ways of knowing (Wolfe, "Human" 571)—especially considering the full bodily sensorium that might be employed

by other species as they experience the world. The posthumanist author must understand that his or her interpretations, in many ways, are limited due to limited access to the Other's language. Therefore, it is worth repeating that all analysis and any claims about the perception of the Other shall forever remain approximations, not claimed as truth or fact. Humility and respect for the Other require this distinction, for one can never know everything about the Other, regardless of the species. Because O'Brien speaks to how she and Wesley shape one another, and (in instances like the one described earlier) chooses to approximate instead of potentially reducing Wesley's ways of knowing, her book (*their* book) often exemplifies analytic reflexivity at its finest. Further, O'Brien's careful attention to her language use acts as an important reminder—the importance of vigilance in discourse practices cannot be overstated. Therefore meeting the criteria of this guideline will require the use of posthumanist discourse analysis (PHDA) to critically analyze language used to describe self, Other, and relation to the Other.

Visible and Active Autoethnographer in the Text

This guideline requires the author be significantly and consistently present throughout the text. Notably, this guideline relates to the reason why autoethnography emerged as an alternative to traditional ethnography (as chronicled in chapter two). As part of the crisis in representation that resulted as social scientists sought to abandon “the colonial era of ethnography” (Anderson, “Analytic” 376), as well as the postmodern turn, the role of the researching author was criticized for often being “a hidden and yet seemingly omniscient presence in ethnographic texts” (Anderson, “Analytic” 383). Thus, this guideline requires the author's role as representer be explicitly and consistently acknowledged—making the autoethnographer highly visible in the text. This “enhanced

textual visibility,” involving consistent and “significant self-reflection” by the autoethnographer, “demonstrates [his or her] personal engagement in the social world under study” (Anderson, “Analytic” 384).

Also, the author should indicate that he or she understands that his or her “own feelings and experiences are ... vital data for understanding” the interspecies culture being observed (Anderson, “Analytic” 384). Therefore, the author should not only be highly visible in the text, he or she should be highly visible as a “social actor” so that it becomes clear how he or she has actively been “involved in the construction of meaning and values” (Anderson, “Analytic” 384) in the material-semiotic world under study. Revealing such levels of personal engagement often involves self-critique as authors “vividly reveal themselves as people grappling with issues relevant to membership and participation in” (Anderson, “Analytic” 384) an interspecies culture.

Askins demonstrates how the criteria of this guideline might be manifested in her book, *Shadow Mountain*. For example, Askins consistently and significantly reflects about her feelings and insights, particularly with regard to the interactions with the canines she bonds with most deeply. Below, Askins reflects about Natasha, the first wolf-subject assigned to her after arriving at the research facility (11). Due to unrest with the pack, Natasha was a mere “six-days-old” when she first met Askins, who bottle-fed and nurtured the pup (Askins 9, 14). Here, Askins expresses her own feelings about the experience of bonding with Natasha:

For years I have tried to capture in words how Natasha was different from my other animal wards. The clearest description I can offer is that she had an essence of “other,” rather than underling. [...] I kept notes on her as she grew; I felt she was doing the same to me ... [a] record so indelible and accurate that our entire

race might be re-created from this creature's perception. It was the first time I felt the utter limitations of language, and the first time I truly began to face and fathom the capacity of another species. The emotion associated with this recognition is even more difficult to describe. (14-16).

Through pages and pages of self-reflection, Askins demonstrates her personal engagement with the interspecies culture and an awareness that her experience of it matters. The fact that Askins has no words that can adequately describe the relations or alliance that is being formed speaks to the inherent complexity of being both a member *and* representer of interspecies cultures. Perhaps more importantly, Askins voices the complexity of this dual role, and thereby explicitly identifies herself as representer—which is required by this guideline. Also, in revealing that she “began to face and fathom the capacity of another species” and to realize “the utter limitations of [her] language,” Askins evidences the way she is grappling with issues relevant to membership and participation in human-with-wolf culture. Here again, Askins effectively fulfills part of the criteria of “visible and active autoethnographer in the text.”

Further, Despret's perspectivism is helpful in terms of understanding how self as member and representer should be situated. In the next passage, Askins provides an example of how to situate experiences with animal Others. Here, Askins reflects on her feelings about the culture being studied as well as the one being cocreated with Natasha—in fact, the intensity of her personal engagement become acutely evident here:

Although Natasha was captive, her whole being retained the resonance of the wild. In her pacing, and her panting, in her own bittersweet way she taught me of another world, another existence, in which *the animals spoke through their roaming and their roaring, their howling and their prowling*. [...] Natasha, like most captive-born wolves, was destined for a life behind chain-link fences. [...] She was a wild thing and from the very

beginning she hated confinement. She was always the first to try to escape. [...] I suspect she knew right from the beginning that these walls meant death to her. In the end, she was right, and because of that *I will be forever haunted* by wild things held captive. (17; emphasis mine)

Notice how Askins describes her experience as it is shaped and affected by interactions with others in that setting—more specifically, how she represents herself as human-*with*-wolf in captivity, thereby meaningfully situating her experience as a social actor (or member) within the interspecies culture of which she is a part. For instance, she repeatedly draws our attention to the fact that these wolves are “captive-born wolves” and that their ways of “speaking”—their embodied communication, including roaming, roaring, and howling—*spoke* to her, personally affected her. In total, this passage evidences the impact of her experience, *the haunting* that results as she begins to consider (to try to “see” or experience) the facility from Natasha’s perspective.

