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The purpose of this thesis is to imagine a posthumanist ethical comportment in the wake of injury and in the face of species disgust. I specify a posthumanist ethical comportment versus a posthumanist ethics to recognize the multiplicity of ethical bearings and beings with others rather than a single compact, deployable ethics. There is not a right, ethical answer to unethical situations and to speak to this impossibility to also speak to the incoherency of beings and hopes. This thesis is a part of the always failing project of dismantling the human and the violences that accompany humanisms through the unknowability of creature-beings. I bring together the work of scholars in feminist theory, queer theory, posthumanist critical animal studies, ecofeminisms, performance studies, critical race studies, and feminist science studies, tracing the implications of their work for posthumanisms and each of their relationships to my concepts of disidentification with the human and/as doing creature hope. I particularly draw on the work of José Muñoz and his conceptions of disidentification and hope. Unique in its open analysis beyond racialized or gendered analogy, this thesis examines the function of suffering in posthumanisms, what interspecies hopes, fears, pleasures, and anxieties reveal about the human, and interspecies sexual intimacies that might be known as bestiality, in order to imagine what it means to treat others well. Critiquing notions of empathy and ethics that rely on likeness or proximity to the human or human affinity or knowledge practices, I explore what it means to have and practice creature hope.

DISIDENTIFICATION WITH THE HUMAN AND/AS DOING CREATURE HOPE

by

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CHAPTER I
BEING AND WRITING, WITH HOPE

Introduction

In Fall 2013 I entered my Master's program brimming with energy and what I can only describe as a naïve readiness to push the feminist academy towards a posthumanism(s) that would surely attend to the violences and exploitations of both human and non-human animals. It was, and remains, so clear to me the connections between the unbearable sufferings of all creatures made Other. Yet, the unknowable promise that had previously sustained me wore away as I was constantly confronted with the abject agony of so many beings unattended to even within a discipline seeking to dismantle systems of violence, the limitations of my own work with regard to those beings, and perhaps most of all the impossibility of writing myself out of the sufferings I sought to extinguish. When it came time to decide upon a thesis topic, I knew that at this point I could only write hopefully, without recourse to and mostly against the human, beyond appealing to the sentience of non-human animals, both within and against the seeping liberal humanism that extends "human" protections to less-than-human and non-human beings marginalized by its own pernicious workings. I knew that I had to write both with the knowledges I had somehow come into and the painfully eager hope I had seemingly lost.

This thesis will be focused on what it means to disidentify with the human and *do* creature hope. The questions undergirding my exploration include: Must we always have recourse to the human? What possibilities for creatures does this preclude? How can the texts that I engage with in this thesis be read as moments of disidentification with the human and of doing creature hope? Where does disidentifying with the human take us, as creature-beings disparately together in our lives and finitudes? How can we consider the infamous question of the animal without reifying corporeal limitations in theorizing matter at the level of species? What does it mean to predicate relief on sentience and the extending outward of protections based on experiences of/in the body typically codified as human? Does locating redress specifically on these often (but not always) suffering bodies in fact foreclose new possibilities for human and non-human animal subjectivities? What would the redress of non-human animal bodies look like without explicit claims of sentience, suffering, or even animality itself? Is this possible? Desirable? Can “creature” offer us a new direction for hoping against the violences suffered by human, less-than-human, and non-human beings and hoping apart from defining beings by the very violences they may or may not suffer? What does it mean for beings to *do* creature hope together? These questions are important for many reasons which I will expand on in this proposal, but perhaps mostly because I do not think that we can look to the human, the animal, or even to sentience anymore. Going to sentience seems less useful to me now because, as I will discuss in the second chapter, non-human animal sentience and suffering are often conflated; that is, I have found that in many

posthumanist works non-human animal sentience is always already suffering and other modes of being are eclipsed by pain. Furthermore, Jeremy Bentham's question that Jacques Derrida found so compelling: "Can they suffer?" alludes to a human that asks the question and extends human protections already denied to so many human Others (*The Animal* 27) Perhaps it is time to think of creatures, and not-necessarily-new ways of being, matter-ing, and mattering together, hopefully.

