

RHETORIC AND MAN'S BEST FRIEND:
CULTURE, NARRATIVE, AND THE VOICES OF DOGS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
DEDICATION.....	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
The Pet Industry.....	5
The Animal Rights Movement and Language.....	6
The Aesopic Tradition and Children’s Literature.....	8
The Narrative World Paradigm.....	11
LIBERATORY TEXTS.....	18
Arguing for Mindedness.....	18
Attributing Voice.....	22
Using First Person to Liberate.....	25
CONSUMER TEXTS.....	35
Creating an Audience of Consumers.....	36
Analyzing Texts Critically.....	43
HEGEMONY AND CRITICAL LITERACY.....	48
NOTES.....	58
WORKS CITED.....	61
APPENDIX.....	65

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the significance and implications of texts written from the points of view of companion animals. Companion animals, particularly dogs, historically and currently play an important role in American culture. Studies in sociology and behavioral psychology explain the symbiotic human-dog relationship and its associated emotional ties. People commonly assign dogs human personalities and values, assignments that are supported by science as well as our tendency to value the cultural narrative of Man's Best Friend.

Voice, a tool central to rhetoric, is often attributed to these animals in various texts. We see voice attributed to animals in children's literature, a foundation of literacy, and animals that speak in the first person are also utilized to persuade readers to act in both liberatory and consumer situations. Liberatory texts that use the personal pronoun "I" include argumentative essays about animal rights, narratives in free publications that encourage readers to adopt homeless animals, and letters asking for support of local humane societies. Consumer texts in which animals are the speakers include advertisements in various media as well as articles that are included in pet product catalogues.

Rhetorical acts in which dogs and other companion animals are assigned voice are significant in terms of critical literacy and economic citizenship. Critical consumers' decisions and beliefs may be informed by rationality as well as narrative, and conscientious economic citizens can employ critical reading strategies to counter scotosis, "rationalized acts of selective blindness that occur by allowing certain information to be discounted or unexamined" (Mathieu 112-113). Through critical

literacy and conscientious economic citizenship, hegemony, including the domination of the Man's Best Friend narrative to fulfill consumerist agendas, can be opposed. A critical reader of the liberatory and consumer texts examined here must look at those texts from multiple perspectives and question who the actual rhetor is, what that rhetor's agenda is, why that rhetor is recycling the Man's Best Friend cultural narrative, and what value lies in that narrative.

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DEDICATION

Companion animals are not only minded creatures, but also loving family members and friends who teach and inspire. My pets—those who I have the honor of living with now as well as those special creatures who have passed on—are gifts; they have played an important role in creating the person I am. This thesis is dedicated to all of the animal companions I have known and loved: Clyde, Bonnie, Precious Sid Vicious, Thumper Robin, Fat Cat, Herbie, Ghost, Gargoyle, Prissy, Rolf, Lucky, Mick, Dumpster Kitty, Fritz, Sal, Otis, Thorogood, and especially Dusty, who was one of the kindest, gentlest souls I will ever know.

INTRODUCTION

The history of human-dog relationships is a long one. According to most theories, domestication of dogs began between 10,000 and 14,000 years ago, and fossil evidence dated 8400 BCE suggests that the dog was the earliest animal domesticated by man (Fox 2, 242). Eventually, dogs came to share a symbiotic relationship with humans that, according to some researchers, actually may have begun closer to 135,000 years ago, around the time humans began forming language (Douglas 24). Although it is commonly accepted that man initially domesticated the dog as a hunting partner, there is contention about how human-dog relationships began. One theory maintains that the dog “initially [...] was a camp companion, follower, and guard, and later its roles as hunter, draft animals, protector, and herder of livestock were developed,” while another theory maintains that the dog’s role gradually evolved from scavenger to more elevated purposes: sacrificial object, hunter, and guardian (Fox 242). No matter the circumstances of this ancient relationship’s origins and progression, the significance of this bond has been a given for millennia. Dogs have come a long way from their origins at the outskirts of a primitive camp.

Today, animal companions are afforded special places in our homes and share close, emotional bonds with our families. Our pets—dogs in particular, for the purposes of this thesis—play a key role in budgeting our time and money, managing our homes, and living our lives in general.¹ Human perceptions of this relationship tend to show familiarity and interdependence. For instance, sociologist Clinton R. Sanders, despite George Herbert Mead’s contention that animals and humans do not share two-way communication, finds that pet owners insist that they communicate with their animals. In

his article “Understanding Dogs: Caretakers’ Attributions of Mindedness in Canine-Human Relationships,” Sanders documents conversations with animal owners who describe their pets as:

unique individuals who are minded, empathetic, reciprocating, and well aware of basic rules and roles that govern the relationship. Caretakers come to see their dogs as consciously behaving so as to achieve defined goals in the course of routine social exchanges with people and other canines. The dogs are regarded, in short, as possessing at least a rudimentary ability to ‘take the role of the other.’ (2)

These owners go beyond anthropomorphizing their dogs and contend that their animals are “minded” creatures—not simply ascribed human characteristics, but almost human. During his research, Sanders encountered owners who described situations in which their dogs consciously comforted, deceived, and manipulated other pets as well as people. For instance, one owner described an occasion when she left her dog alone for an evening; when she returned, the animal followed her around and barked at her: “HE WAS ANGRY. He just let me know...It was like he was yelling at me” (Sanders 7). Sanders’ subjects claim their dogs purposefully calm them when they are upset, manipulate them for attention and food, and even punish them, through destructive behavior, for being away from home for too long.

Although they describe their canine companions as minded—thinking, planning, emotional creatures—Sanders finds that his subjects are often uncomfortable when asked whether they consider their dogs to be people: they will not go so far as to apply the word “person” to their dogs, but they insist their pets are full-fledged family members and

friends who are inseparable from their owners' individual humanity (9-10). Although these creatures are not human, to dog owners they are not mere animals, either. Pet dogs play a social role similar to that of human companions, and they play a part in history that is certainly more elevated than that of any other species—except horses, maybe.

In addition to the sociological perspective, which focuses on how owners describe their dogs' behavior, behavioral psychology explains human-dog interdependence in terms of the dog's role in the relationship. In the 1980s, University of Michigan psychology professor Harry Frank determined that, over the course of their evolution, dogs' relationship to humanity has decreased their capacity for insight, evidenced by their inability to solve the same puzzles as wolves in identical experiments (Douglas 24). More recently, findings by Hungarian researchers mirror Sanders' subjects' beliefs about their pets' mindedness. According to Vilmos Csányi, whose team carried out experiments that measured dogs' level of attachment to their owners and problem-solving abilities with and without their owners' assistance, dogs would be different creatures had they evolved separately from humans: "Dogs are interested in the emotional and intentional content of the human mind and they are able to learn and to maintain the rules of human social settings," he contends (24). In the experiments, dogs formed partnerships with their owners and relinquished the responsibility of decision-making to the humans. Ádam Miklósi, a member of Csányi's team who studies how dogs react to human gestures such as pointing, determined that dogs' ability to make a connection, a line in space, between a finger and a reward, "is the first step to argue that dogs understand that we are communicating something to them" (26). In addition, the researchers found that mature dogs understand some human language (26). Further support for the mindedness of

domestic dogs comes from University of Colorado researcher Marc Bekoff, who studies dogs' and other canines' interactions with their own species. He maintains that dogs are self-aware, empathetic creatures and supports his claim with stories of dogs helping and even saving the lives of other dogs and creatures of other species (27). Like the studies of their human owners, studies of dogs demonstrate that the two species share a strong bond; because of its ancient origins, this bond has immensely impacted dogs' evolutionary path and shaped the creatures into the animals we know today.

Csányi and other researchers contend that dogs have shared our homes for so long that these places have become the natural environment for this species, and this fact of evolution has led to a peculiar hard-wiring of the canine brain: Domestic dogs operate with humans to solve problems, understand some human language, and behave empathetically toward other creatures. Behavioral psychology experiments that measure dogs' level of attachment to their owners lend even more credibility to the overarching story of the dog-human bond, a story that pervades Western culture and is identifiable in a plethora of texts. Science and its associated empirical studies lend credibility to the human-dog bond that goes beyond a mere affinity for house pets. The species has taken on a distinct role many millennia into its unique evolutionary path and in Western culture and history: Man's Best Friend. However, despite dogs' mindedness and their long, strong relationship with humanity, the two species are not equals, even within that relationship. Dogs simply do not have the same cognitive abilities people do, and as such, they do not experience the same desires we do.

The Pet Industry

Empirical scientific studies and everyday pet owners support the notion that dogs are minded creatures, and the impact these creatures have on our social and economic lives further demonstrate the importance of dogs in our society. For instance, based on pet industry statistics, we can assume that the majority of the American population values animals in the home, and a significant amount of that majority values dogs. In its 2001-2002 National Pet Owners Survey, the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association discovered the following about American pet ownership: Sixty-two percent of U.S. households own some kind of pet, and each pet-owning household will spend approximately \$460 on its animals this year (www.appma.org). Also, according to a survey on the Humane Society of the United States Web site, approximately 68 million dogs live with American families, and forty percent (approximately 40 million) of U.S. households have at least one dog (www.hsus.org). The growth of the pet supply industry reflects the popularity of house pets and their importance to a significant number of Americans. Pet super stores are enjoying increasing popularity, rapid growth, and continuing profits, despite the poor performance of retail sales and the overall economy over the past few years (Barker *passim*). As they have throughout Western history, companion animals influence our individual lives and the culture as a whole; that influence extends to the economic sphere.

Because of the stories, including the Man's Best Friend cultural narrative, the pet industry shares in its sales vehicles, consumers may be persuaded to buy products for their pets. However, through critical literacy and conscientious economic citizenship, hegemony, including the domination of the Man's Best Friend narrative to fulfill

consumerist agendas, can be opposed; rather than buying stories, would-be consumers can resist industries' persuasive tactics. Critical readers utilize multi-perspectival thinking to analyze texts and determine their rationality and coherence, as well as who is telling the story and why.

The Animal Rights Movement and Language

In addition to the influence of the industry that we turn to in order to feed and even pamper our pets, we can also see the power of human-companion animal relationships in language itself. Language affects and is affected by those who simply live with pets, those who make a living from these animals, and those who have charged themselves with protecting these animals. Another facet of the growing influence companion animals have on our lives and on our society, debates about local government language have sprung up across the country in recent years. Movements led by animal rights groups such as the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and In Defense of Animals (IDA) have called for changing the term "pet owner" to "guardian" in municipal government documents. Some local and state governments (including West Hollywood and Berkeley, California; Amherst, Massachusetts; Boulder, Colorado; and Rhode Island) have heeded that call. "The Guardian Campaign," an article on the IDA Web site, explains the reason for such changes:

The Guardian Campaign proposes nothing less than to change society's relationship with animals. When people come to view animals as fellow travelers on this earth and not simply commodities to be bought and sold, the treatment they receive from humans will improve either voluntarily or

via legislation passed as a result of the new ethic. [...] We are beginning with companion animals, as people have close relationships with them, usually as adopters rather than ‘owners.’ Changing people’s minds is a difficult task, but the rewards will be enjoyed by animals everywhere.

