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The Dogs of “Kerfol”: Animals, Authorship, and Wharton

Jennifer Haytock

- 1 Edith Wharton loved dogs, and although she seldom included them in her fiction, her personal writings reveal that she thought about them often and deeply. In a diary begun in May 1924, she reveals: “I am secretly afraid of animals—of *all* animals except dogs, & even of some dogs. I think it is because of the *usness* in their eyes, with the underlying *not-usness* which belies it, & is so tragic a reminder of the lost age when we human beings branched off & left them: left them to eternal inarticulateness and slavery. *Why?* Their eyes seem to ask us” (“Quaderno” 211). In *Life and I*, her unfinished first attempt at an autobiography, Wharton writes:

I always had a deep, instinctive understanding of animals, a yearning to hold them in my arms, a fierce desire to protect them against pain & cruelty. This feeling seemed to have its source in a curious sense of being somehow, myself, an intermediate creature between human beings & animals, & nearer, on the whole, to the furry tribes than to homo sapiens. I felt that I *knew things about them*—their sensations, desires & sensibilities—that other bipeds could not guess; & this seemed to lay on me the obligation to defend them against their human oppressors.

- 2 She then explains that her sense of obligation moved through the phases of “morbid preoccupation” to a “haunting consciousness of the sufferings of animals” that only passed when she worked “to better the condition of animals wherever I happened to be living, & above all to make the work of their protection take a practical rather than a sentimental form” (193). Given these two statements about her feelings toward dogs, Wharton’s story “Kerfol,” her only work in which dogs appear in primary roles, invites a reading of her portrayal of the relationship between humans and animals. In the story, dogs appear in a multi-faceted, multi-signifying system as symbols, ghosts, and actual dogs. “Kerfol” not only encompasses a turning point in the historical debate about the relationship between humans and animals but also attempts to reconcile Wharton’s feelings of kinship with and fear of dogs in their ghostly representation as the victims of class and gender privilege and as the executors of vengeance on behalf of

the silent. In this story, she also tackles the problem of being taken seriously as a writer while addressing a subject not considered serious: the love of dogs.

Wharton, Dogs, and Serious Discourse

- 3 That Wharton loved dogs is well known among scholars of her life and work. In *A Backward Glance*, Wharton claims that "The owning of my first dog made me into a conscious sentient person [...]. How I loved that first 'Foxy' of mine, how I cherished and yearned over and understood him!" (4). Biographers note that Wharton always had dogs in her life and that she grieved for them when they died (Lewis *Biography* 160; Lee 151-52). The Mount, her home in Lenox, Massachusetts, has a cemetery for several of her dogs. She also took a public stance in the movement to protect animals. In the winter of 1905-06, she was active in the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and she gave a speech quoted in the *New York Times* about the need for an open investigation of the society's leader in order to regain public confidence in the organization ("May Ask"). Hermione Lee notes that Wharton also participated in the S.P.C.A.'s debates about the ethics of euthanasia for pets and that she was active in a campaign to make bowls of water publicly available for dogs in New York (152). As the passage quoted earlier indicates, she was careful to make her public work on behalf of animals "practical" and not "sentimental." She kept her feelings for dogs private until late in life, when she wrote about them in *A Backward Glance*. As Amy Kaplan has shown, Wharton struggled to assert her "profession of authorship" by distinguishing herself from other women writers, particularly those "whose work was described by some as pure idleness and by others as conspicuous consumption" (68); further, her critical sense of the "serious" usually required that Wharton exclude the animals she loved from her literary work. Writing about dogs would quickly have undermined her standing as a "serious" writer.¹ Still, as Hildegard Hoeller has demonstrated, even while Wharton bowed to "male literary taste preferring irony, economy, and realism," she recognized that "for a woman writer, adherence to such a male taste at the cost of a sentimental voice means nothing less than a form of self-annihilation" (53). Hoeller illuminates Wharton's use of sentimentalism to portray issues such as motherhood and women's sexual desire (36), to which I would add a love of pets. Although care for animals does not have to be gendered—Wharton's husband Teddy was devoted to them too—the love of pets has been regarded as a sign of the feminine and effeminate.² Mindful of this prejudice, Wharton was careful to avoid sentimental representations of dogs in her public writings (though not in her private letters, in which she occasionally sent messages in her dogs' names³). In "Kerfol," she skirted this problem by producing a "serious" story about dogs by appropriating the ghost story form.
- 4 "Kerfol" first appeared in *Scribner's* and then in *Xingu and Other Stories* in 1916, although it was written before the war (*Letters* 385). In the frame of the tale, the unnamed first-person narrator seeks out a property in Brittany that his host has suggested he might like to purchase. When he arrives at Kerfol, the guardian who is supposed to show him the house fails to appear. As the narrator explores the property by himself, a pack of dogs quietly follows him. When he later explains what happened, his host's wife remembers that "that day" is special and tells him that no dogs live at Kerfol. The framed tale follows—a story distilled by the narrator from the history of a trial, that took place in 1602, in which Anne de Cornault stands accused of murdering her