This thesis is inspired by and aims to bring together primarily, but not exclusively, the works of Jacques Derrida, Cary Wolfe, Donna Haraway, Stacy Alaimo, Mel Chen, Monique Allewaert, and José Muñoz. This project grapples with scholars who work in the areas of feminist theory, queer theory, posthumanist critical animal studies, ecofeminisms, performance studies, critical race studies, and feminist science studies in ways that I personally have not come across to date. My interest in bringing these theorists together is less about creating a neat, linear argument regarding our need to dispense with the human or with sentience altogether and more about onto-epistemological daydreaming on *doing* creature hope. I feel an urgency to look at hope and futurity in creative ways that do not mark or maintain species boundaries, particularly violent to and exploitive of those beings currently understood as less-than-human and non-human. What this thesis offers is an organic, generative, and undeniably messy exploration of creature hope as a verb.

It is worthwhile to note that in this thesis I am engaging with many works that are not labeled posthumanist, for example, one of the main concepts in this piece is that of

disidentification using the work of José Muñoz. That the main inspiration for this thesis is not considered posthumanist seems crucial to discuss, as it highlights what kind of work can be understood as posthumanist and what kind of work is missing from posthumanisms. I refuse to rest with posthumanist work; I need concepts that are not bound by typical posthumanist understandings of sentience as suffering. I need explorations of being in which non-human animals do not become objects of knowledge, in which their suffering is not fetishized, and in which non-human animal feeling and being are not tied to human feeling and understanding. In this thesis I draw upon a genealogy of not knowing, and while Muñoz's work does not explicitly discuss non-human animals or resist the human(isms) in ways that are normatively posthumanist, it opens possibilities for considering beings while resisting positioning them as objects of knowledge ready for theoretical consumption. That Muñoz does not explicitly talk about humans/non-humans leads me to wonder what kind of work can be labeled as posthumanist as well as what potentially groundbreaking work may be refused in the name of posthumanism itself. What seems so useful and important to me about disidentification is that it is always both with and against dominant culture, creating new relational and political possibilities through "emergent identities in difference." (*Disidentifications* 6-7) Muñoz's work allows me to think about disidentification with the human as not a conscious choice of fully accepting or rejecting the human, but a decoding and recoding of being capable of a unique and unapologetic candidness regarding the delineation of the human. I find it promising and exciting that working

against the human does not necessarily mean working *outside* of the human, as the latter is ultimately impossible and any claim to working outside of the human seems very much humanist. Given that I am working with the concept of disidentification with the human in relation to [creature] hope, I want to be clear about how hope is being used here. While Oxford Dictionaries defines hope as foremost “a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen,” Muñoz uses hope to discuss that which has yet to be imagined, as that which cannot be expected yet is very much desired (“Hope”). In other words, hope cannot be specifically anticipated, located, or known; any certainty forecloses hope itself. When I say “hope beyond the human” I do not mean to locate hope as spatiotemporally after the human, but rather to gesture to the hope that arises from the uncertainty of the human. What is crucially hopeful about disidentification with the human as creature hope, then, is that it is always open to its own reimagining.

Of course, in my work on creature hope I am not the first to suggest that we need to turn to terms and theoretical frameworks not circumscribed by the human/animal binary, especially since human and animal have never truly existed in binary opposition to one another. In *The Animal That Therefore I Am* Jacques Derrida proposes “*ecce animot*” or “*l’animot*” to denote the importance of recognizing the multiplicity of non-human animal creatures and the violence inherent in singularizing “the animal.” The aforementioned terms are a crucial aspect of Derrida’s plea to “envisage the existence of ‘living creatures,’ whose plurality cannot be assembled within the single figure of an animality that is simply opposed to humanity.” (47) Donna Haraway imagines the

conceptual possibilities of “companion species” as different species living and evolving together, keeping company as “messmates” in life in *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* as well as in later works (*When Species Meet* 17). Haraway argues that “companion species” is more a verb than a noun, as it is about interacting in relationships filled with both pain and pleasure, labor and play, pointing to how human and non-human species cannot be analyzed apart from their complex relations with one another (*Companion Species* 18). Stacy Alaimo looks towards “trans-corporality” in *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*, defined there as “thinking across bodies” and the ways “in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world.” (2) Alaimo argues that such a term and theoretical site “opens up a mobile space that acknowledges the often unpredictable and unwanted actions of human bodies, non-human creatures, ecological systems, chemical agents, and other actors.” (2) In *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* Mel Chen claims that:

Using animacy as a central construct ... helps us theorize current anxieties around the production of humanness in contemporary times, particularly with regard to humanity’s partners in definitional crime: animality (as its analogue or limit), nationality, race, security, environment, and sexuality. Animacy activates new theoretical formations that trouble and undo stubborn binary systems of difference ... animacy has the capacity to rewrite conditions of intimacy, engendering different communalisms and revising biopolitical spheres, or, at least, how we might theorize them. (3)

Chen considers animacy with/as affect and affectivity, through animacy hierarchies most broadly categorized as words, animals, and metals. In *Ariel’s Ecology: Plantations,*

Personhood, and Colonialism in the American Tropics Monique Allewaert dedicates an entire chapter to “parahumanity, a condition of fragmentation between the human and the animal,” in order to consider the literal and figurative splintering of colonized black subjects (98). Allewaert’s parahuman refers to the perversion of the human, a continuously open state of relation to both humans and animals that precludes any recovery of the human.

Given the brilliance and incredible potential of the aforementioned works, why “creature” and “creature hope?” Creature does not work to ground the human, maintain human difference, open the human, or extend it outwards; rather, it originates from the inhuman, the ahuman. Creature already exists in a space of alterity and it is in a constant state of collapse from its unknowable boundaries. Creature is not palatable, it is not comfortable, and it should not be. While “human” and “non-human” so easily slip into the less-than-human, into the absence and loss of something that humans must apparently reclaim for less-than-human humans and for non-human animals, creature is not tethered to the human/animal binary nor does it find recourse in the human. Animal both encompasses the human and makes possible the distinction of the human, but “creature” is, according to Oxford dictionaries, foremost “an animal, as distinct from a human being” (“Creature”). Although Urban Dictionary may not be the most credible source academically speaking, I find it quite interesting and telling that the most popular entry for “creature” on that cite is “Any human being with an appearance or behavior so unique that their identity as a homo sapien is questionable,” a definition which alludes to a

popular understanding of creature as the in/ahuman (“Creature”). Creature itself signifies an uncertainty about veritable forms of life while creature-beings undoubtedly call upon a corporeality and liveliness that is something near animate, near sentient, but not fully knowable. Creature, and more specifically creature hope, are not my claims to having dismantled the human or my answers to how to dismantle the human; rather, they are terms and frameworks that help me think through about what it means to disidentify with the human, and dismantling the human as always to come. I find it important to keep creature open and somewhat nebulous, not only to hold open the possibilities of creature but also to allow for its dissolution; creature may or may not be useful in other times and spaces, and part of the hope of creature is that it may later lend itself to frameworks not yet conceived or conceivable. I understand creature to be a crucial theoretical departure from Derrida’s “*ecce animot*,” Haraway’s “companion species,” Alamio’s “trans-corporeality,” Chen’s “animacy,” and Allewaert’s “parahuman.”

“*Ecce animot*” and/or “*l’animot*,” while working against the constructed monolithic “animal” that continually violates and haunts all non-human animal life, may collapse into the very same human as animal/distinct from animal trap that regularly but dissimilarly denies human, less-than-human, and non-human animal beings a hopeful existence. Furthermore, I find Derrida’s insistence on the separation of humankind even from within “*ecce animot*” and/or “*l’animot*,” troubling, especially the explicit claim that any kind of work that does not attend to human difference, whatever that may be, is asinine. That being said, I greatly appreciate Derrida’s attention to “the stakes in always

seeking to draw the limit, the unique and indivisible limit held to separate human from animal,” although his textual preservation of the human and human difference may very well do this limiting work (*The Animal* 48). I am inspired by both his contemplation beyond “the animal” and by his nod to “living creatures,” although I will not qualify creatures with living, as that forecloses the possibilities of *doing* creature hope with those beings that are no longer living, not yet living, or conceived of by humanisms as never living at all (47). Creature as it will be used in this thesis does not seek to entirely define the beings it may refer to or to engage with the specific limits of creature itself, but simultaneously will attempt to grapple with beings that may experience suffering in ways that other posthumanist terms and frameworks that attempt to theorize non-human beings and matter do not, and I believe, cannot.