To transform their social and moral status from property to living beings with their own needs and interests initially requires language changes from ‘owner’ to guardian, ‘pet’ to friend, ‘it’ to he/she, ‘that’ to a given name and other similar substitutions.

IDA and other groups that lead movements for the language change insist that it is appropriate because animals are not property but companions, and therefore people who share their homes with and care for animals should be regarded as guardians rather than owners.

On the other side of the debate, though, animal trainers and breeders are wary of the language change because they believe it is a first step in eroding the rights of people such as themselves, who care for animals. Bob Vella, a veterinarian who hosts Pet Talk America, a widely syndicated radio talk show, condemns the change, which he maintains will lead to frivolous, expensive lawsuits made in the name of animals against responsible trainers and breeders who invest time, money, and attention in their animals’ well-being. Vella contends, “This one little change in words will give them the ammunition to take away the rights of pet lovers as we know it. We do have people in this county (sic) that need to be prosecuted for the way that they treat animals, but we do not need to change the term to appease animal rights groups. It is a dangerous move in the wrong direction.” From Vella’s perspective, the IDA intends to end the breeding of

companion animals and, additionally, threatens animal-human relationships. What may appear to outsiders to be simply a sentimental and ceremonial shift in focus—merely an issue of semantics—is actually quite serious to both its opponents and proponents. The debate about what to call those who care for animals—“owners” or “guardians”—is one of the latest issues in a long history of intersections between beliefs about animals’ mindedness and language. Throughout the evolution of literature involving talking animals, many questions about these intersections arise.

The Aesopic Tradition and Children’s Literature

Companion animals, dogs in particular, have a significant impact on people’s lives, including our pocketbooks and our beliefs about their mindedness and rights. Animals have influenced individuals and cultures for millennia, as workers (beasts of burden, hunting or guard dogs, mousing cats) and objects of interest, whether domesticated or in the wild. Since ancient times, even before beast fables were written down, animals have played important character roles in stories told for entertainment and education; As William Thackary wrote, “The tales were told ages before Aesop; and the asses under lion’s manes roared in Hebrew; and the sly foxes flattered in Etruscan; and the wolves in sheep’s clothing gnashed their teeth in Sanskrit, no doubt” (qtd. in Provenzo, 2). Beast fables attributed to Aesop first began to be told in Greece around 600 BCE and were praised and recorded by scholars over the ensuing centuries (Wiggin, xiv-xv). Fables are still read, shared, and used as teaching tools today.

Current-day adult readers may recall beast fables as a mainstay of their own childhood library. However, when these stories first came about more than two millennia

ago (as opposed to when they were published and mass produced in recent centuries for young readers) these stories were not aimed specifically at children. Over time, though, they became popular teaching tools used for practicing reading, composition, and translation skills (Ziolkowski 21-22). Provenzo explains that, in the nineteenth century, “it was probably almost impossible not to come across the Fables at one point or another in one’s elementary education” (175).

Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, another body of literature, fairy tales, ancient stories “that go back into the mists of time, through centuries we can only sum up with the term ‘oral tradition’,” were recorded (Sale 24). Although the animals in both fairy tales and beast fables have the power of speech, fairy tale animals are often enchanted humans, royalty with impeccable manners and the best of human traits, while beasts in fables are similar to humans only in their capacity for speech (Sale 78). Beasts in fables are simply animals that talk; they are not necessarily humanlike.

The trend toward stories written specifically for children, a body of literature in which talking animals were a mainstay, began in the eighteenth century and was influenced in its early stages by Romantic notions of childhood, according to Tess Cosslett: “If the child is seen as nearer to Nature than the adult, nature stories must be specially suitable for childish readers; if the child is more imaginative than the adult, the fantasy element (we all know animals do not talk) is more suitable to children” (475-76). Later, in the nineteenth century, Darwinism raised questions about the human-animal divide and problematized the role of talking animals in this still-emerging area of literature, children’s fiction (passim). Talking animals continued to play an important role in children’s literature into the twentieth century.

According to Roger Sale, animals are the strongest link between fairy tales and Modern children's literature: Modern children's literature retained talking animals and animals "endowed with what we think of as human power [...] its animals talk, wear clothes, live in houses, and, even when otherwise described in realistic terms, think and feel like human beings" (80-81). Sales explains the specialized role of animals in children's literature:

[T]he very fact that talking animals exist in children's literature reveals the persistence of a tradition that mostly died or disappeared in other writing and must count for something in the way of shared assumptions. Animals, talking animals, animals that are children or specially allied with children, creatures that can recreate, flatter, and repudiate the human wish that we are not alone—that is the backbone of children's literature as we know it.

In the twentieth century and now, talking animals have remained mainstays of children's literature, and therefore still impart literacy to emerging readers. The "I Can Read" series, popular first readers in the last few decades of the twentieth century that are still being printed, contain stories about and often told by animals. (For an example of animal voice from this era of children's literature, see Appendix A.) Non-print texts also have played a significant role in building literacy; on Sesame Street, puppets of animals, each with a unique character, play roles in stories as well as teach basic literacy skills. The trend of educating, talking animals continues today in children's literature and television programming.²

This phenomenon—interacting with texts in which animals speak—does not end when our relationship with childhood texts ends, because stories don't go away when we

outgrow story time. We are surrounded by animal stories, including myriad examples of personified dogs in popular culture far too numerous to list. Dogs are everywhere—often mimicking humans and sometimes even talking like us.

The Narrative World Paradigm

Instances of animals speaking in various texts can be analyzed in terms of the author's rhetorical purpose: Why would a writer assign speech—impossibility for an animal—to an animal? It may be irrational to accept animal voices, but such voices may be effective nonetheless, as demonstrated by the popularity of assigning voice to animals to teach reading skills, impart morals, or as we will see later, sell products and encourage the adoption of homeless animals. Western thought has encouraged a rational world paradigm, within which argumentative discourse based on logic and reason is assumed natural. However, rhetorical theorist Walter R. Fisher contends that a narrative paradigm is a better basis than the rational world paradigm for understanding human communication (295). Human beings are not the rational creatures assumed by Modernism and Naturalism, he says; rather, we create meaning through storytelling (295). The narrative paradigm is supported by E.G. Bormann's "fantasy themes" and "rhetorical visions," each of which "translates into dramatic stories constituting the fabric of social reality for those who compose them" (296). These theories lead Fisher to an important component of his vision: "'rhetorical fictions,' constructions of fact and faith having persuasive force" (296). In contrast to the persuasive logic on which the rational world paradigm is based, the narrative paradigm recognizes and values faith as well as fact.

Fisher describes the rational world paradigm as a construct based on reason that assumes logical argument is the route to creating and understanding meaning through language. He contends that a more valuable framework for understanding human communication is the narrative paradigm, a vision supported by the work of other rhetorical theorists, including Kenneth Burke and Bormann. Within this paradigm for understanding human communication, storytelling outweighs and subsumes rational discourse. In a world based on stories and populated by storytellers, meaning and truth are created and realized through narrative discourse rather than through logic and reason. The power of narratives in creating and understanding the world is evident in issues of economic citizenship and quality of life, each of which may be viewed in terms of critical literacy. Critical literacy approaches to pedagogy, composition, and simply reading real-world texts encourage readers to “resist the authority and power of the dominant discourse through dialectical (and critical) approaches to language and knowledge. [...] Critical literacy depends upon resistance to the status quo” (Bowden 141-42). Critical readers question a text’s message, determine who is delivering it, and examine how texts shape and are shaped by culture.

Advertising in particular exemplifies the strong effect cultural narratives have on consumers. For instance, vehicle manufacturers put forth, via advertising, the story that possession of a powerful sport utility vehicle (SUV) makes the possessor powerful. Even now that drivers are suffering circumstances that significantly decrease their personal power (gasoline prices have risen fifty percent in the past year, war is being waged in the Middle East, and shared roads are suffering ever-increasing pollution and congestion,

which can be attributed in part to the proliferation of SUVs) people continue to buy the story and buy SUVs.³

The rational world paradigm, on the other hand, is an epistemological construct influenced by Modernism and Naturalism that “presupposes that [...] humans are essentially rational beings” who function within and for argumentative discourse (293). Within this paradigm, to argue is human, and the world “is a logical set of puzzles” that can be understood through argumentation, which suggests that there is always one clear answer to any given situation (293). Western education reinforces this construct by assuming rationality in students and encouraging teaching within the frameworks of science and logic, and the rational world paradigm assumes that citizens function rhetorically from a basis of science and logic as well (293). Building on his own and others’ theories of rhetoric, Fisher maintains that the rational world paradigm, though dominant in Western thought, is not as useful as a paradigm based on narrative. The narrative paradigm assumes that “humans are essentially storytellers” living in a world constructed of stories, and people’s decisions depend on their circumstances. Rationality is determined by the “coherence” of the story at hand: whether or not it “rings true with the stories they know to be true in their lives” (297). Determining truth depends on interpretation of the narratives at hand, the narratives that shape us, and the narratives that create our world, rather than merely on reason.

The rational world paradigm is a false consciousness that we are educated into; the narrative paradigm, on the other hand, is a given, natural because we are socialized through storytelling. Whereas institutional education encourages learning and communicating via reason, social education encourages learning and communicating via

storytelling. Through stories, we build cultural beliefs, value, and meaning; stories are the basis of human existence and the foundation of culture. Fisher asserts that the rational world paradigm is not necessarily at odds with the narrative paradigm, because the former is part of the latter. Reason is one of the narratives humankind has created to assign meaning to the world, and while not everyone can achieve or use traditional rationality, which is confined to a few narrow fields of thought and study, we are all capable of narrative rationality (299).

Fisher's discussion assists in developing critical understandings of economic citizenship when we consider the influence corporate narratives (such as the SUV story) have on our decisions to purchase goods and determine their value and necessity. As economic citizens, we judge the value and truth of corporate narratives based on the worldview that has been written onto us by broad cultural narratives, including those that demonstrate American ideologies of self-determination, liberty, and equal access to economic prosperity. Often, corporate narratives reflect and reaffirm those ideologies. For instance, advertising campaigns for SUVs often refer to American cultural narratives of the Old West and Manifest Destiny; the advertisements may contain images or words that conjure cowboys and wide-open frontiers, reaffirming the ideologies of self-determination and freedom that are connected to the Old West and Manifest Destiny in the American consciousness.