husband, Yves de Cornault. Although witnesses suggest that the marriage was happy at first, they also believe that Anne suffered too much from loneliness and her lack of children. Her husband brings her a dog for company but later kills it when he suspects that she is committing adultery with a neighbor, Hervé de Lanrivain. He subsequently kills four other dogs to whom Anne has shown kindness until, according to Anne, one night their ghosts appear and maul him to death on the stairs outside her bedroom. Although the judges do not find her guilty, they hand her over to her husband's family, and she eventually goes insane. The story ends in the present with the narrator's meditations on the subsequent life of Anne's supposed lover.

- 5 Wharton's ghost stories, including "Kerfol," are often interpreted as critiques of paternalist and patriarchal marriage that produces and regulates gender and sexuality, and they tend to focus on women silenced by patriarchal power.⁴ "Kerfol" has not received much attention on its own, and in the few extended treatments it has been given, critics have tended to read the dogs as signs of something else. Helen Killoran suggests that the dogs distract the reader from an underlying issue in the story, the violent conflict between the Jesuits and the Jansenists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Jenni Dyman argues that the dogs "symbolize Anne's plight" (78) and that they "represent Anne's suppressed self" (85). Margaret B. McDowell sees them as "mute, uncomprehending victims of an evil that destroys those who challenge its supremacy," much like Anne de Cornault herself. McDowell recognizes, though, that "as perturbed, avenging forces, the dogs acquire a reality so strong as to convince us at times of their actuality as dogs and as spirits" (141). I argue that overlooking the dogs is a result of principles inherent in scholarly and other serious discourse. As theologian Stephen H. Webb shows, we do not take pets and the love of pets seriously because "pets are about excessive emotions, and excess cannot be easily analyzed or articulated" (79). We expect animals to "mean," not to be. But, given Wharton's love of dogs and her need to protect them, reading the dogs as dogs—and the ghosts of the dogs as ghosts of dogs—becomes essential. That Wharton should write a ghost story in which the dogs are not protected by their mistress suggests vulnerability and impotence in women's lives as wives but also articulates Wharton's own desire to protect animals and express what she intuited as "their sensations, desires and sensibilities." This need to protect animals and articulate their feelings has yet to be explored.

Dogs among the Cornaults: Conflicting Views in the Seventeenth Century

- 6 Understanding the dogs in "Kerfol" requires recognizing the changing relationship between animals and humans during the early modern period in Western history. The framed tale takes place just before significant changes occurred in the ways humans in Western Europe perceived animals in relation to themselves. As Keith Thomas explains in his study *Man and the Natural World*, animals in the early Christian era were considered to be in the service of humans, as ordained by God, and were seen as signs of man's dominion on earth. In the seventeenth century, Christian thinkers began to change their views, considering that "nature existed for God's glory," not man's service, and "that [God] cared as much for the welfare of plants and animals as for man" (Thomas 166). Thomas quotes Henry More, author of *An Antidote Against Atheism*

(1655), as claiming that animals were made "to enjoy themselves" (166). Further, theologians and philosophers began to imagine the inner lives of animals:

What this new mode of thinking implied was that it was the *feelings* of the suffering object which mattered, not its intelligence or moral capacity. [...] Or, as Jeremy Bentham observed in 1789 in a famous passage, the question to be asked about animals was neither 'Can they *reason*?' nor 'Can they *talk*?,' but 'Can they *suffer*?' This was a new and altogether more secular mode of approach. It was now possible to attack cruelty to animals without invoking God's intentions at all. The ill-treatment of beasts was reprehensible on the purely utilitarian grounds that it diminished their happiness. Animals had feelings and those feelings ought to be respected. (Thomas 176)