Haraway’s “companion species” investigates kinships between various human and non-human life forms as collective action and as a “political act of hope” (*Companion Species* 3). She argues that both cyborgs and the broader category of companion species speak to how beings live and evolve together, muddling boundaries of the human/non-human, nature/culture, and other liberal humanist binaries (4). The concept of “companion species” beautifully explores encounters and sites “between” species in all their messiness and ambiguity, but it also relies upon the delineation of humans as *Homo sapiens* with special biological and historical status (*Haraway Reader* 2). Moreover, “companion species” insists on an unmistakably human knowledge and curiosity about non-human animals, tethering scientific knowledge about and social and

political respect for non-human beings together. Haraway asserts that “companion species need to understand their messmates” but this project of understanding is one undertaken by the human (*When Species Meet* 30). Why must we understand non-human animals? Why do we assume that we can know or understand? And if this responsibility of understanding is not limited to the human, why should non-human animals be called upon to partake in such work? Haraway’s preoccupation with attaining more, *truer* knowledge, especially scientifically significant knowledge, about non-human beings deemed to be companion species suffocates non-human animal being and feeling with human knowing.

“Trans-corporeality” primarily deals with the ways in which human corporeality constantly comes into being through more-than human nature. While Alamio claims that such a concept and theoretical framework reconceives of culture as always already nature, and refuses to see nature as a passive landscape to be acted upon by human culture, framing human corporeality with and against non-human nature while not attending to non-human corporealities may function to reinscribe the passivity of non-human beings. Furthermore, the most attended to subject in theorizing through trans-corporeality always seems to be the human, therefore I question whether the possibilities of trans-corporeality are already given over to the human in any form. Indeed, while addressing how trans-corporeality may be read as anthropocentric, Alamio argues that its promise extends from the human outward to non-human beings and the environment. I find creature a more useful concept as it resists locating theoretical, social, ethical, and

political possibilities in one species, or envisioning beings in a concentric circle through which these possibilities may be dispersed.

“Animacy,” a slippery term that alludes to the “quality of agency, awareness, mobility, and liveness.” is utilized by Chen to simultaneously contemplate binaries of difference and hierarchies of being and thingness and to imagine the racialized and sexualized biopolitical scope of the (in)animate (M. Chen 2). My work on creature hope is greatly informed by Chen’s work on animacies, but I find myself wondering if animacies can attend to not only the ways beings sometimes suffer at the hands of one another but also the hope that beings can do together. I imagine creature to occupy a mostly-unlocatable theoretical space within animacies, in a realm in which the animate/inanimate cannot be delineated. However, creature does not occupy the entirety of animacies, which contains words, metals—material and immaterial objects that cannot feel in the way beings can, although I cannot say what or who those beings are or might be. In this thesis I am concerned with hoping within and against the violences that creatures may come into being through, and I question whether animacy can index hope in the ways I imagine that creature may be able to. Although I consider creature and creature hope a departure from Allewaert’s “parahuman,” I absolutely do not want to dismiss the parahuman or to position creature in opposition to it. Rather, I would like to consider creature and creature hope alongside of the parahuman and alternative human(ism)s proposed by black studies scholars which I will discuss further in the literature review. My concern regarding parahuman is that, alone, it may not be the best

equipped framework for taking the conditions, agencies, possibilities and hopes of and for non-human animal beings into account. Also, while parahumanity refuses to cement into hybrid identities for good reason on which I will elaborate in the literature review, I do not want to foreclose the potential of hybridities for creature and creature hope.