When compared to use of such narratives that draw on the uniquely American ideologies of self-determination and freedom, are narratives that feature talking animals really significant and worth paying attention to? When you consider the influence they have, yes. As we have seen, emerging readers learn thanks to such stories. Also, as we

will see, economic consumers spend based on such stories, and humans invite dogs into their lives when moved to action by such stories. Even those stories that are clearly irrational because they are told from an animal's point of view are often effective and go unquestioned.

Obviously, there is nothing rational about talking animals, even those as close to us as dogs are: Dogs cannot talk because they do not have the physical or intellectual capabilities. Yet Western history and cultures, as well as the histories and cultures of other civilizations, are filled with texts in which animals speak. The stories we tell and believe about dogs and their roles are irrational, yet we continue to create texts in which these animals speak; media of all kinds are cluttered with modern and postmodern artifacts that feature stories told from dogs' points of view.

In advertising contexts, animal stories are intended to motivate an audience toward consumerism, and sometimes they are even meant to create an audience. Pet product catalogues and advertisements contain narratives in which pets declare their desire for products and ask that those products be purchased for them. In publications that advertise animals for adoption, pets are described from their own points of view, not that of shelter personnel or rescuers. Animals "speak" in a variety of texts to educate, entertain, and—most importantly for the purposes of this thesis—persuade the audience to act as liberators or consumers. Although these stories are not rational, we accept them and operate according to them. Texts in which dogs have voice appeal successfully to readers because readers share a close relationship with dogs, and humankind shares a long history with these creatures. Even those who don't consider themselves "dog

people” are influenced by these stories because the human-dog relationship is so entrenched in our culture.

A common theme that runs throughout the texts analyzed for this thesis is the pursuit of happiness. The pursuit of happiness has been discussed in various liberatory texts meant to inform readers about political, social, and economic injustices committed against particular groups, and such texts encourage action to rectify oppression. Among the many instances of liberators or would-be liberators speaking for those they represent are: abolitionists speaking for slaves, literacy advocates speaking for the illiterate, and mental health activists speaking for the mentally ill. Similarly, rhetors with an interest in helping animals have spoken for animals.

The liberatory texts discussed here do not view animal liberation in the sense it is described in Peter Singer’s Animal Liberation and other texts that inform the animal rights movement. According to those texts, animals are enslaved, tortured, and murdered for humans’ whims; the animals in the texts discussed here, however, are denied or merely in danger of missing out on their right to the pursuit of happiness. And in the case of the consumer texts analyzed, it is evident that in American culture today happiness is equated with acquiring and owning possessions: “The problem of the satisfied/unsatisfied appetite seems to be particularly ours, and it is getting worse. Luxuries are deemed necessities. [...] Catalogs that sell everything from gems to dog blankets pile up at the door or in the mailbox as never before [...]” (Rosenblatt 4). Americans and their dogs, we are led to believe by retailers, deserve the belongings that lead to a certain lifestyle that will create the happiness that is our right.

The pursuit of happiness is a human right with which dog trainers and owners, advocates for homeless pets, and animal rights activists contend. While those concerned with protecting and helping animals grapple with animals' rights to happiness, those concerned with selling products use the right to happiness to market pet supplies. Owners, trainers, advocates, and activists question whether and how animals and humans can achieve animals' right to happiness, and marketers exploit that supposed right. To turn a profit, marketers would have us believe animals themselves hold dear the right to happiness. However, through the questioning and analysis intrinsic to critical literacy, conscientious economic citizens can thwart marketers' intrusions into their lives, pocketbooks, and beliefs. By examining these storytellers' methods, informed and concerned consumers can resist the manipulation of familiar stories for questionable ends.

LIBERATORY TEXTS

Arguing for Mindedness

The Man's-Best-Friend cultural narrative, which assumes that dogs are minded beings capable of human thoughts and emotions, including happiness, cannot be reduced to mere anthropomorphism for entertainment's sake. Rather, this story reflects deeply held beliefs, so strong they are second nature to many Americans.

In her essay "What's Wrong with Animal Rights," author and dog trainer Vicki Hearne explores the relationships between people and their dogs and the implications those relationships have for fundamental rights. She maintains that dogs, like humans, are affected by the deeply embedded American ideal of personal achievement. Happiness cannot be imposed on dogs, Hearne argues. A byproduct of pride in a job well done, happiness can only come from within: "The capacity for satisfactions that come from work in the fullest sense" is an American value and a human right—as well as a dog right (Hearne 790). Hearne also maintains that, like humans, dogs have the ability to know. For instance, her dog is aware of his surroundings, his companions, and the boundaries of his territory and his relationships (793). Minded as they may be, though, dogs cannot understand or even be aware of their roles in the eyes of the state or official entities such as the Humane Society, because these entities are simply literary constructs (794). Dogs are intelligent creatures with certain rights, Hearne maintains, but they do not believe in relationships imposed by outside entities that they do not (and cannot) know or understand.

We also see the influence of cultural narratives in Hearne's essay. The author argues that animal rights activists have misinterpreted or even ignored "life, liberty, and

the pursuit of happiness” in their quest to ensure quality of life for animals. She claims that happiness, “one of the three fundamental rights on which all others are based,” must come from within animals and cannot be imposed on them (790). Whereas animal rights activists, including Singer, argue that “rights were created to prevent us from unnecessary suffering,” Hearne maintains that rights originate in the pursuit of happiness (791-92). She contends that the animal rights activists’ position actually leads to the destruction of happiness by denying the value of animals’ interdependence with humans (791-92). Central to Hearne’s point of view is reciprocal possession: having an animal does not connote enslavement; instead, reciprocal possession implies “possessiveness but also recognizes[s] an acknowledgment by each side of the other’s existence” (793). Pets and other animals that work with owners and trainers experience the right to happiness via relationships with humans that encourage accomplishment from within the animal. In Hearne’s view, only reciprocal owner-animal relationships lead to animal happiness.

Hearne’s essay is interesting not just for her take on animal rights and human-dog relationships, but also for how she chooses to demonstrate those rights and relationships. The support for her argument includes telling examples of people’s faith in the belief that dogs are, in a way, humanlike. Although Hearne makes a distinction between the different ways in which dogs know, she writes of a dog that has the power of *language*. Her dog, Drummer, whose actions she uses as support for her argument, thinks in English—in complete sentences. Hearne writes that, when restlessness kicks in, “Drummer [...] can insist, ‘Hey, let’s go outside and do something!’” and when the dog is uncomfortable with a stranger, it might think to itself, “This person has no business pawing me. I’ll sit very still, and he will go away” (794, 95). Later, she writes a dialogue

between the dog and herself, in which the roles have been reversed and the dog is over-congratulatory toward the human, praising her for her ability to know (795). Instances such as these, in which dogs “speak” in written discourse, are evidence of the strong cultural bond we have with our canine companions. This bond encourages us to believe that dogs are minded, thinking creatures that are conscious of themselves and their relationships to humans.

However, because Hearne argues against activists who would ultimately sever the human-companion animal relationship, it is difficult to determine exactly why she assigns her dog voice in this essay. Does she write her dog’s thoughts and the exchanges she and Drummer share to make a point that the activists overlook, or is she simply doing what comes naturally to many Americans? What is the effect and significance of a dog talking in this essay? For me, the speaking dog went unnoticed upon first, casual reading. Upon closer inspection, it was jarring to read sentences in which the dog is the speaker in the midst of such a carefully reasoned argument. However, upon successive readings, it is evident that Hearne includes these passages to demonstrate the close relationship she and her Airedale share (for the animal’s good) and to counter the animal rights movement’s call for separation of humans and animals (for the animals’ good).

Of course, most people (rational and otherwise, Hearne included) know that their dogs do not speak and think this way: Dogs do not have the brains or the vocal chords for it. However, because of the powerful role these animals play in our culture, we may not be so dismissive of the idea that dogs *could* voice their beliefs, feelings, and opinions, at least to themselves, as Drummer does. After all, we see our dogs entertain themselves, solve problems, and weigh options every day. What is to stop them from forming beliefs,

feelings, and opinions? Because we live in a world made up of stories, some of which feature talking animals, we find these notions natural, and according to Fisher they are natural. Like Hearne, we operate in a narrative paradigm that is fueled in part by faith. Because of our belief in our dogs' value and abilities, instances of dogs using language—no matter how irrational—seem plausible rather than ridiculous.

From Hearne's perspective, the anti-ownership narrative offered by the animal rights movement is incoherent, as it does not agree with the narratives with which she is familiar. From her perspective as a dog trainer, she shares, values, and believes narratives in which animals enjoy their owners and gain satisfaction from work done well. It is only natural for her to reject calls for disallowing ownership and other human-animal relationships because, as the stories she values confirm, to do so is to deny animals their right to happiness. Her argument is similar to that of opponents of groups such as PETA and IDA that call for changes in government language in the interest of animal happiness, which they insist is not available at the hands of trainers. Those same trainers—and Hearne—insist that they encourage animal happiness. Also, much of Hearne's argument is based on matters of faith, a condition allowed and valued in Fisher's narrative paradigm. Throughout her essay, she translates her dog's actions as signifiers of happiness and discusses the animal's thoughts and feelings, although there is not a rational basis for these translations and discussions. In actuality, these are assumptions on her part, which Fisher would term "rhetorical fictions."

Attributing Voice

Hearne's use of the personal pronoun "I" is problematic in that she assigns voice to a dog. The problem lies in the facts that: (1) statements "made" by the dog support her argument (and dogs cannot literally speak such statements) and (2) the statements are, at their basis, hers because she—not Drummer—is the actual speaker. When applied to writing, the term "voice" historically has been problematic in many contexts because of the concept's abstract nature. Despite the difficulties that stem from that abstract nature, it is an important concept, central to many theories of rhetoric and composition pedagogy. Voice, the intricate and often puzzling relationship between writer, speaker, and reader, involves how the writer writes what the speaker says and the way the work *sounds* to the reader—even though it is made up of words on a page, rather than, say, words spoken on a recording. Voice affects the reader's reception of the message and perception of the writer's credibility. In fact, in his landmark essay "The Rhetorical Stance," Wayne C. Booth maintains that along with audience and available arguments "voice is one of the three elements at work in any communicative effort," an effort on which the rhetorical stance depends (141). If voice is one of three legs on which all communications stand, its importance cannot be ignored. Composition theorist Peter Elbow offers a helpful jumping-off place for a discussion of the importance of voice.

According to Elbow, when we discuss "voice" in relation to writing, we accentuate sound and hearing rather than vision: "it emphasizes the way all linguistic meaning moves historically through time rather than existing simultaneously in space" (xiv). Although voice is affected by speech, with its related sounds, inflections, and the meaning those characteristics carry, it nevertheless depends on how the reader reads the

text. Elbow acknowledges his admiration for M.M. Bakhtin, who “describes all discourse in terms of ‘voices’ and ‘speakers’ and ‘listeners’” (xiv). Bakhtin says, “Verbal discourse is the skeleton that takes on living flesh only in the process of creative perception—consequently, only in the process of living social communication” (qtd. in Elbow, xiv). In texts where we actually hear the voice—television and radio, for instance—the work is done for us. In written texts, however, we must assign character to type on a page.