In the passage below, Askins reveals her despair after being informed that Natasha will be sent to another research facility, one that will be even more confining of her. Askins also speaks to how her values are shaped by the values of Natasha’s species, and how this occurred through a kind of emotional imprinting:

I was crazed in pain. I contemplated kidnapping Natasha, or turning all the wolves loose [...] The prospect of Natasha’s spirit, her being, her essence behind chained walls or concrete, without even pack mates to soften the monotony, filled me with despair. (18-19)

The way Askins is being influenced by her attempt to understand the values of another species means she is becoming aware of the consequences of human exceptionalism in a very lived way. In fact, it is Askins’ anguish that becomes the impetus of her life’s work,

as she resolves herself to finding a way “to make up to [Natasha’s] species” for what Askins’ felt she had “failed to do for [Natasha]” (19). Notably, these reflections are part of the extensive notes Askins kept in a journal during her time at the research center (15).

However, what we see here is more than just personal reflection. Askins’ reflexivity causes her to be self-critical as she demonstrates an awareness of how her identification with Natasha challenges conventional ways of living in the world and alongside the animal Other. For example, in the next excerpt Askins speaks to the intensity of human-with-wolf relations, as well as the complexities of grasping and representing a new sense of alterity and how that affected her understanding of herself with respect to “otherness”:

It is a breathless sensation ... one can feel one’s mind stretching to encompass and absorb the recognition. [...] This creature is simultaneously different and familiar. She is of her own nature and yet I recognize my own impulses in her actions. [...] Nonetheless, her senses surpass mine. Her diminutive presence connects me, includes me, and I recognize that I am, like her, merely a pulse in the rhythm of the world. [...] With this recognition came a sense of communion and belonging, an emotion which made me see how exiled I had felt, cornered by an unconscious belief in a typically Western, hierarchal universe. (15-16)

The last sentence particularly evidences self-critique. Here, Askins calls into question her scientific and humanist ideology (or “unconscious belief”) that supports a Western human-animal hierarchy (or “hierarchal universe”). The affects of the interspecies bond with Natasha and the other wolves at the research center have made Askins aware of this ideology and inspired her to challenge it. Through this critical self-reflection, Askins invites her readers to engage in this process as well. Consider the following passage:

As I watched and lived with these wolves hour after hour, day after day, a cognizance of what I was watching (and being watched by) began to slowly infiltrate my consciousness. And as I began to fathom the extraordinary sentient capacity of these animals, their intelligence,

imagination, sensitivity, and sophistication, the compromise implicit in their captivity became nearly unbearable to me. (Askins 16)

This clearly reflects a hyperawareness of her role in the “compromise” she speaks of, as well as the magnitude of this compromise.

Through all of this critical self-reflection, Askins finds herself in the midst of a paradigm shift. She is questioning everything she believed before she arrived at the research center and bonded with Natasha. “I learned,” Askins reflects, “that our assumptions, expectations, wisdom, and presumed knowledge are only a construct that allows us to believe we can both control and predict the nature of nature” (12-13). Askins summarizes these lessons as “honor and allow the mystery, love the questions and the otherness” (13)—whether she was familiar with these concepts or not, Askins appears to have learned to take a posthumanist and opaque stance to animal Others, through her interactions with them, followed by critical self-reflection on the mutual affectivity.

Collectively, these passages represent only a portion of the critical self-reflection in Askins’ text. This consistency demonstrates the level of textual visibility expected of a posthumanist autoethnographer. Further, in revealing her personal feelings as data informing her observations of human-with-wolf (-in-captivity) culture, Askins makes herself visible as presenter. Thus, Askins provides us with a prime example of this guideline.

Informants Beyond the Self

This guideline insists that analysis not be based solely on observations by the author. In human-focused autoethnography, the expectation for this guideline would be to

immerse oneself in the larger culture and to document evidence that the experience being reported occurred within a fully researched and understood culture. Therefore, since situated interspecies cultures have significantly fewer members, and the animal Others can not resist or contest their representations, the author must collect data via other texts (i.e. scientific theories about the species), interviews, interaction with additional informants (human or animal), or other mechanisms for demonstrating knowledge of context and culture. The Algers, for example, understand the power of the “big three” of qualitative research—texts, interviews, and observation. In their book, *Cat Culture*, they reference academic texts, share excerpts of interviews with volunteers at the shelter, and describe their observations of cat-human, cat-cat, and human-human interactions. The employment of all three adds credibility to their findings.