- 7 While Thomas focuses on specifically English attitudes toward animals and acknowledges that French thinking sometimes differed,¹ he notes that Montaigne and other French philosophers largely concurred that God valued animals and humans equally (166). Wharton set the tragedy of the Cornaults before the seventeenth-century shift in religious thought, but she framed her tale with a twentieth-century perspective on animals. More important, she knew the story would be read by a twentieth-century audience. The dogs thus resonate differently for the story's characters and its readers.
- 8 In the framed tale, most of the human characters' attitudes toward the dogs stem from the belief that humans hold dominion in the natural world. Yves de Cornault in particular treats the animals as if they were in his service and makes it clear that they are subject to his mercy. He pays a large sum for the first dog, a "little golden-brown dog," of a breed, probably Pekinese, that was "beginning to be in demand at the French court" (99).² He regards the dog as a sign of his status and as his property. He also views the dog as a symbol within a tradition that places a premium on female chastity. When he comes across his wife sleeping with her dog at her feet, like the effigy on his great-grandmother's tomb, he promises Anne that she too will have her dog at her feet in death if she earns the privilege: "The dog is the emblem of fidelity," he tells her (103). It does not occur to him that the dog has rights or subjectivity. When Anne later reveals in court that her husband strangled the dog, the narrator imagines that "A smile must have passed around the courtroom: in days when any nobleman had a right to hang his peasants—and most of them exercised it—pinching a pet animal's windpipe was nothing to make a fuss about" (102). Indeed, Yves de Cornault hangs a peasant and beats a horse the day after the little dog is found dead (105). Wharton's critique of his class privilege appears in this evocation of cruelty not only to dogs and horses but also to certain classes of humans, namely peasants and women.³ Wharton's readers may have made this connection since, as Diane L. Beers shows in her history of anti-animal cruelty organizations in the United States, the end of the nineteenth century saw public opinion shifting in favor of the humane treatment of animals. Further, Beers explains, "Activists believed that by teaching adults and especially children the core values of their cause, they would cultivate a more compassionate society for everyone" (86). In other words, by the beginning of the twentieth century, treating animals well was considered a sign of a fully moral adult person. By making Yves de Cornault a killer of pet dogs, Wharton brands him as inhumane, to her contemporaries.
- 9 Anne de Cornault does not regard the dog the way her husband and judges do; her perspective reflects the philosophical and theological changes of her time. She first compares the dog to "a bird or a butterfly," but on closer inspection she changes her language: he "looked at her with eyes 'like a Christian's,'" the quotation marks

signifying that the words are Anne's in the court transcript (99). So Anne no longer classes the dog among animals ("a bird or a butterfly") but moves it closer to humans, with a standing in God's eyes and possibly even possessing a soul.⁴ Unlike her husband, she does not view the dog as a symbol: She vows to be "faithful [...] if only for the sake of having my little dog at my feet" (103).⁵ Later, Anne draws a connection between herself and her dog when she testifies in court that she asked her neighbor Hervé de Lanrivain to take her away. The judge asks her why:

"Because I was afraid for my life."

"Of whom were you afraid?"

"Of my husband."

"Why were you afraid of your husband?"

"Because he had strangled my little dog." (102)