Related to voice is persona. Persona is inevitably slippery when writers use the first-person singular pronoun “I” while writing from a character’s point-of-view. A critical reader may ask, “Where is the message really coming from? The author or the speaker?” An author may be honest or manipulative when she assumes a role, and readers must judge that author’s trustworthiness.

The power of voice lies not with the virtual speaker, who seems to be speaking, but with the actual author, who sends a message via the speaker. Aristotle corroborates “the nonstartling claim that humans naturally listen to discourse for cues about the actual person behind it” and “sometimes [...] emphasizes how speakers can fool listeners and persuade them with just dramatic voice or implied author” (Elbow xii). After the author has done his or her job—sending the message via the speaker—voice ultimately depends on the reader who navigates the text and determines what the message is, who is actually delivering that message, and what it means. Aristotle gave this advice to rhetoricians in Rhetoric: “We can now see that a writer must disguise his art and give the impression of speaking naturally and not artificially. Naturalness is persuasive, artificiality is the contrary; for our hearers are prejudiced and think we have some design against them....” (qtd. in Elbow, xli). Then, as now, audiences critically analyzed texts to determine the

underlying agenda. Then, as now, audiences required that a voice seem “natural” to be credible. (Like “voice,” though, “natural” is an abstract, and therefore problematic, term.)

But what is the significance of texts in which voice is attributed to animals? And how do writers and readers determine what constitutes “naturalness” when writing or reading the voice of a dog? As we have seen, despite the irrationality of talking animals, such voices are present in a variety of texts, from simple children’s literature to somewhat dense philosophical treatments of animal rights. The authors’ intent in these texts is to appeal to the audience through the voices of animals. Elbow says,

Aristotle clearly implies what common sense tells us: we are not persuaded by implied author as such—that is, by the creation of a dramatic voice that sounds trustworthy; we are only persuaded if we believe that dramatic voice is the actual speaker or author. We don’t buy a used car from someone just because we admire their dramatic skill in creating a fictional trustworthy voice. If ethos is nothing but implied author, it loses all power of persuasion. (xlii)

Speaking animals can add an element of ethos to a text. In Hearne’s essay, Drummer’s voice and his dialogue with her demonstrate the importance of their symbiotic relationship and that the relationship itself actually allows Drummer to experience his right to happiness. By association, the dog’s voice lends credibility to the author’s argument. The animal voice is a strong rhetorical tool in educational, liberatory, and advertising texts because readers put stock in messages told from this point of view despite the irrationality of such messages. Even more common, pathos is conveyed through animal voices. Because people have strong emotional bonds to animals, the

animal voice can be a persuasive tool of emotional appeal. Irrational as they may be, talking animals are persuasive. It appears that those who value companion animals in particular want to project messages, which appeal to their own human desires, onto the animals that are closest to them, their pets.

Using First Person to Liberate

Voice plays an important role in PawPrints, a free monthly magazine distributed throughout the Cape Fear region: Wilmington, North Carolina, and the surrounding area. The publication, which is supported by advertising from local businesses, is competently and carefully written, edited, and designed. However, it is modest: PawPrints is printed on newsprint and features black-and-white photographs throughout and a four-color photograph on the cover. The magazine, which celebrated its first year anniversary in April 2003, has grown since its inception, from forty to fifty-six pages and from a distribution of 5,000 to 7,000. PawPrints has been well received by the community, advertisers, and those who work and volunteer with homeless animals. One cat rescue organization has had such success placing its adoptees through PawPrints that it no longer has to participate in adoption fairs at the local pet superstore.

Although the magazine is expanding to include rescue organizations that focus on species other than cats and dogs (iguana, pig, and rabbit rescues are new features) the focus of the publication has been and will remain shelter animals because of the sheer volume of homeless cats and dogs. New Hanover County alone, the editors estimate, euthanized 3,000 animals in 2002. Each shelter represented has a full right-hand page dedicated to its adoptable animals. Despite the fact that advertisers often request right-

hand pages, which are more visible than those on the left, no advertising space is sold on the shelter pages.

According to a statement in the masthead, “PawPrints Magazine is dedicated to saving the lives of homeless animals by promoting shelter adoptions. We provide an up-to-date pictorial directory of shelters, humane societies and rescue organizations in the Cape Fear area” (5). A few articles throughout the magazine include information about pet health issues, community events that support homeless pet adoption, and features about rescue dogs and celebrities’ relationships to their pets. However, narratives, all told from rescued and shelter animals’ points of view, comprise the bulk of the copy. The stories, which often begin with a greeting, are often touching, sometimes upsetting, and always deftly told. These, in my opinion, are nicely done narratives in which each potential pet is assigned a personality that is evidenced by its voice and descriptions of itself.⁴

Diane Pour and Kelly Wall, the editors of PawPrints, cannot accurately track how many pets are adopted because of the magazine, but they do detective work during their monthly visits to the shelters for photo shoots, when they discover whether the magazine was the impetus for adoptions. “A lot of people don’t like to go to shelters in the first place, so we’re hoping this is like a bridge to get people to go down to the shelter,” Pour said. “They can read about it and maybe that will give them the spark.” Pour and Wall acknowledge that the animal voice is the best tool for creating that spark.

The two PawPrints editors collaborate on writing, editing, and design. Pour and Wall each work more than forty hours a week out of their homes: “This isn’t just our job. It’s our whole life,” Pour said, while Wall nodded in agreement during a joint interview.

Each of the women worked on Web sites and newsletters for shelters before beginning publication of the magazine. Wall said the copy she placed in publications she worked at prior to co-founding PawPrints was written in third person: “Black lab, 45 pounds, good with children, neutered,” for instance. As readers and editors, Pour and Wall found such copy less effective than it could be and thought first person would directly appeal to readers’ emotions. Wall explained,

It (copy written in third person) didn’t involve you any. It didn’t evoke any kind of emotional response, and in a lot of these situations, it’s a life or death situation we’re talking about—with animals being euthenized. You’ve got to get the reader involved, and the way you do that is to make them connect, and to personalize it. To have the animal talking makes it more personal, and just makes the reader feel more emotional about it, and perhaps compels them to go to the shelter to see the animals.

The editors chose to write narratives in which animals speak because they thought the technique would give readers a more honest and emotionally evocative description: “When you spend one-on-one time with an animal, that’s when you truly bond with them. I always thought that if it was written from a dog or a cat’s perspective, then it would be the reader and that animal in the moment, alone,” Pour said. Naturalness in these narratives comes from the details in the writing, which add a conversational tone and suggest a relationship between the human reading and the animal speaking on the page.

The September 2002 issue of PawPrints contains the following story, told by Emma (To see a reproduction of the original copy with its accompanying photographs, see Appendix B):

My name is Emma. I'm 1-year-old, house-trained, good with other dogs and kids, and I've had some obedience training. You may be asking yourself why a perfect little dog like me is homeless. Well, I was rescued when a friend of the Humane Society saw someone kick me in my ribs. I'm not bitter, although I am ready to move on and find a mom and dad to love. (9)

The voice here rings true for several reasons. After she introduces and briefly describes herself, Emma acknowledges and speaks directly to the reader: "You may be asking yourself..." The next sentence, her explanation, begins with the colloquial, "Well," which somewhat deflects the tragic element of her story: the abuse she suffered. It seems like the way a person—victim or survivor—might calmly and succinctly describe an ordeal she experiences without going into the upsetting details.

Like Emma, the unique elements of Sassy's voice go beyond the personal pronoun "I" to paint a fuller picture of an animal who has a case to make. Whereas Emma is resigned to her past and looking forward to the future ("not bitter" and "ready to move on"), Sassy wants to have a good time:

Hello! My name is Sassy and I am a small Labrador Retriever mix. I'm an expert at chasing a ball and bringing it back to you. I am house-trained, spayed, up to date on vaccinations and good with kids. I love going on car rides but I bet the best one of all would be the one we share together on the way home. Sounds like fun to me. (15)

Although much of Sassy's biography is dedicated to her love of play, it still contains the necessary selling points: her health and obedience information. Sassy, like Emma, also

involves the reader in her description. Instead of directly appealing to the reader with “you,” she engages the reader with a “we” statement and alludes to the kind of newspaper personal advertisement through which one might search for a mate. These are simple and honest-sounding tales and descriptions of these potential pets’ backgrounds, behaviors, and needs, as well as their hopes for future homes and families. The writer can easily assemble facts for copy about backgrounds, behaviors, and needs; however, animals’ hopes and the personalities displayed through the writing require inventiveness that must ring natural. In this case, the naturalness of the voice can be attributed to its simple, conversational tone. The end result is a combination of ethos and pathos that has worked well for the publication and the animals it serves.

Compiling these narratives also involves describing the animals and even naming them. The stories are based on any background information that shelter or rescue records and personnel share, combined with what the writers can learn about an animal’s demeanor during its photo shoot. Often, little information accompanies the many animals that arrive at shelters and rescue organizations, and those animals housed at animal control tend to have only a number, not a name, assigned to them. Therefore, sometimes photo shoots, which may last as little as five minutes, are the sole opportunity to gather information and create voice.

Often when working on a bio of a nameless dog, Pour and Wall assign the animal a name. The editors share an anecdote about the influence these names can have: Once they wrote a piece about an older yellow lab at a shelter, and since the dog had no name, they named her “Nana Banana” in the copy. The next month, when they visited the shelter to take pictures, the shelter personnel informed them that an unusually high

number of people called about the dog. Pour and Wall attribute the level of interest to the unique name and, by association, persona assigned to the animal.

In the case of an animal they know little about, the editors say, they try to write a funny, upbeat, or happy bio and assign the animal a fun name (for instance, after a character on a television situation comedy) that will compel readers to visit the shelter. They choose their words carefully because the goal is to move readers to contact the shelters about the animals in the bios: “We try to turn negatives into positives without misleading anybody,” Wall said. For example, if a dog was given up by its previous owner because it killed a cat, the bio might say “I’m not too fond of cats,” and if a dog is not good with children, the bio might say “I really love adults” or “children make me nervous.”⁵ Readers can learn the rest of the stories from the shelter or rescue organization.

Pour and Wall are careful to tell another side of the story and use a different photograph if an animal runs more than once in the magazine, so readers will not disregard copy with which they are already familiar. For instance, a fourteen-year-old Labrador retriever, Wally, was featured in the magazine four months in a row. The first month’s narrative was “very sad,” according to the writers, and they decided to have the dog tell a happier story in the following issue. After four months of different stories from Wally’s point of view, he still had not been adopted. A reader who followed Wally’s story was curious about his fate when he did not appear in the magazine for a fifth month and apprehensive that he may have been put down because he was not adopted. She called the shelter to find out about him and, relieved to learn that he was still available, adopted him.