O’Brien also utilizes these three methods of research in *Wesley the Owl*. First, she includes an extensive section of unusual facts about barn owls. While the source and original context of these “facts” is not clearly identified, which is problematic, O’Brien acknowledges scientist Dr. Don Kroodsma³⁸ “at Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology,” veterinarian Dr. Douglass Coward, and colleagues at Caltech for addressing questions in preparation of the manuscript (234). However, for the information in this section to qualify as reliable (and thereby fully satisfy the criteria of this guideline), O’Brien would need to identify the source of this information more explicitly. The point here, however, is that there appears to be an attempt to collect data via other texts or sources—in this case, the opinions and theories of other experts on barn owls, which signifies the author’s attempt to gather data from informants beyond the self.

38. Kroodsma is author of *The Backyard Birdsong Guide: Eastern and Central North America*.

Also, when attempting to interpret Wesley's altered vocalizations, O'Brien not only relies on her own observations and theories, she seeks outside help so that she might guess their meaning as accurately as possible. One of O'Brien's key informants is Dr. Penfield. When O'Brien is unsure about her translations, she records Wesley's vocalizations using equipment provided by Penfield and then seeks his aid (186). After they listen to the tapes and discuss the actual context of the recordings—thereby, situating the interaction—Penfield interprets what Wesley is trying to communicate to her. O'Brien claims that during these sessions Penfield “taught [her] how to observe carefully and to notice details that even many experts would miss” (94), including subtle nuances in Wesley's bodily movement. Therefore, O'Brien works closely with an informant who has been observing owls-with-humans for years. She does this in an attempt to better understand Wesley so that she might respond to him properly, and thereby potentially provide a quality of life worthy of the feathered being in her life. By seeking other informants, O'Brien shows respect to her alliance with Wesley and lends more credibility to her representations of him in the process.

The idea with this guideline, then, is that respectful representation is based on data that goes beyond the author's own observations and approximations—in lieu of an animal's proxy. Thus, authors should provide images or other evidence of interpreted behaviors whenever possible. Notably, black-and-white photographs are interspersed throughout O'Brien's text, mainly highlighting the early part of Wesley's life, although all of his eighteen years were spent with her. With these images, O'Brien exemplifies yet another type of data an author might include to fulfill the criteria of this guideline.

Notably, additional informants need not be human. In fact, Millan's work is largely informed by not only watching people interact with dogs (human-with-dog and dog-with-human), but also by watching how dogs interact with other dogs (dog-with-dog). This is why he often has owners bring their dogs to his Dog Psychology Center—so he can observe them with humans *and* their own species. Thus, Millan's methods are informed by watching a dog interact with other dogs. Based on his observations of this dog-with-dog interaction, Millan assesses how best to help a dog, including what he needs to teach the dog's human about his or her dog's behavior so that the dog's specific needs might be better met. In short, Millan uses dog informants (and other staff-observers at the center) to help humans meet their "response-abilities" to their dogs.

Finally, utilizing another standard of ethnography, it is important that an author who wishes to represent the animal-Other fairly and accurately provide some form of member checking or inter-rater reliability. This approach, as with other forms of qualitative research, is undertaken to establish more validity in the assessment. Practically speaking, in this context an outside reader-observer might be asked to check for accuracy of findings and examples of problematic discourse using PHDA. This is important due to the implicit function of ideology and how language systemically embeds users with biases that work to maintain and reproduce the exploitation and oppression of Others (Stibbe 158). As a result, authors are often unaware that they are employing humanist rhetoric. This means that even conducting PHDA may not fully address this issue; therefore, outside readers might be useful here.

While none of the texts in my corpus indicate that outside readers were employed for these explicit purposes, O'Brien acknowledges her friend Wendy Francisco in a way

that suggests that Francisco may have fulfilled the role of outside reader-observer to some degree. According to O'Brien, Francisco "edited every line" of the book with her, and, in the process, "laughed, cried, and relived every moment of this memoir" because, as O'Brien explains, "it was Wendy ... who enthusiastically took Wesley into her home as a tiny baby owlet, back when [they] were roommates" (231). Notably, O'Brien also credits Francisco as "the photographer of both pictures [of Wesley] on the jacket of [the] book" (231)—so Francisco was present during some of the events represented in the book. Again, it is unclear what role Francisco actually played in this revision process; however, this acknowledgement suggests that O'Brien may have attempted to have an outside reader assess her version of events, a choice that potentially could have improved her level of inter-rater reliability and thereby established more validity. To fulfill the criteria of this guideline, O'Brien would need to clearly explain that Francisco (or another reader-observer) read for an accurate portrayal of Wesley and employed PHDA during this process.