- 10 Anne thus equates herself with a dog. Part of her tragedy, as critics have noted, is that not only her husband but her society and its legal system too associate her with her dog in a less-than-human category: both are objects to be purchased and consumed.⁶ In *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Carol Adams points out that the degrading association between women and animals runs both ways: "We oppress animals by associating them with women's lesser status" (72). Wharton makes her argument against the tyrannical treatment of wives by appealing to the twentieth-century sense of how animals should be treated: if readers recognize that Yves de Cornault's behavior toward animals makes him a not-fully-moral being, they may see his treatment of Anne as part of the same vein of immorality. More subtly, Wharton suggests that Western culture devalues dogs as much as women, and to her, both oppressions are equally troubling.
- 11 Part of the problem of understanding both Anne and the dogs is that a love of animals is often seen as a compensation for the lack of children, or even as simply childish in itself. Anne's dogs are seen not as dogs but as child substitutes; local gossip indicates that she treated the dog "as if it had been a child" (99), although there is no evidence that Anne herself sees the dog as a child. As a woman in a patriarchal society, Anne is treated as a child, by her husband, her judges, and her later narrator. And as a woman who loves dogs, she is marked as doubly childish. In the narrator's reconstruction of the trial, the judges view Anne's testimony as "pueril[e]" (106) and listen with impatience: "Dogs again—!" (109). The narrator offers no quotations from the transcripts to prove the judges' dismissal of Anne's story; the bias is his. Wharton must have been familiar with this kind of attitude and may have sensed some of her friends' impatience with her dogs and her care of them.⁷ Her personal writings indicate that she saw dogs and other animals as subjects in themselves with "sensations, desires and sensibilities." While many of Wharton's ghost stories address the issues of erotic and sometimes transgressive love, the secret passion of "Kerfol" is not Anne's alleged love affair with Hervé de Lanrivain but rather her love for her dogs. Her husband, her judges, and her narrator would be able to understand extramarital passion (just as the narrator imagines the judges' boredom with the story of the dogs, he "fanc[ies]" that the judges anticipate Anne's telling of the affair with "a certain relish" [108]), but they cannot see, let alone validate, her love for her pets. Reading Anne's grief for her dogs literally, rather than as code for a frustrated love affair, allows the reader to take Wharton's own attachment to animals seriously.
- 12 As ghosts, the dogs' motivation is far from transparent. The ghosts have been read as vengeful spirits doing the will of Anne de Cornault. In *Sexchanges*, the second volume of their *No Man's Land* trilogy, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that "of course, as

Wharton surely meant to imply, the animals were themselves agents of their mistress's unspeakable and deadly desire" (160). Kathy Fedorko similarly explains that the dogs "clearly speak for the passive Anne" (67). The assumptions of these critics is troubling: according to them, the dogs, or rather the ghosts of the dogs, act only on behalf of someone else and, further, we can know their motives. Certainly they may be protecting their mistress from the onslaught of her husband's wrath, but the deeply disconcerting problem with animals and ghosts is that they cannot talk and make their desires and purposes known through language. In "Kerfol," Wharton represents the dogs as having subjectivity and agency apart from that ascribed them by other characters. In life, the dogs are gentle creatures, variously loving and clever and meek and plaintive (all terms used, admittedly, to describe human behavior and emotions). As ghosts, they are violent and ruthless in their slaying of Yves de Cornault. In Anne's description of the attack, which the narrator transcribes, she tells of them "snarling and panting" and of hearing "a sound like the noise of a pack when the wolf is thrown to them—gulping and lapping" (109). This moment speaks of the fears provoked by dogs, that is, of their potential for violence. The story drives home the duality of dogs: they descend from wolves and yet they are trusted pets. Wharton's description of the dogs in "Kerfol" reminds us of their potential for violence, and her language of the wolf hunt shows that dogs can be as or more violent than the prey they are trained to kill. As much as humans might like to think they know their pets, Anne's horror at her dogs' behavior, or at least that of their ghosts, suggests that the motives of animals can only be guessed at.

Kerfol's Dogs in the Twentieth Century: The Narrator and Serious Literature

- 13 Unlike Yves or Anne de Cornault, the dogs appear in the frame story; they are ghosts by this time, but the narrator does not know that. The ghost dogs thus also allow for a reading of human attitudes toward animals in the early twentieth century. Early in the story, the narrator establishes that he is sensitive to historical atmosphere: "I wanted only to sit there and be penetrated by the weight of [Kerfol's] silence" (90). Eventually he wants more, "not to *see* more [...] but to feel more: feel all the place had to communicate" (91). But, as with any first-person narrator, his presentation of himself is suspect: although he may want to feel more, he may not be capable of feeling what the "place had to communicate." As Elsa Nettels has shown, Wharton's male narrators are often obtuse in some way, frequently biased by the privileges of gender, class, education, and race. Although he sees the ghosts, which suggests that he has some capacity for "feeling," this narrator is no exception, particularly in his patronizing rendering of Anne de Cornault ("She was not a clever woman, I imagine" [108]). Still, there is a gap between the narrator's experience of "feeling" Kerfol and his narration of Anne's story, during which he encounters the ghost dogs. While he has limited ability to sympathize with Anne, he can and does respond to the emotions that he perceives in the dogs. When approached by the Chinese "sleeve-dog," he sees "anger in his large brown eyes" (91), and he notes that the greyhound's "expression was more timid than that of the others" (92). In other words, he recognizes their suffering as suffering:

I had a feeling that they must be horribly cowed to be so silent and inert. Yet they did not look hungry or ill-treated. Their coats were smooth and they were not thin, except the shivering greyhound. It was more as if they had lived a long time with

people who never spoke to them or looked at them: as though the silence of the place had gradually benumbed their busy inquisitive natures. And this strange passivity, this almost human lassitude, seemed to me sadder than the misery of starved and beaten animals. I should have liked to rouse them for a minute, to coax them into a game or a scamper; but the longer I looked into their fixed and weary eyes the more preposterous the idea became. (93-94)

- 14 The narrator empathizes with the dogs' emotional state, but he is not anthropomorphizing. He interprets the cause of their suffering in terms of what would matter in the emotional life of a dog: a lack of human attention. There's no way to know if he is right in his interpretation of these dogs, of course. But the narrator's sympathy for the dogs proves his humanity and, even if he himself has not achieved the moral transition from sympathy with animals to that with humans, his response to the dogs prepares the reader to sympathize with Anne.
- 15 Looking at "Kerfol" through a history of human-animal relationships thus opens up questions about where the story's horror lies. Why and for whom is it frightening? Where does its "thermometrical quality" ("Preface" 273), as Wharton called it, come from? Critics focus on the crimes perpetrated against Anne de Cornault by her husband and a legal system that denies her a voice. But it is not Anne's terrorized ghost that haunts Kerfol; it's the ghosts of the dogs. Although Wharton wrote about the ghost story genre in her "Preface" to *Ghosts*, she never fully articulated what she thought a ghost was. Her stories reveal some of their attributes, however. Monika Elbert argues that in "All Souls," "the ghosts are, psychologically seen, the passions which have been repressed in the individual psyche." In "Kerfol," the horror is not Anne's suffering but rather the loneliness and victimhood of the dogs: "The impression they produced was that of having in common one memory so deep and dark that nothing that had happened since was worth either a growl or a wag" (94). The dogs experience the helplessness and terror of violent death, an emotional trauma that has left them caught between worlds, forever longing for and unable to experience human contact. They cannot speak their fear or pain at the time of their deaths or their loneliness afterward as ghosts. To Wharton, their experience of violence and muteness lies at the heart of the ghost story's meaning.
- 16 Dogs and ghosts share what Wharton calls the characteristics of "usness" and "not-usness." In Wharton's words, both dogs and ghosts are mute or silent, conditions to which she responds with fear. They are also both "left behind"—dogs by the processes of evolution, and ghosts by the need of the living to move on. Wharton articulates the distance between "us" and "not-us" as that of language and, in "Kerfol," the similarities between ghosts and dogs make the ghost story the medium through which she could address animals seriously. That is, if recognizing cruelty to dogs allows readers to see cruelty to women, understanding the silence of ghosts may help readers to hear the silence of dogs. While the dogs cannot be communicated with through language, the narrator shows that they may be approached through feeling. Just as ghosts may be seen by those who are sensitive to them, dogs may be understood by those who are open to them and who can bridge the gap between "us" and "not-us" by being aware that animals have their own "sensations, desires & sensibilities." Dogs may communicate through, not in spite of, their silence.
- 17 Wharton's "curious sense of being, somehow, myself, an intermediate creature between human beings and animals, and nearer, on the whole, to the furry tribes than to homo sapiens" is one manifestation of her struggles with silence, of her fear that her own

voice may be silenced. At the same time, this "curious sense" also seems to have offered her not only an identity from which to speak and write but also one that avoids the complicated and damaging systems of identification enforced in the human world. She could mediate for dogs and protect them, and she could also be of them, a position reflecting not negatively of humanity but rather positively of animal-hood. One senses that Wharton regarded belonging "to the furry tribes" as a privilege, despite their loneliness and terrible muteness. As she wrote in *A Backward Glance*, she transformed herself from her in-between state into a human one through her care for dogs. Webb suggests that the excess associated with the love of dogs offers something spiritually rewarding: "dogs are like a gift, a grace undeserved, that releases us into an economy of abundance, where the economic laws of scarcity and therefore competition no longer apply and where instead we feel ourselves the beneficiaries of a wealth that is actualized only as we give it away, and in giving we see something that we could not see before. In this way, dogs are part of the antieconomy of giving, generosity, and grace" (103-04). Loving dogs is emotional excess, and Wharton found a way to make this excess productive in a literary economy that did not value it.