While which side of the story to tell, or creating a persona from very little information, affects some of the narratives, all of the narratives have first-person voice in common. The editors purposefully decided to write the narratives in first person to gain readers' attention and sympathy. Pour and Wall had seen this style scattered about on Web sites and other texts about homeless animals, and both had employed it in publications at which they worked before launching PawPrints. Wall acknowledges that, as a reader, the first person sounds right to her: "You just can connect when someone is talking like that to you. And with these animals, they really need an extra push; they need some help." Writing in the third person, she continues, is "sterile" and "not enticing."

Readers seem to agree that the PawPrints first-person style is more lively and engaging than the third person, and, interestingly, nobody has ever questioned the use of first person. In fact, after the first issue, a reader with an editorial background gave Pour and Wall advice on using the voice: to make it even more correct and add to the perception of authenticity, the reader said, use "who" rather than "that" when constructing a clause that refers to the antecedent "I." So instead of "I'm a friendly dog *that* is house trained and good with cats and children," the copy would read, "I'm a friendly dog *who* is house trained..." Such construction makes the voice sound natural: Humans consider themselves beings, not things, and to maintain the perception of authenticity in the voice, so should these animal speakers. Also, people who rescue and foster animals have sent write-ups composed in third person to PawPrints, and have never questioned the editors' change to first person for publication. The first-person, colloquial voice sounds natural to those who compose these texts as well as those who read the final products, and contributes to the ethos of the piece. (The advice given the PawPrints

editors on upholding the naturalness of the animal voice, and the fact that only one reader and no submitters ever acknowledged the first-person style, demonstrates the comfort readers have with the style.) The woman who made the suggestion about the treatment of “who” clauses evaluated the text “for cues about the actual person behind it,” although it seems that along with the rest of the readership she appreciates the dramatic animal voice and finds it trustworthy (Elbow xli).

The first-person style is evident in other publications meant to benefit animals as well, but it does not always work as well as it does in PawPrints. The New Hanover Humane Society offers an example of an animal narrative that seems unnatural. A fundraising letter from the society, written from the point of view of Emmy, a canine resident, contains many of the same elements as the PawPrints narratives, although the text’s rhetorical purpose is different. (To see a reproduction of the original copy with its accompanying photographs, see Appendix C.) The document includes a mug shot of the animal speaker, and the narrative includes a greeting, a brief history, and a description of the animal’s hope for the future. Emmy, who uses first person to address the reader, does not try to persuade readers to take her in as the animals in PawPrints do; rather, she tries to persuade readers of the good the society has done for her, in order to garner donations to the society.

Emmy’s story is not a happy one; she was left by her previous owners, who moved away without her. She explains her appreciation for the Humane Society and the care she has received there. However, the letter does not ring true, as there is no transition from the third to the fourth paragraph, which begins: “Sad as it is, Emmy is luckier than those who are abandoned to die homeless, hungry, and sick.” Suddenly, Emmy’s story is

ended, and a new, anonymous speaker addresses the reader. The problem is one of poor editing and design, which would be improved by clearly separating the dog's narrative from the last two paragraphs of the letter. Interestingly, the new (apparently authoritative) human speaker takes over at the point in the letter when the Humane Society begins its appeal for a financial donation. Would it seem unnatural for the dog to ask for the donation? Perhaps the writer thought a dog appealing for money would seem jarring to readers or make them uncomfortable. In any case, the end result is an awkward appeal that loses much of its persuasive force because of lack of delineation between two voices.

The PawPrints narratives that work so well have effects for readers that go beyond informing them of the animals available for adoption. Although some readers have said the narratives make them cry, that is not necessarily a criticism, and feedback has been generally positive, according to the editors. Wall says the voice makes these narratives much like a story, like a children's book, and Pour comments on the popularity of the magazine with children, pointing out that it could be an educational tool to teach children about the problems facing animals and humans due to overpopulation: "It teaches them about the problems, that they need to be spayed and neutered, and that people didn't have a commitment to them." The educational value of talking animals, judging by the editors' testimonials, extends beyond texts that are created with the purpose of teaching children and imparting literacy skills.

Like a children's book that features talking animals, PawPrints can be an effective literacy tool that encourages children to read out loud. One reader reported that her son would make up a different voice for each animal as he read the bios to her. Another parent told the editors that her autistic son actually displayed emotion, a rare

occurrence, when he read the bios. He would laugh at the funny narratives or acknowledge the sadness of the pets that had harsh backgrounds. Because they have gotten positive feedback from readers about their children's interaction with PawPrints, Pour says, she is careful about the information she includes in the narratives: "I try to keep in mind that I don't want to say anything that a child really shouldn't read." Often the animals in shelters have suffered abuse and neglect, and their voices may convey difficult lives thus far, while leaving out the details.

Texts that encourage the liberation of animals, from those animals' points of view, are not uncommon. The strategy is used in animal shelter and rescue newsletters and Web sites as well as flyers created by individuals who lost or found pets. PawPrints is unique in that it uses the first person consistently and deliberately throughout its pages; the voice is a foundation of the editors' strategy and goal. By assigning animals voice, the publication is lent not just pathos but ethos as well; narratives of homeless animals actually seem more credible when (seemingly) told in those animals' words. The key to the success of these narratives is the stylistic choices the authors make, those little things that make the animals' stories seem conversational, as if they are actually spoken: the simple greetings, colloquialisms, and deft treatment of background information and the notion of being. The surprising and strong effects these narratives have had on potential adopters and their children in terms of emotional connections and literacy are added benefits of PawPrints' style.

CONSUMER TEXTS

We might assume that dogs do not crave the newest and the tastiest products, and that their palates are not particularly refined; nonetheless, the pet food industry provides us with the newest and the tastiest products, and those products' accompanying sales narratives about dogs' sophisticated tastes. In her essay "No Wonder They Call Me a Bitch," Ann Hodgman takes a satirical look at the proliferation of dog foods and treats on the market, all sold on the basis of dogs' unique tastes. In the essay, she describes her odyssey into eating dog food to test the veracity of claims made in advertisements and on packaging about various products' tastes and textures.

The foods might be fed to dogs, she intimates, but the illusions clearly are intended for people: "Although our dogs do nothing but spend 18-hour days alone in the apartment, we still want them to be premium dogs. We want them to cut down on red meat, too. We also want dog food that comes in a bag with an attractive design, a subtle typeface and no kitschy pictures of slobbering golden retrievers" (197). Hodgman's analysis of the foods and the industry's sales tactics demonstrates that dog owners who buy the industry's narratives do so because we are eager to please our dogs and also because we assume that our dogs are what we are—and what we are is a culture of consumers.

Americans' tendency toward consumerism is evident in the extremes to which we have taken food. As cultures have evolved, humans have developed food into cuisine, and now humans' desire for variety (in the West, at least) can be satisfied by the wide selection of foods available at the market. At the typical American grocery store, shoppers may choose from among several ethnic cuisines, dozens of frozen and prepared

meals, and a seemingly countless number of snack foods. Whether the cause of the plethora of available foods is a result of consumer demand for variety or marketers' creation of variety to spur consumption, the result has been a dizzying array of food products from which to choose.

The overwhelming variety that has come to characterize the grocery store—and the clothing store, and the drug store, etc.—has spilled over into the pet industry. During the 1990s, the United States saw the creation and rapid spread of warehouse pet stores, including PETsMART and the smaller Petco; Web sites and catalogues devoted solely to pet supplies; and an increase in the amount and variety of pet products available at discount and grocery stores. Among the number and variety of pet products available, some, such as the self-filling water bowl, are practical and may come to be seen by busy pet owners as a necessity. On the other hand, novelty products, such as bottled gravy for dog food, do not fill a need of the owner and do not necessarily fulfill a desire of the pet.

Creating an Audience of Consumers

It is impossible to form a focus group of animals or to conduct interviews with them to determine their desires, yet the pet industry manages to market products on the basis of what animals want. This marketing strategy appeals to human desires (meaning: American materialistic ideals), which include affinity for variety and acquiring the newest and best things, paired with owners' yearning to please their pets. Dog owners in particular are targets of marketers who want to convince potential purchasers that, like people, dogs crave and even expect variety in their food, as well as wish for more, newer, better possessions. This marketing strategy is evident in advertisements in which dogs

“speak.” (My favorite example is an advertisement for dog food that often runs in Vegetarian Times magazine. It features a photograph of a dog with the caption, “I’m vegetarian and proud of it!”) We see this marketing strategy—using animals’ voices to inform an audience about animals’ supposed desires—in the Doctors Foster & Smith pet supply catalogue, a publication that targets dog owners for the majority of its food and trinket offerings.

The catalogue itself has the appearance of an authoritative, knowledgeable source of information about what is healthy (and therefore necessary) for pets. The name of the catalogue, Doctors Foster & Smith, and the tagline “Products for your pet *selected by our veterinarians*” (emphases mine) are the first and most immediate indicators of medical authority. The first half of the catalogue is devoted to medical supplies, including do-it-yourself vaccinations, parasite and skin remedies, and first-aid supplies. The doctors for whom the catalogue is named are two veterinarians whose bylines appear on several of the articles found throughout the catalogue. A photograph of the two veterinarians, wearing white lab coats with their names embroidered over the pockets, appears on the first page, immediately signaling to the reader the medical authority of the authors and namesakes of this text.

Most of the publication’s space is filled with descriptions of goods for sale, product photographs, and prices and product numbers. However, non-consumer copy accompanies the sales information. On any given page, in any given product department, the design incorporates photographs, short articles with bylines, and fact boxes. The articles are about how to keep pets healthy and happy; the February 2002 edition, for example, includes a three-part series on caring for dogs at different stages of their

lifetimes, an article about how flea and tick products work, and a piece entitled “Is your pet obese?” (Interestingly, health issues such as obesity that are growing more problematic for American humans are the focus of the articles about pets in this catalogue. The concerns of geriatric dogs—a population whose growth parallels that of the American human senior population—is another theme in the catalogue.) In articles about pets they treat at their clinic, the authors use a conversational first-person style to tell the stories of how they help the pets, describing the bond between the veterinarians and the pets and suggesting a personal relationship between themselves and the reader. The catalogue’s editorial content suggests to potential customers that the company is an authority on the health and well being of pets. The magazine-like set-up of the catalogue contributes to the ethos of the piece: this publication is trustworthy and credible because it is informing, not just selling.

In addition to its authority on pets’ medical needs, the company is portrayed as a kindly, humane, caring enterprise that is also the authority on pets’ desires. In photographs throughout the catalogue, the veterinarians are pictured holding, petting, and walking pets, and other photographs feature children hugging and cuddling pets. All of these photos serve to portray a kind company that cares about animals. We also see how much the company cares from the positive customer comments printed throughout the catalogue.