Opaque Analytic Agenda

Opaque analytic agenda requires that authors contribute to a "broader set of social phenomena" (Anderson, "Analytic" 387) and employ a hyperawareness of language use in those contributions. Therefore, this guideline involves two separate (yet related) processes. First, opaque analytic agenda requires an attempt by the author to contribute more generally to social knowledge by refining, elaborating, extending, or re-visioning theoretical understandings (Anderson, "Analytic" 387) through careful use of analytic or critical tools that demonstrate systematic observation. In the case of cross-species efforts, this requires special attention to interspecies culture as a particular application of

autoethnographic methodology. In short, the author should seek to gain insight into a broader set of social phenomena and add knowledge to existing schema. Irene Pepperberg provides a particularly thorough example of adding to social knowledge in her book, *Alex and Me: How a Scientist and a Parrot Discovered a Hidden World of Animal Intelligence—and Formed a Bond in the Process*. Pepperberg's re-visioning of theoretical knowledge is based on her close alliance with an African Grey parrot, Alex. Pepperberg is likely thorough due to her training in ethnographic methods as a scientific researcher; however, based the nature of the implications she draws from her experience with Alex, it is also possible that she does so as an act of responsibility out of respect for animal Others (*Alex* 224).

For instance, after claiming that “Alex taught us how little we know about animal minds and how much there is to discover,” she draws philosophical, sociological and practical implications from this insight (*Alex* 215). Pepperberg stages these insights by first historicizing “how scientists came to espouse ideas about animal minds that were so at odds with what nonscientists would call common sense” because, in her view, “[this history] tells us a lot about ourselves as a species” (*Alex* 215). Then she explain that what has been discovered through her work with Alex is that nonhuman mammals have “elements of language,” and that “cherished human cognitive abilities could indeed be found in nonhuman animals” (Pepperberg, *Alex* 218-219). Therefore, “by implication” she adds, “a vast world of animal cognition exists out there” (Pepperberg, *Alex* 219). With this in mind, Pepperberg asks her readers to contemplate that “animals know more than we think, and think a great deal more than we know” and that perhaps “our vanity had blinded us to the true nature of minds, animal and human” (*Alex* 219). Here,

Pepperberg is extending what she learned by working with Alex to other animals and re-envisaging our place among a world of nonhuman Others. Thus, Pepperberg is analyzing and challenging current social and scientific understandings about animals—and, in essence, the human-animal binary.

In fact, Pepperberg directly challenges an anthropocentric and humanist viewpoint, stating that “the most profound lesson” that can be gleaned from her alliance with Alex is that it “teaches us that humans are not unique, as we long believed. We are not superior to all other beings in nature” (*Alex* 222). From her perspective, this means that “the idea of humans’ separateness from the rest of nature is no longer tenable” (Pepperberg, *Alex* 222). Through her theoretical reconsideration of the nature of the supposed divide between the human and the animal, and our social constructions of other animals, Pepperberg provides us with an excellent example of the analytic agenda, part of the required criteria of this guideline.

The second portion of this guideline stipulates that, when drawing larger social implications, authors should be aware of their language use, especially when drawing similarities and differences that might reinscribe positions of others on the human-animal continuum. This is where opacity or the “opaque” portion of the agenda item comes to bear on the guideline. While an analytic agenda is important, approaching and representing the animal Other with humility and respect is crucial. Also, it is this part of the guideline that I would argue Pepperberg falls short, particularly with regard to some of her reasoning. In her call for the reconsideration of our place in the world, for instance, Pepperberg is placing high value on an animal’s ability to acquire human language. According to her book, the more Alex’s cognitive abilities mirrored those of a young

child, the more the scientific community and the media hailed their importance. As Pepperberg herself says, “Vanity, thy name is *Homo sapiens*” (*Alex* 216; original emphasis)—she seems to say this in defiance of human exceptionalism. However, she is basing her call for interrogation of the notion of human exceptionalism on the very humanist framework she seeks to denounce. In other words, she is attempting to complicate human exceptionalism by hailing an animal’s ability to mimic human abilities. That is, Alex is “exceptional” precisely due to his ability to mirror our exceptionality back to us, not because of his difference or inherent ontological value. While African grey parrots got a better position on the human-animal continuum, the continuum remains intact. Unless we take lesson from this, and interrogate our own language, it will remain intact along with the oppression that results from it. Thus, to fulfill the criteria here, authors should be cautious in the theoretical statements—their language use—and utilize PHDA to thwart such persistent ideologies.

In addition, embracing Despret’s perspectivism is crucial for fulfilling the criteria here because it requires the representation of self as situated in a specific culture. Despret reminds us when representing our interactions with animal Others that we describe the “parrot with human” and not to fool ourselves into thinking we have the ability to know “what parrotness is, nor anything about the point of view of parrots on the world” (“Becomings” 128). According to Despret, Pepperberg honors this notion by situating her insights with regard to species *and* apparatus; meaning, Pepperberg understands her role as an interrogating apparatus (“Becomings” 127) when interpreting Alex’s behaviors. Despret bases this assessment on conference proceedings written by Pepperberg in 1995

about her work with Alex.³⁹ Again, Despret is suggesting that Pepperberg is a “good representer” of Alex because Pepperberg appears to understand her role in Alex’s behavior (“Becomings” 127). At the end of the proceedings, Pepperberg qualifies (or situates) her findings as follows:

Our findings, although they emphasize how well Alex can perform complex cognitive tasks, do not imply that all parrots—or even all [African] Greys—are capable of such behavior. Rather, our data is meant to suggest the level of competence that may, *with the appropriate* environmental support, be within the capacity of the species. (“Studies” n.p; emphasis mine).