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NOTES

1. Wharton was not alone in this concern. In his 1983 introduction to *Flush*, Virginia Woolf's biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's dog, Trekkie Ritchie quotes Woolf's diary, in which she wrote of her fears that critics would call her book "'charming,' delicate, ladylike. And it will be popular... Now. I must not let myself believe that I'm simply a ladylike prattler" (xiii).

2. In her recent *Homeless Dogs and Melancholy Apes*, Laura Brown describes the "immoderate love" of the nineteenth-century trope of the "lady and the lapdog" (85), which had, she argues, far-reaching implications in that excessive love for an animal created the possibility of sympathy for oppressed peoples, including slaves (81).

3. William Tyler recounts some of her letters in which Linky, Wharton's last Pekinese, "speaks." In one letter, Wharton and Linky congratulate Tyler and his wife "on the immense privilege of having under your roof a member of the Imperial race;" a later letter is signed in Linky's name (102-03).

4. See Kathy Fedorko and Jenni Dyman, among others, for readings of gender in Wharton's ghost stories. See Candace Waid particularly on Wharton's use of the ghost story to convey anxieties about women's silence, 176-178. See also Richard A. Kaye for a reading of the ghost stories that addresses homosexuality.

1. For example, human names for dogs signified affection in England, but never took hold in France (Thomas 114-15).

2. The appearance of a Pekinese in the story is an anachronism, as the breed was not introduced in the West until the nineteenth century (Thomas 107).

3. Ann L. Patten offers a reading of Wharton's early ghost stories that "relies on a definition of the uncanny as relating to cusp experiences, such as when the old value system encounters the new" (1). The same clash of values takes place in "Kerfol," with seventeenth-century aristocratic privilege coming under scrutiny by the twentieth-century narrator.

4. As biographer R. W. B. Lewis shows, Wharton was frustrated by the Catholic Church's refusal to grant that animals have immortal souls (*Biography* 160). She was not alone in her belief. Thomas argues that despite the teachings of the Church, animals had long been popularly believed to have souls or at least to have something of the "divine spark" (138). The seventeenth century saw much debate on the issue, and while many heretics declared that neither man nor beast had a soul, some religious figures argued the opposite: "In the 1770s the Calvinist divine Augustus Toplady declared that beasts had souls in the true sense, adding that he had never heard an argument against the immortality of animals which could not be equally urged against the immortality of man" (Thomas 140).

5. In 1920, Wharton published several "Lyrical Epigrams" in the *Yale Review*, one of which was about her dog:

My little old dog:
A heart-beat
At my feet

See Lee, 643. Although a dog at a woman's feet is a symbol in "Kerfol," to Wharton, having a dog at one's feet is a moment of emotional and kinetic connection between two living creatures.

6. See Dyman 77, and White 17.

7. Percy Lubbock reveals that Gaillard Lapsley referred to Wharton's dogs as "those damned Pekinese" (139). Lee reports that Wharton's friendship with the young Byzantine scholar Steven Runciman may have fallen apart when he refused to pamper her dogs (707).

ABSTRACTS

Edith Wharton aimait les chiens, et elle a exprimé la force de ce sentiment dans deux passages-clés de ses écrits autobiographiques. « Kerfol » est la seule de ses œuvres publiées qui accorde une place très

importante aux chiens : cette nouvelle nous invite à nous interroger sur la représentation du rapport entre l'homme et l'animal. Wharton utilise la structure du récit enchâssé pour évoquer l'histoire des relations entre l'homme et l'animal en Europe occidentale, qu'elle intègre à sa critique de l'oppression des femmes dans le mariage. La présence de fantômes de chiens dans cette nouvelle s'explique par la crainte de ne pas être prise au sérieux en tant qu'écrivain et neutralise les stéréotypes associés à l'amour des animaux par l'intégration du texte à la tradition fantastique. Le refus de la critique de s'intéresser aux chiens de « Kerfol » témoigne d'une incapacité à reconnaître les animaux comme sujets à part entière : la critique s'obstine à ne considérer les animaux que comme les signes d'autre chose qu'eux-mêmes. Ce n'est qu'en reconnaissant les chiens en tant que tels que le lecteur peut comprendre la profondeur de la cruauté morale dans cette nouvelle.

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