The company takes caring one step further by speaking *for* pets, putting their needs and desires into language humans can understand, in the “Pets’ Bill of Rights.” Among other needs and desires in this list, pets demand their consumer rights: “We have the right to stimulation. We need new games, new toys, new experiences, and new

smells” (44). (For the complete text of the “Pets’ Bill of Rights,” see Appendix D.) The personal pronoun “we” lends a higher level of authority and the “naturalness” Aristotle wrote of to the text. Another reason this excerpt can be construed as natural is that the animal speaks in a tone appropriate for such a statement: emphatic and righteous. Instead of a company exhorting potential customers to act, pets themselves (seem to) make that exhortation. The use of “we” adds another layer of ethos to the piece: a pet is the ultimate authority on what pets need and desire.

After the speakers have made their case, the company gives customers an opportunity to fulfill their own pets’ rights to new games, new toys, new experiences, and new smells toward the end of the catalogue, in the toy and treat departments. The latter half of the publication moves away from medical authority, and shows us what dogs want for leisure activities, including playing, snacking, and looking fashionable. Treats, specifically, are described as necessary not only to pets’ health but also to their desire for variety: Dogs, the company tells us, want new tastes and textures and foods similar to those humans enjoy. Customers can purchase cheese/apple, honey/cinnamon or peanut butter/honey treats which are described as “special flavors for special pets” that “[d]ogs absolutely love” (122). Good Boy Choc Drops allow humans “to share the chocolate flavor you love safely with your pet” (122). Customers may choose candy kiss-like Tasty Snacks for their pets because “[g]ood behavior deserves a tasty treat and these healthy morsels come in three delicious textures.” Sweet Yogurt Drops, for instance, come in “three delicious flavors that add variety” (123). These treats are all based on people-food flavors: fruit, candy, and yogurt, rather than the meat flavors in traditional dog foods, suggesting that if people crave it, dogs crave it too. The product descriptions tell the

potential consumer that well-behaved dogs are tempted by, deserve, and expect variety and novelty in their treats' flavors and textures. Because dogs can be delighted by these treats, the potential customer may be persuaded to believe her dog may be disappointed without them. Pet owners, the target audience of this industry's marketing and public relations campaigns, are the purchasers but not the ultimate consumers; they are the decision-makers, but they cannot get feedback from their pets about what to purchase. Therefore, they depend on the industry to tell them what their animals want.

Such consumption of incomplete narratives is addressed in "Economic Citizenship and the Rhetoric of Gourmet Coffee," in which Paula Mathieu suggests that "economic citizens act by critically examining and questioning the dominant narratives that are circulated in and about the economic system" (111). However, economic citizens often contend with powerful narratives that are only partial stories, intended to create customers and persuade these customers of the necessity for new products. In the case of Starbucks coffee, Mathieu demonstrates, consumers are told a glossy, cosmopolitan spectacle of a story that makes the expensive, gourmet Starbucks brews seem much more alluring than the standard, less expensive cup of joe. Starbucks coffee seems enticing because of the related language, rituals, and atmosphere; readers buy these facets of the fragmented narrative when they buy the product.

The fragmented narrative that we receive from the Doctors Foster & Smith catalogue is this: Dogs enjoy the tastes of new treats; therefore, they must necessarily desire them. However, dogs do not spend their days yearning for yogurt drops and mint-flavored chew toys, which the catalogue offers, because they do not know of these products; it is irrational to assume we know their desires or that they even have desires.

In fact, dogs survived for millennia on subsistence diets—what they could catch and kill, carrion, and creek water. Even now, many domesticated dogs, if given the opportunity, will consume food that is considered disgusting by human standards (for instance, garbage and animal waste). The fractured narrative promoted by the pet industry encourages us to assume that dogs have the same cravings and desires as humans and ignores natural, observable, documented canine behaviors. We are encouraged to ignore the rest of the story and to buy the portion of the story the industry chooses to create and share.

When consuming these fragmented narratives, Mathieu says, scotosis—“rationalized acts of selective blindness that occur by allowing certain information to be discounted or unexamined”—is at work (112-13). Not only do creators of these narratives tell only part of the story; consumers of these narratives accept that partial story. According to Mathieu, “[t]o *suffer* scotosis is to accept the rhetorical presence of a given narrative frame and act in the directions that frame suggests. It is analogous to looking in one direction without turning your head” (113, emphasis mine). By using the word “suffer” in her description of the consumption of these partial narratives, it may seem that Mathieu suggests that consumers are not on equal footing with the creators of these narratives, that we do not have equal access to the complete narratives. Partial stories are imposed on consumers; however, Mathieu lists questions that can be a basis for rhetorical analysis and allow consumers to disrupt scotosis by searching out and exploring competing narratives:

How do narratives frame people as consumers? What needs do they promise to satisfy? What other needs do they deny? Where and how are

the producers in these narratives portrayed? What material contradictions get ignored? What are consumers asked not to see, not to consider? What lies unspoken outside of these discourses? (115)

In short, she lays a groundwork of suggestions for how we can be critically literate economic citizens: By questioning fragmented narratives and searching out competing narratives, we can redefine our needs based on a more complete picture.

Because the products demanded by the “Pets’ Bill of Rights” are things we might desire for ourselves—toys and treats—we project that desire onto our dogs. As owners, we want what is best for our dogs. As humans, we know what is desirable for ourselves. And as consumers who have strong beliefs about human-dog relationships, we might be swayed to believe products targeted at humans are appropriate for, desirable to, and even necessary for dogs. Mathieu’s groundwork for disrupting scotosis by asking the questions that will lead us to the rest of the story suggests that, to some degree, rationality is necessary and valuable. While narratives may be natural to us and we may function according to them, tempering narrative with rationality can afford us a balance that leads to a more complete, and therefore more accurate, picture when dealing with consumer texts. As economic citizens, we are charged with looking beyond given stories and thinking in a multi-perspectival manner to consider and discover the other sides of any given sales pitch.

Although we cannot get literal feedback from our dogs about their desires, we may discern our dogs’ feelings via their behaviors, as evidenced by Sanders’s study, and our dogs may even understand human communications and work in partnership with us to solve problems, as proposed by the Hungarian psychologists and other scientists.

However, these findings about dogs' level of mindedness cannot rationally be extended to assume that these creatures have materialistic cravings and give in to consumerist messages. Doctors Foster & Smith attempts to create an audience of consumers who care not just for their pets but about their pets' supposed cravings, desires, and preferences. Such an audience will depend on the industry to explain what pets want. To create this audience, the company first must convince potential customers of its expertise, which it attempts through its display of medical authority and the manner in which it presents information: a catalogue that looks much like a magazine. Then it attempts to convince potential customers of what dogs really want, by giving voice to the voiceless: using first person to speak for animals so it seems the animals speak for themselves. Doctors Foster & Smith's ability to speak for dogs is given credence because it is an authority on veterinary medicine and cares deeply about animals, as evidenced by the photos and articles in the catalogue. Although the people who purchase the treats do not consume those treats, they do consume the narratives told from a pet's point of view about what will make their dogs happy.

Analyzing Texts Critically

Mathieu discusses the narrative of gourmet coffee, which tells only part of the story while ignoring the plight of underpaid workers who contend with dangerous conditions on coffee plantations. Although she does not mention the character by name, her description of the overlooked part of the story reminds us that Juan Valdez is an image of a coffee picker as we'd like to imagine coffee pickers: the peaceful, bucolic existence close to nature, delighting us with the crop they pride themselves on. Coffee

pickers are not Juan Valdez; their lives tend to be much more difficult than the life of that character. Similarly, the sleeping dog on the cover of a Doctors Foster & Smith catalogue who dreams of a visit from Santa is an image of a dog as we'd like to imagine dogs: blissfully dreaming of a fantastic life of fancy treats. (See Appendix E for the cover.). Dogs don't believe in Santa (himself a cultural narrative used to encourage consumerism); we cannot rationally say they believe in anything. These partial, or fragmented, stories accent the positive—pleasure and convenience for the consumer—and ignore the negative, which in the case of gourmet coffee is the working and living conditions of coffee laborers in developing or Third World countries, “the materialist conditions that precipitate the need” (Mathieu 114). If we accept that we live in a world made up of stories and that we operate according to those stories, it is imperative that we realize that many of the stories we hear are created in order to sell. They sound good, we like them, and therefore we want to operate according to them. However, we must be aware of the manipulative and even harmful potential of partial truths and untruths.

Within Fisher's narrative paradigm, we can view these partial messages, analyze their narrative rationality, and judge whether they correlate with the stories we already know. For instance, a Brazilian consumer familiar and sympathetic with the plight of coffee plantation workers may find the fractured gourmet coffee narrative incoherent. An uninformed American, on the other hand, unfamiliar with the stories of oppression on plantations, may not be moved to question it. However, critically literate consumers, no matter their background, are more likely to question and reject the fractured gourmet coffee narrative simply because they strive to think from multiple perspectives, a strategy that would lead them to question and discover the rest of the coffee story.

Critical analysis of everyday, real-world texts is the basis of The Uses of Literacy, in which Richard Hoggart explores the way in which the mid-20th century British press spoke to its working-class audience in a voice that was at once familiar, comfortable, and trustworthy, while it was also condescending, owing to the identity of the actual author. Hoggart termed this sense of connectedness and sympathy “A phony sense of belonging” (199). Much like reading between the lines, if you step back from such texts and analyze them critically, you can hear through the voice and determine the speaker’s agenda. More often than not, and despite the text’s claims, that agenda is not for the benefit of the text consumer; it benefits the industry:

We can soon put ourselves into a position in which we lie back with our mouths open, whilst we are fed by pipe-line, and as of right, from a bottomless cornucopia manipulated by the anonymous ‘Them’. [...] ‘Only connect,’ said E.M. Forster, thinking of the conflict between the claims of the inner and the outer life. ‘Only conform,’ whispers the prevailing wind today. Nothing much matters anyway, but the majority are probably right, and you ought to go along with them. (198)

Although it was written about a different type of publication with a narrowly defined audience at another point in history, Hoggart’s description of the relationship between the audience and the rhetor (Us and Them), still applies to present-day American advertisers who exhort us to buy because material goods will make our lives better and make us more valuable. As with the entertainment publications that encouraged Hoggart’s countrymen to avoid questioning and remain middle-of-the road, the advertising targeted

at Americans today encourages us to accept comfortable stories, including those that are irrational—pets’ desires, for instance.