Despret deciphers this to mean that Pepperberg is clarifying her role as representative of “not what parrots are but what they might be rendered capable of” (“Becomings” 127) through an appropriate interaction *with* humans. The *with* of becoming with, then, might be seen as the link to a specific apparatus. In short, Despret evinces that Pepperberg situates herself as human-*with*-parrot and Alex as parrot-*with*-human versus herself or parrot (“Becomings” 128).

In *Alex and Me*, Pepperberg expresses her role as representer in a similar but more implicit way. For instance, Pepperberg never explicitly qualifies her findings as she did in the conference proceedings (as represented above). Instead, any time Pepperberg makes generalized statements about African Grey parrots, she situates such statements within discussions about Greys in laboratory settings or as pets. Again, she is representing parrots-with-humans and not parrots in the wild, for example. In this refusal to make theoretical claims about parrots in general, Pepperberg refuses to reduce Alex as an essential being-ness, or “parrotness” (Despret 128). Since the Other remains irreducible,

39. See Pepperberg’s conference proceedings for *The International Aviculturists Society* titled “Studies to Determine the Intelligence of African Grey Parrots.”

this exemplifies an opaque stance. I further identify this refusal as an act of Glissant's gives-on-and-with, in that Pepperberg seems to have given up the need (to claim) to know everything there is to know about Alex. Thus, if Pepperberg were to fully embrace the notion of opacity, she might chose to qualify her role more explicitly in *Alex and Me* as representative *with* the animal Other, as she does in the conference proceeding.

Despret and Haraway agree that knowledge is always situated and it should be represented as such. From this perspective, or perspectivism as it were, while generalizations about broader social implications should be made, these generalizations should be drawn from situated knowledges—based on species and context. Therefore, authors must situate new knowledge within the specific interspecies culture, and mix, and contextualize it in terms of the ecological setting that is being observed. Since it is reasonable to believe that the setting in which the interactions occur and the reasons for those interactions affect the interactions themselves, observations made of these interactions should account for this situatedness. First, authors must consider how his or her mere presence might affect the ecology. Then, claims about broad social phenomena should only be made about species in similar contexts and ecologies. In this refusal to reduce an animal to an oversimplified essence of species, authors opt for more opaque analysis and representation.

Moreover, as Askins clearly knows, the potentiality for reduction also exists when animals are being observed in the wild. In fact, Askins illustrates the complexity of such considerations and provides a perfect example of why an author should take an opaque stance to the Other by accounting for context and physical setting in his or her theories about broader social phenomena. As a scientist, Askins resists theorizing about larger

social implications based on some of the communication, behavior, and vocalizations she observes, especially in regard to the interaction between companion dog and wild wolf. Instead, Askins merely records her observations and reflects on her curiosity about them. Notably, she is also careful to differentiate in terms of the context of her observations.

For instance, after observing a wolf pack living in captivity experience a “breakdown of social structure,” Askins theorizes that this breakdown “provides insight into why it is so difficult to justify keeping wild animals in captivity in order to study their behavior” (13). “Rarely is it appropriate,” she explains, “to extrapolate what we witness in captive situations to the wild because behaviors are radically altered by the adaptations and stresses inherent in captivity” (Askins 13). Here, Askins clarifies the nature of the “culture” being observed—“wild” wolves captive on a preserve. She makes an important distinction here, for it illustrates why authors should be cautious when extrapolating from observations made of a specific culture to another, even when the cultures are the same species. Askins clearly warns against extending the social phenomenon of a culture living in captivity to a culture living in the wild, or vice versa. Not only are such extensions scientifically flawed, they are disrespectful. Therefore, Askins’ resistance here seems in keeping with a posthumanist *opaque* approach—posthumanist in the way that she carefully considers the frameworks she uses to approach the animal Other, and opaque in her resistance to potentially reduce a species through the overextension of analysis from one context to another.

In review, opaque analytic agenda requires that authors draw larger social implications about new knowledge *with* critical attention to their language use. This second part insists that authors avoid making (de)valuative statements about this new

knowledge, such as strictly basing the value of this knowledge on similarities found between other animals and humans. It also requires that authors situate this knowledge with regard to the particular species comprising the interspecies culture and the setting of interactions. Again, it is this second part of the guideline that brings opacity to bear on the analytic agenda—for the posthumanist (auto)ethnographer, one requires the other.