Parallels can be made between Hoggart’s discoveries and the ways in which various current American publishers study and speak to their audiences, and we can see current American advertisers creating a phony sense of belonging. In the case of the Doctors Foster & Smith catalogue, the actual speaker, the author with an agenda, cloaks himself in an animal’s voice that the reader can understand and appreciate and does not tell the entire story; the same can be said of the PawPrints authors. However, the PawPrints agenda does not seem to me insidious as the Doctors Foster & Smith agenda does: Both publications use the voice of animals, one to help and one to exploit. Whereas PawPrints aims to help homeless animals, Doctors Foster & Smith’s goal is to persuade people to buy goods, many of which are unnecessary. Here and now, as in Hoggart’s England of the 1950s, They may *seem* to be Us, but they are not *really* Us. In our case, They are not really our pets; we just think they sound like our pets. We must remember that the author is not necessarily the voice, and the author does have an agenda.

The critical literacy framework encourages us to question agendas, and an understanding of the narrative paradigm supports this act. Because of their individual interests, corporations’ and activists’ narratives tell only part of the story, as evidenced by Mathieu’s and Hearne’s articles. Doctors Foster & Smith and PawPrints are real-world examples of publications that contain narratives that employ a particular voice, the first-person pronoun “I” “spoken” by animals. Within the narrative paradigm, readers can decide to accept or reject any given narrative based on its coherence, whether it resembles the stories they value, even if the stories they value are based on faith as well

as fact. In addition, critically literate consumers can consider fractured narratives from multiple perspectives, considering potential counter-narratives and searching out the other sides of the story.

HEGEMONY AND CRITICAL LITERACY

The device of talking animals has been used in stories since ancient times, and the human-dog bond has existed for at least 10,000 years; however, it appears that lately there has been a surge of stories and products featuring talking dogs. The media, in its various forms, uses talking animals for a variety of reasons, including teaching and entertaining people, liberating animals, and selling products. Within American culture now, distinct narratives about bonds between humans and companion animals proliferate. Dog voices are constantly being used to sell the newest products, which extend well beyond goods created especially for dogs and their owners, to beer, fast food, and even bath tissue.

Stories about animal mindedness are taking on newer, more immediate guises: A case in point is the popular Animal Planet network television program Pet Psychic, on which a woman claims to channel pets' thoughts and feelings, after which she tells owners precisely what their animals have to say. Soon, the dog voice itself will become a product when Bowlingual, a \$120.00 gadget that supposedly translates "each woof, yip or whine into six emotional categories—happiness, sadness, frustration, anger, assertion and desire—and displays common phrases, such as 'You're ticking me off,' that fit the dog's emotional state" comes to market in this country in summer 2003 (Tomorrow).

Although the idea that dogs are minded beings is not new, the extent to which mindedness is being exploited is new. Whether the increase in first-person and mindedness narratives is attributable to a change within the culture or the proliferation of information sources, the fact remains: No matter the amount of evidence to suggest dogs'

mindedness, these creatures still do not desire consumer goods or liberation as humans might.

While narratives that feature companion animals talking may appear purely innocuous, they in fact may be capable tools of seducing readers toward actions that are not to those readers' benefit. Consumer texts that speak for dogs and employ the first person to do so can be manipulative by playing on readers' emotions and their connections to their pets in order to spur economic consumption. However, critical readers who can step away from these narratives need not be manipulated by this voice. Critically literate economic citizens can oppose a structure that encourages belief in narratives that are irrational, incoherent, and meant to create an audience of consumers rather than inform an already existing audience.

As Antonio Gramsci describes the workings of culture, ideologies, the sets of beliefs that form the foundation of a cultural system, can be dominated by power-holding classes. Ideology is the key to understanding what is construed "true":

in Gramsci's estimation ideology is not so much false consciousness as a distorted vision of what is in fact the historical truth of a particular social situation. Ideology [...] expressed in the form of [...] such popular literary forms as song and folklore, is thus construed as being an object of interpretation and understanding rather than of denigration. (Lucente)

When ideology is dominated by power-holding classes, hegemony results. Hegemony, supported by social institutions, including family, education, and media, is the dominance of one social class over others. In Gramsci's historical context, the Italian bourgeoisie's

culture was dominant, and that class's view became the consensus for the society as a whole.

Hegemony goes beyond domination of ideology. According to Victor Villanueva, in a hegemonic construct belief is not just dominated but exploited as well; however, that exploitation is not imposed on those who do not hold power. Rather, the powerless consent to their own domination and exploitation: "We accept commonly held worldviews as truths. The dominant does more than accept; it capitalizes. We accept the dominant's actions as based on truths; we approve of acts based on truths; we consent" (Villanueva 123). When institutions with power encourage something to be, it will not be unless the masses accept it as truth. In America, capitalism is a particularly potent ideology and the marketplace a historically influential institution. In America, marketers make up a particularly strong dominating force that creates hegemony, manipulating and capitalizing on the narratives that shape us, and using them to shape us further into economic consumers.

Cultural narrative, or folklore, is a reflection and reinforcement of ideology as well as a route to hegemony, and Gramsci points out that "folklore has always been tied to the culture of the dominant class" (194). Cultural narratives are the stories told about the ideas that are the basis of our culture, and common sense, "commonly held conceptions of the world" in Gramscian terms, is closely related to folklore (Villanueva 124). In Hoggart's England, the press sold recycled versions of the people's common sense back to the people through the press. In America, common sense plays a similar role in the press and other institutions, including the marketplace.

Just as the cultural narratives of the Old West and Manifest Destiny, reflections and reinforcements of the American ideology of individualism and self-determinism, are told, retold, recycled, and repackaged until they take on the status of common sense, so are stories of Man's Best Friend. In America, it is widely accepted popular opinion that dogs are minded beings. This story is respected and even celebrated as common sense; worldviews in which dogs are simply animals have been largely, but not completely, cast aside.

As popular narratives compete with one another, some necessarily take precedence over others, so it should be noted that even in America, where the Man's Best Friend narrative has a long history, garners respect, and enjoys great popularity, the story does not ring true to some. Some Americans still find the competing narratives, those that did not rise to the top, more sensible. For instance, hunters may view their hunting dogs as prized possessions, and if a dog does not perform in the field, it will be killed on the spot lest it taint the rest of the pack. And among some in this country, dogs are not companions so much as nuisances that other people keep in their homes for questionable reasons. Despite the influence of the Man's Best Friend narrative on the majority, there are still Americans who are puzzled by the popularity of house pets, who see them as wastes of money and time. Although some narratives may have larger audiences that put stock in them, the fact remains: what is common sense to one person is not necessarily common sense to another.

The familiar folklore of the Old West and Manifest Destiny is old, entrenched in America, and a significant part of understanding this country and its culture. On the other hand, stories that involve talking animals, dogs in particular, are much older than

America and older even than Western civilization and culture, so irrational as they may be, their acceptance as common sense is not surprising. But of what ideology are these Man's Best Friend stories a reflection and reinforcement? Stories about companion animals are often representative of companionship and comfort. Such narratives determine what is true and real for most members of a culture and reinforce dominant social interests.

Gramsci's theory can be applied to current-day America, but analyzing American culture using this framework is troublesome in that the Prison Notebooks and other writings were necessarily colored by Gramsci's Communist background and beliefs. When using Gramscian theory to analyze any given current American popular cultural situation, it must be determined what groups in this society parallel the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in Gramsci's Italy of the 1920s and 1930s. In current-day America, which is the dominant class and who is being dominated? It is difficult to acknowledge or break away from American constructs that suggest nobody is dominated because in a democratic, free-market system, according to American belief, everyone is equal. Also, the American Way is all we understand. According to Villanueva,

Individual responsibility in Puritanism, individual achievement in liberal politics, an economic system which has only known capitalism—all of this makes for a memory which knows of no other social constructions, no other forms of government, no other means of production. Americans can't think of a different way to do things because America has never known different ways of doing things. Hegemony in America is virtually

watertight—and thereby relatively easy to pass on through civil society.

(126)

But because hegemony is only *virtually*, not completely, watertight, it can be resisted. Through critical literacy and conscientious economic citizenship, hegemony can be opposed.

The root of critical literacy, Marxist theory (including the writings of Paulo Freire), is at odds with American ideologies of self-determination, liberty, and equal access to economic prosperity. In fact, critical literacy's Marxist roots may create tension for American students and researchers who, by nature of our enculturation and the broad cultural narratives that in part form us, have had democratic and capitalistic ideologies written onto us. It is difficult, if not impossible, to study culture and the messages about culture from within that culture, particularly when working within a framework that is at odds with and historically devalued in that culture. American ideologies of self-determination, liberty, and equal access to economic prosperity and the anti-Marxist sentiments that have been part of American thought throughout the Twentieth century and into the Twenty-First in part (if not for the most part) sway individual thought, as it is difficult to escape the belief that any system of ideas rooted in Marxism is necessarily and obviously dangerous. Even after coming to terms with the tenets of critical literacy, we may find ourselves wondering how they apply in mainstream, middle-class American culture. Are we the oppressors or the oppressed about whom Freire writes? Can we be both at once? How do we balance hegemony with free will, structure with agency?

Critical literacy goes beyond mere attentive reading and writing; it requires an interaction with texts and encourages us to question the forces that wrote those texts, our

culture, and ourselves. A critical reader of the liberatory and consumer texts examined here must look at those texts from multiple perspectives and question who the actual rhetor is, what that rhetor's agenda is, why that rhetor is recycling the Man's Best Friend cultural narrative, and what value lies in that narrative. Individual readers can employ critical thinking to resist hegemony; agency can supercede structure.

Russel K. Durst's definition of critical literacy, which he outlines in Collision Course: Conflict, Negotiation, and Learning in College Composition (a text that concentrates on critical literacy in the college composition classroom) is extremely helpful because it describes postmodern and related theories in manageable terms. He says, "critical literacy approaches ask students to examine their relationships to language and other cultural tools in an attempt to understand their role as actors in history and to realize their potential to create change on both a small and large scale" (3). He goes on to list many of the factors involved in critical literacy: "self reflection, multi-perspectival thinking, explicit consideration of ideological issues, rigorous development of ideas and questioning of established ways of thinking" (3). Reading critically goes well beyond the act of decoding words and sentences and assigning them meaning based on one's individual storehouse of vocabulary and grammar knowledge. It extends to deciphering meaning of a given text based on several variables, including our own backgrounds and the ideologies that form and are reinforced by our culture and assumed by authors.

In addition to questioning and analyzing what authors assume, critically literate readers question and analyze what authors intend. When we read critically, we recognize agendas, question those agendas, and recognize how they may differ from our worldview as well as the worldviews of others. Every day, we contend with texts that have an

underlying agenda, through which authors attempt to persuade us to believe or act in certain ways. Reading is questioning: asking what the author has said and why, as well as what the author has not said. In terms of reading, critical literacy is the ability to negotiate the myriad messages targeted at us all and to question and analyze those messages' content. Additionally, it is the ability to determine what is left out of the messages and why; what is not said is as important as what is.

As Mathieu suggests, our level of critical literacy can influence our sense of economic citizenship and how we conduct ourselves as economic citizens. Whereas American citizenship is both self-defined and provable (corroborated by government records), economic citizenship is not provable and tangible; it is solely self-defined. There is no test to pass, no permanent file, no certificate of citizenship; “[e]conomic citizenship means accepting the task of defining political agency around the roles each of us plays in the cycle of global production and consumption” (Mathieu 112). Economic citizens are those who exchange goods and services, earn money, and buy things; they affect and are affected by the economy, and they are aware of their role. So the consideration, in terms of critical literacy, is not whether we are economic citizens (if we buy, we are); rather, the consideration is whether we are conscientious economic citizens. Conscientious economic citizens think critically about their buying acts, weigh the pros and cons of their consumer decisions, analyze those decisions from different perspectives, and question the outcome of their purchasing decisions for themselves and for others.

Materialism, encouraged by narratives that tell us to buy, fuels consumerism. Because they have the ability to manufacture mass quantities of products (although

people may not have the need for those products) manufacturers use cultural narratives to create audiences to buy those products. Cultural narratives are themselves reflections of ideology, which is recycled and told to us in new ways in order to spur consumption. Other industries may be more blatant in their creation of images based on American ideals to appeal to potential customers: The automobile industry has its rugged, SUV-driving outdoorsmen; the cigarette industry its thin, chic, independent women; and high-priced clothiers their sultry, rebellious teens. While sometimes subtle, the pet industry also uses images based on stories that form cultural beliefs to encourage consumption of its products.

In the case of liberatory texts, however, the narratives are not intended to spur consumption; rather, their purpose is to persuade the reader to act for the social good. Whereas Doctors Foster & Smith is a sales vehicle with many of the vestiges of a news or entertainment magazine, PawPrints is a magazine (supported by advertising) with a distinct social mission. The well being of animals is the focus and goal of the PawPrints narratives. While the focus and goal of the “Pets’ Bill of Rights” may *seem* to be the well being of animals, the focus and goal of the catalogue, including this feature, is the sale of consumer products.

The consumer and liberatory texts analyzed here take advantage of stories that have been part of Western culture for a long time: Dogs are Man’s Best Friend; they are minded, communicative beings; and the bonds between humans and companion animals are valuable. Although the “Pets’ Bill of Rights” calls for actions that will lead to social change for the better, the placement of this text within a pet product catalogue is in itself insidious. PawPrints, on the other hand, does not use the Man’s Best Friend narrative, the

companion animal's voice, or the story of mindedness for the purpose of spurring consumption and making money; rather, it uses them to capitalize on the readership's faith in the animals' mindedness and the importance of human-companion animal bonds to achieve better lives for the animals represented. Even though they may be used in certain contexts as means of manipulation to spur consumption of goods, animal stories, including those told from a dog's point of view, are still worthwhile and valuable in many contexts. We can critique impossible images of dogs that are purely sales tools without losing sight of our appreciation for the Man's Best Friend narrative.

NOTES

1. I often use “our,” “us,” and “we” when I write about humans’ relationship with dogs and the impact of that relationship on culture, humanity, economic citizenship, rhetoric, and critical literacy because people’s relationships with animals, particularly dogs, and stories that feature talking animals permeate our culture and influence us all.
2. For a fascinating discussion of a movement *away* from anthropomorphized animals in children’s literature, see Patricia Lee Gauch’s “The New Hero in Children’s Literature.” Gauch, a children’s book editor and author, says that “animals are being regarded in new heroic ways in children’s books, more and more without human distortions. They are allowed to be beautiful, not as a reflection of human beings, but in their own right” (211). Gauch contends that animals in children’s literature show connectedness to nature, not to human nature.
3. See David Goewey’s “Careful, You May Run Out of Planet”: SUVs and the Exploitation of the American Myth,” a thorough semiotic analysis of the popularity and marketing of SUVs and their relationship to American history and values.
4. It seems the monthly Dog Fancy would be the pinnacle of canine-related print media. In continuous publication since 1969, it has a glossy cover and medium-weight stock for the pages. It is a relatively expensive magazine; a year’s subscription costs \$27.97, and a single issue costs \$3.99 on the newsstand. Unlike PawPrints, which charges itself with spreading the word about the many area homeless animals available for adoption, Dog Fancy appears to be an authority on purebred dogs. It contains information for finding a breeder in order to buy such a dog, as well as how to care for, train, and show a purebred dog.

Like PawPrints, the articles in Dog Fancy are concerned with health and well-being of dogs and strengths of the dog-human relationship. In fact, in Dog Fancy there are more such informative articles in number and kind. I suspected I would never find an article written from the dog's point of view—"I"—in Dog Fancy, though, and I was right. In an entire issue, the only time this point of view happened was in two relatively small "Canine Marketplace" ads in the back of the magazine. Upon inspection of Dog Fancy's entry in the 2003 Writer's Market, I found this in the directions: "No stories written from a dog's point of view [...]" (372). In a profile about freelancing for pet magazines, the freelancer interviewed warns: an "approach to avoid at all costs is the talking pet" (369).

I suspect that purebred enthusiasts to some extent must consider their pets investments and possessions rather than minded beings. These dogs' mindedness, at least in the contexts of their roles as show dogs and breeders, is limited to their ability to learn, train, and put their best foot forward. The personal pronoun "I" would be inappropriate for Dog Fancy's audience and message.

5. In an earlier draft of this thesis, I replaced the word "killed," which Pour used in her description of reasons dogs might be turned over to a shelter, with the word "hurt." I attribute this replacement to my own reluctance to write about a dog killing a cat, understandable as such an event may be. As a lifelong dog and cat owner, the notion of such an occurrence is upsetting to me, and as an appreciative reader of PawPrints, particularly the stories these animals "tell," I did not want to imagine any of them killing other animals. When I realized why I had made the change and that this instance of telling only part of the story was not as accurate as it should be for the goals of this text, I

changed the word back to “killed.” Manipulating Pour’s description to soften a blow in my retelling does not serve a beneficial purpose as it might in PawPrints.

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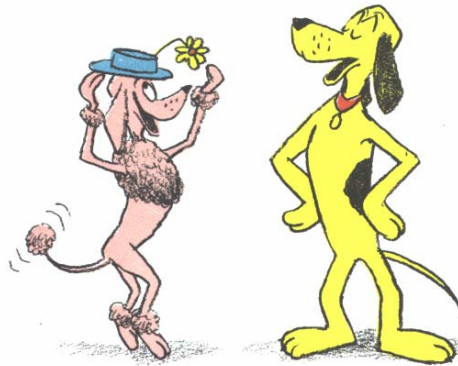
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APPENDIX

Appendix A. First Person in Children's Literature

"Do you like my hat?"

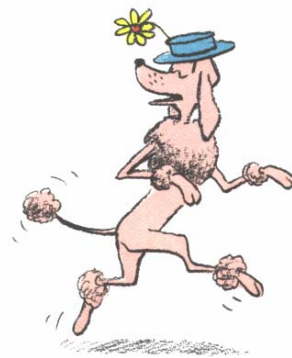


"I
do
not."

"Good-by!"



"Good-by!"



An image of dogs talking from the 1961 children's book Go Dog Go, by P.D. Eastman (9). This is the first of many exchanges between dogs in the text.

Appendix B. First Person in PawPrints



▲ My name is **Emma**. I'm 1-year-old, house-trained, good with other dogs and kids, and I've had some obedience training. You may be asking yourself why a perfect little dog like me is homeless. Well, I was rescued when a friend of the Humane Society saw someone kick me in my ribs. I'm not bitter, although I am ready to move on and find a mom and dad to love.


► Hello! My name is **Sassy** and I am a small Labrador Retriever mix. I'm an expert at chasing a ball and bringing it back to you. I am house-trained, spayed, up to date on vaccinations and good with kids. I love going on car rides but I bet the best one of all would be the one we share together on the way home. Sounds like fun to me.




Narratives told from Emma's point of view (9) and Sassy's point of view (15), with accompanying photos.

Appendix C. First Person in Humane Society Fund-Raising Letter

NEW HANOVER HUMANE SOCIETY
P.O. Box 12293
Wilmington, N.C. 28405
Phone 910-763-6692



November 2002



Dear friends of animals,

My name is Emmy; I am at the New Hanover Humane Society because my family moved far away and couldn't take me with them.



I was so bewildered at being left, that for the first few days I spent most of my time just lying on my blanket hoping that my Mom and Dad would miss me as much as I missed them and come back for me.

The people working here must understand how I feel because someone always comes to check on me, brush my coat or give me treats and a rawhide bone--which does make me feel better.

Being allowed to play in the yard with a friendly Lab has made both of us forget our loneliness for awhile, and all the dogs have learned some basic commands to help our behavior when visitors come to see us. I do think I am the smartest one here and am hoping with every footstep I hear in the hallway, that someone is coming to love me and keep me FOREVER. I am ready to love them unconditionally and forever.


Sad as it is, Emmy is luckier than those who are abandoned to die homeless, hungry and sick. Our shelter must stay open for these unwanted animals and we are asking for your help so that we can continue providing them with food, housing, care, comfort and most importantly, a loving, permanent home.

Please make a commitment that will save lives by giving whatever you can to this, our annual fund raising drive. We are grateful for your continuing support.




A NON-PROFIT CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION SUPPORTED SOLELY THROUGH DONATIONS

The original speaker, a resident of the Humane Society, is replaced with what appears to be a human voice in the last two paragraphs.



The Doctors' Health Care Series #2361

Pets' Bill of Rights



Martin R. Smith DVM

- 1** We have the right to be full members of your family. We thrive on social interaction, praise, and love.
- 2** We have the right to stimulation. We need new games, new toys new experiences, and new smells.
- 3** We have the right to regular exercise.
- 4** We have the right to have fun! Do not expect us to be predictable all the time.
- 5** We have the right to quality health care.
- 6** We have the right to good nutrition. We depend on you for all our good health decisions.
- 7** We have the right not to be rejected because of your expectations that we be great show pets, watchdogs, hunters, or baby-sitters.
- 8** We have the right to receive proper training. Otherwise our good relationship with humans – including you – could be marred by confusion or strife and we could become dangerous to ourselves and others.
- 9** We have the right to guidance or correction based on understanding and compassion rather than abuse.
- 10** We have a right to live with dignity... and to die with dignity when the time comes.

Go! For more information about this subject and hundreds of other articles, please visit us at:
PetEducation.com

Complete text of “Pets’ Bill of Rights,” from the February 2002 Doctors Foster & Smith catalogue (44).

Appendix E. Cultural Narrative in Doctors Foster & Smith



Cover featuring a dog that dreams of Santa, from the 2002 Holiday catalogue.