Summary of the Guidelines

The following chart summarizes the principles of each guideline:

Guideline and Criteria
<p>1 - Complete Member Researcher (CMR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two types: opportunistic (already a member when research begins) and convert (become a member after research begins) - Has a stake in the interspecies culture beyond data collection, thereby personally invested in the interspecies culture under study - Achieves a level of response with the animal Other that allows for the approximation of each other’s emotional stance—preferably a level of five or higher
<p>2 – Analytic Reflexivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resists make absolute claims about the animal Other (including what the author knows about the animal, what the animal knows about the author, and how the animal perceives the world); instead, the author adds another perspective in the form of respectful approximation - Bases analysis of data on patterns of interactions sustained over time with other members, including behaviors and routines - Reflects on the affects of mutual informativity—how the author is being shaped by interaction with the animal Other and approximates his or her affects on the animal Other (i.e. how each is adapting his or her behavior for the sake of the relationship) - Describes interspecies communication, particularly on the part of the animal (or animals), such as vocalizations or behaviors, including embodied communication (paralinguistics, kinesics), and whenever possible provides images (also see Informants Beyond Self) - Remains dedicated to the animal Other’s life and perception being central to the text, aside from peripheral details meant to enhance the understanding of relational activities and dialogue among members

- Attempts to represent the animal's perspective (other-with-self) but avoids using the animal for metaphorical self-expression, thereby merely expressing "self"

3 – Visible and Active Autoethnographer in the Text

- Represents self as situated in a specific culture (self-*with*-other; human-with-cat)
- Understands that his or her own feelings and experiences are a vital addition to the multiple points of view that constitute the world being observed
- Demonstrates personal engagement in the semiotic-world under study through consistent and significant self-reflection in the resulting text

4 – Informants Beyond the Self

- Attempts to collect data about the Other through other texts (i.e. scientific theories about species), interviews, or interaction with other informants (human or animal) beyond their own approximations based on their observations and participation
- Provides images, or other evidence, of interpreted behaviors whenever possible
- Provides some form of member checking to establish more validity in their assessment, such as an outside reader-observer who can check for accuracy of findings and problematic discourse using PHDA

5 – Opaque Analytic Agenda

- Contributes more generally to social knowledge by refining, elaborating, or re-visioning theoretical understandings, particularly in regard to interspecies culture or autoethnographic methodology
- Situates insights into a broader set of social phenomena with regard to species and apparatus (self-*with*-other, dog-*with*-human), as well as setting
- Remains vigilantly aware of his or her language use when drawing larger social implications, particularly with regard to the human-animal continuum, for example:
 - avoids claiming an animal's life has worth strictly because he or she added to human scholarship
 - avoids claiming a species deserves ethical consideration because of similarities to humans

Conclusion: Contributions and Looking Forward

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

~ Martin Luther King Jr.

“One day we will look back in embarrassment and shame at the suffering we caused them for so long.”

~ Neal Barnard

Haraway says that stories of *becoming with* are weaves of knowledge of an entirely different kind (Haraway, *When* 231). I believe that. I also want to believe that “stories are much bigger than ideologies” (Haraway, *Manifesto* 17). My concern, however, is that ideologies *are* stories. They are stories we tell ourselves about ourselves. And these deeply embedded stories often have “major consequences of life and death” for other animals (Haraway, *Manifesto* 17). Therefore, I would like to begin with a story about our evolutionary heritage, one that weaves the concerns of literary scholar Priscilla Patton with some of my own:

What we have constructed as *being an animal* or *acting like an animal* is a lie: behaviors such as violence, love, empathy, are not what makes us *similar* to or different from animals—these behaviors are ours to own (P. Patton 574). They represent *our* evolution as a species, developing from the time of our “hominid ancestors” (P. Patton 574). Further, being humane is “not what separates us from ‘the animal’ or the animalistic. “Rather, the ‘humane’ separates us from the other ‘human,’ the one that harbors—often in sophisticated, culturally encoded ways—arrogance, dominance, and cruelty” (P. Patton 574). We need to excavate our ideologies for humanist thinking that is

deeply engrained in our social development—in the stories we tell each other and ourselves. Further, we need to understand that “violence and abuse of others are not just impulsive acts, but also highly socialized behaviors”—they have been learned. Thus, we “can hope for change” (P. Patton 574).

This story is one that demands accountability, and it is one of hope.

Our discursive practices, narratives, and stories, all constitute representations that matter, that have the power to culturally construct, and, with that, the power to reinscribe ideologies that can have serious consequences for animals. We are writing their fate. That is, their fate is not so much in our hands as it is our language. Many of us write about animals, some with good intentions. The experience of sharing one’s life with an animal of a different species profoundly changed every single author’s life in the texts appearing in the guidelines. Askins writes, “My formative years were spent among animals . . . Animals profoundly influenced who I would become” (16). As if an echo, Millan says “Canines were a constant presence in my childhood, and I can’t overstate their importance to my development in becoming the man I am today” (22). O’Brien says, “Wesley changed my life. He was my teacher, my companion, my child, my playmate, and my reminder of God” (218). In my experience, such alliances are good for the soul, if not also our understanding of the limits of science. But I hope that my work has illustrated how even the best of intentions can fall short if the insidious stories underpinning our stories remain the same.

A Dual Call for Action

As Westerners we are the inheritors of a violent and oppressive colonial history, a history quite familiar to postcolonial theorists, such as Anzaldúa, Spivak, and Glissant.

The animal studies scholars I have represented herein show us how humans and animals have been historically animalized in order to oppress them, which has been an effective strategy due to ideological assumptions about what is permissible—few question our right to dominate and oppress animals (Wolfe, “Human” 567). These kinds of assumptions reflect how “ideology often manifests itself more effectively by being implicit,” assumed as if it were the Truth, and common sense (Stibbe 148).

As lingual animals, we are epistemological colonialists. This will be the legacy our descendants inherit from us (Barnard 2). If we take postcolonial concerns seriously, and I believe we do, we must attend to our ethical obligations to the *other* Other. As postcolonial scholars can attest, there are consequences when Others are misrepresented. The stakes are high—particularly when we consider “the extent to which human understanding of animals is shaped by representations rather than direct experience of them” (Baker 190). Just as representations of people have consequences for the people represented, representations of animals “have consequences for living animals” (Baker 197). Since language has been the colonial tool of choice to subjugate Others, human and nonhuman, we must attend to how we represent these Others. Our representations of animals matter.

According to Anderson, “The stories we tell and the ways we tell them are at the heart of ethnographic writing” (Anderson, “Apples” 457). What is behind this heart, or ethnographic imperative, is matter that matters—the Others that cocreate our world. Thus, where I see particular promise in the autoethnographic genre for the purposes of representing interspecies relations is how it might be used to challenge the kind of pluralism that Derrida despises—using the word “animals” as if all of the creatures on the

Earth were the same species. It can challenge essentialist notions of animal Others that serve to reduce them and reinscribe oppressive ideologies. It can be used to complicate binaries, or culturally constructed divisions—divisions that also serve to position “us” and “Others” on rungs of a hierarchal ladder. Posthumanist (auto)ethnography provides mechanism for the marginalized voice, the alternative experience of that history, and while this voice is singular, it also speaks for the many who cannot speak. While it is the vocalization of singular experience, that experience might be said to be representative of the experiences of many who live in the shadows, the borders, and the points in-between. This is a more ethical representation. This is what we would want for ourselves.

With this in mind, I again consider writing about the life my animals and I have created together. I feel as though I now have an ethical mast in these newly created criteria—a model of humility. In offering a posthumanist (auto)ethnographic framework, I am making a dual call for action. First and foremost, I am making a call for moving beyond purely pathos-driven representations of animals. While I truly believe we can reveal our attachments to other animals, *with feeling*, I am calling for more respectful study of cross-species communication and tenets to guide human representations of the creatures in our lives—tenets that require relation(ship), alliance, and becoming with. My hope is that this new apparatus might allow us to attend to this work more ethically—with vigilance, responsibility, and humility—for their sake, as well as our own.

Then, in a broader sense, I am arguing for the serious consideration of life writing about animals in the field of rhetoric and composition. I am attempting to carve out whole new areas of study. I would like to see us join fellow literary scholars in considering how this rhetoric indicates who we are becoming as a society, what matters to us, and who is

shaping us—what other semiotic beings are writing on us, communicating with us, and what all this means. And most of all, how our writing about them affects these Others, as much as our willful ignorance does. Autoethnographic texts, like the ones included in my selection, represent an important area for study by rhetoric and composition scholars due to the evocative ways these narratives attempt to voice another typically marginalized Other, and the ideologies underpinning such attempts. However, in terms of animal Others, this is an area of inquiry reflecting a dearth of scholarship in the field of rhetoric and composition.

My meaningful interaction with animals is one of many common threads binding me with the scholars who are insisting animals be addressed in their fields. I propose we find inspiration in the scholars attending the first “interdisciplinary conferences dedicated to the study of nonhuman animals in culture [that] were held in the United States and Great Britain” between the summers of 1999 and 2000:

We can never fully know animals, cannot avoid imposing our own interpretations on them, but we can, nevertheless, do scholarly work on their behalf. We can deconstruct self-serving versions of animals [of any genre, communicated through any mode] that legitimate dismissal and abuse, can call attention to theories that seem to compel respect, and can ... serve by informing others about cultural attitudes that necessarily impact animals. (J. Smith 295-96)

I believe the field of rhetoric and composition can and should be involved with this work alongside other fields. More specifically, I hope our field will help challenge notions of human exceptionalism and poor representations of animals. Therefore, I support Hawhee’s call for our field to revisit Kennedy’s “rhetoric in the world of animals” (“Toward” 85) and to suspend our “habituated emphasis on verbal language and

consciousness” and broaden what counts as rhetoric and who employs it. Where I potentially part ways with her is when she purports “it might be well useful to keep the rhetoric-as-energy theory tied to the nonhuman, nonwordy animals that occasioned its emergence” (Hawhee, “Toward” 83). Why shouldn’t our field explore the use of rhetorical energy by “wordy” animals? After all, we use “animal” rhetoric in the form of paralanguage and kinesics.

Also, it might be useful to “emphasize the transformations of energy central to ecosystems” and that it is “through these transformation, [that] entities are continuously in states of becoming” (Birke and Parisi 65). Becoming with therefore “allows us to think across boundaries” such as the human-animal divide (Birke and Parisi 68). Thus, if we define rhetoric as a first-order process, then, as Kennedy theorized, it *is* prior to speech and therefore potentially employable by many species. From this vantage, the field of rhetoric and composition should investigate Kennedy’s notion of a “deep’ universal rhetoric” shared with other social animals, and how this shared rhetorical energy is shaping us as beings semiotically and materially.

Contributions

For those of us who have embraced a new, more complex level of relationship with animals, an alliance that requires particularly conscious kinds of stewardship because of animals' vulnerability to human interaction, I hope to have contributed here a methodological apparatus that allows us to attend to this work. With the guidelines for posthumanist (auto)ethnography, a rubric that also serves as a “multispecies representation ethic,” we might approach and represent animal Others more respectfully.

This new conceptual apparatus is designed to shift us toward the “profound rethinking” that Wolfe and Haraway are calling for as well. Guided by Glissant’s opacity and Wolfe’s posthumanism, this framework was designed to help us approach alterity with humility and respect. This approach will undoubtedly require the use of posthumanist discourse analysis (PHDA) at every linguistic turn, as ideologies are stories we have forgotten are stories. We now call them Truth and Reality, and Common Sense.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

In terms of the corpus in this project, it is assumed that contributing editors and coauthors allowed the authors (those living in alliance with animals) to describe their feelings and experiences as vividly, honestly and accurately as possible. The boundaries of this project are delimited to the delineation of a single methodological approach (autoethnography) using a small sample of six print texts all produced within the last decade. One obvious set of limitations is due to the choice of analytic autoethnography, which represents a mere part of an entire spectrum of approaches to this methodology, as well as a single mode among many autoethnographic modes of life writing. The limitations of the sample (corpus) represent another set of limitations, such as the exclusion of other textual media. Also, texts representing animals not (necessarily) living in alliance with humans are not represented. As stated in the introduction, all representations of animals matter. The limited scope of this thesis did not allow room for discussion of all the other animals and their situated contexts; thus, this work is truly limited in its focus on the written representations of animals living in alliance with the writer.

With these limitations in mind, this project does not claim to provide all possible modes for the ethical representation of animals, nor does it claim to address the ethical representation of *all* nonhuman animals and life forms. However, by examining these texts, we now have a general sense for the kind “common sense” assumptions buried in our language, what many of us in our society believe to be self-evident about animals, even about the ones who share our lives. We also begin to realize that being in respectful alliances with animals are experiences that matter, and are therefore worth writing about and writing about with great care.

Looking Forward

Undoubtedly, there is more work to be done beyond this project, work that is no less pressing. While this work is beyond the scope of this project, it is not beyond my attention, or my concern. Understanding the violence and suffering that occurs when our culture slides certain animals away from the human side of the human-animal continuum, there is much to be done. Animals that have inherited these animalized positions—such as utilitarian, industrial farm, laboratory, zoo, and wild animals—deserve no less attention than I have provided companion animals here. Their voices count, they matter. The fate that we write for them, is our own. The question is, what is the story we want to write? Perhaps most of us aspire to one of vigilance, responsibility, and humility but we have needed standards and guidelines and that is what I have attempted to describe. Choosing these high purposes, we must begin with a profound rethinking about our thinking. We need a new ethic and new lens: a multispecies representation ethic using posthumanist discourse analysis (PDHA).

In totality, this thesis suggests new directions of study for rhetoric and composition scholars, including those interested in representational rhetorics, life writing, critical discourse analysis, epistemic rhetoric, postcolonial and feminist theory. These points of entry into discussion with animal studies scholars blur the boundaries and limitations of our field. With this, other animals have entered our ken. While rhetoric and composition scholars initially reacted to Kennedy by asking what is this field coming to?—I ask what (or who) is this field becoming with?

EPILOGUE

Jaxon eats all of his food, then, after making eye contact with me, scoots closer to his empty bowl and sits up straight. I grab the food cup and, while shaking it, ask, “Do you want some more?” Jaxon resituates himself by rocking back and forth ever-slightly into the most perfect sit position possible. “You dooo?” I ask him, followed by, “Where do you want it?” Jaxon repeatedly and gently taps the rim of his bowl with his right paw. I ashamedly ask him again, “Where do you want it?” just so I can see him tap his bowl once more. “There you go, you good boy.” He offers a gentle lick to the hand gripping the food cup above his bowl as if to thank me. Did I interpret this familiar scene right? How do I know, what I know?

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