I have come across a number of scholars who mention creature, including Derrida, Chen, and Alamio, but I have yet to encounter any work that dwells on creature as a theoretical opening for how beings matter or offer it as a possibility of doing hope. Many of these scholars are concerned with and warn against collapsing difference and while I do not deny difference I am also not interested in marking or maintaining it. That is, my interest is not in knowing or marking difference, but rather a radical difference of knowability that precludes any reservation of presence and certainty for the human. I believe that the constant insistence on difference in part comes from a desire to maintain the human and human privileges in some form, and through creature hopes I want to trouble this preservation of the human. Chen's claim that "difference does not collapse even when we wish it away" seems especially relevant for my work on disidentifying with the human and/or doing creature hopes (M. Chen 93). What kind of activity is "wishing away" difference? Is there hope to be found in "wishing away?" This action seems important to address in relation to disavowing the human in light of the human deciding/naming/benefiting of and from species difference. What the concept of creature throws into sharp relief is the impossibility of excavating the human from the multiple matrixes of power in which it is embedded, yet, for all the possibilities of creature and

creature hope I also need to contend with its relationship to the ethical racialized stakes of relinquishing claims to the human. For example, it is important to consider that the act of “wishing away” [species] difference could very easily fall in line with the unattended whiteness in posthumanist projects. I previously argued that creature is already in/ahuman, and this means that I must constantly attend to the proximity of blackness to the animal and to creature. Since this project is framed through posthumanisms, I must address the uninterrogated whiteness in posthumanisms as well as the posthumanist conflation of liberal humanisms with all humanisms and of the human as man with all humans.

Although I resist strict definitions and applications of creature, especially given that in this thesis it is opened through hope as an impossibility of imagining, I do not want to present creature as a word without fraught meanings and histories that complicate its usage for this project. The origin of “creature” is the Latin *creatura* “a created being,” which became “creature” in Middle English, defined as “something created” (“Creature”). “Create” is from Latin *creat-* meaning “produced,” becoming “create” in Late Middle English to mean “form out of nothing” in the supernatural sense (“Create”). For me, this brief etymology of creature presents two main issues: first, the relationship of “creature” to the divine, and second, the presumption of “creature” as a finished product. However, I argue that these issues also point towards the verb capacity of creature hope. “Creature” can acknowledge that beings do not simply exist as they are, but come into being through intertwining power structures and therefore, are open to

infinite re-creation. Creature need not be static nor necessarily created by a supernatural being. What if we reconceived of “creature” in a more flexible manner that could account for the vulnerability of being forms while disrupting the ties of creature to concentrated sources of control? Doing creature hope then, alludes to beings becoming and re-becoming through their unimaginable desires. Susan Stryker also imagines the potential of injurious terms such as “monster” and “creature” in “My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix,” calling for the reclaiming of words such as “monster” and “creature” in order to approach an “egalitarian relationship with non-human material being” and to disempower those who might use the words violently (240). The potential Stryker sees in “creature” and “monster” is not merely the power in reclaiming those terms, but of conceiving embodiment in a way that does not have to be readable or knowable. Without analogizing the subjects in my and Stryker’s work, occupying “creature” is about the ungovernability of the body. Her words both embolden my proposal to turn towards creature and caution me against calling upon those most harmed by “creature” to bear the burden of reclaiming it. “Creature” and similar terms such as “animal” and “beast” have been used to denote racial difference, dehumanizing persons of color and justifying their exploitations. I refuse to ask persons of color to reclaim “creature” when they have historically been denied access to the human via “creature;” instead I would like to consider the ways in which marginalized humans are already disidentifying with the human through resistant writing and performance and how these disidentifications are hopeful for less-than-human and non-human beings. Despite the

issues with “creature,” I still find it important to utilize because there is no word that exists outside of the problems of the human and its reliance on Others’ object status; no new, unfraught word can continually point towards this dependency.

Several critical race studies and scholars have mapped the ethical stakes of disavowing or abandoning the human. In “Blackness, Animality, and the Unsovereign” Che Gossett details how black radical thinkers have consistently addressed the proximity of Blackness to animality in the colonial imagination and created an opening for human and non-human abolition that critical animal studies scholars have largely ignored. Indeed, posthumanist accounts of the human often presume a fairly neat human/animal binary where the human is always granted general rights and immunities, ignoring that whiteness is a precondition of human coherence. Gossett frames abolition as an “unfinished project” and a “means of worlding and ‘becoming with.’” This “becoming with” splinters the human and offers a relational framework for understanding entanglements of Black human and non-human animal lives and deaths. Sylvia Wynter’s “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument” works to wrestle the human away from its colonial overrepresentation as Man. Wynter argues that the human as Man is not the only modality of human, and therefore this project must account for the humans and humanisms that do not underpin racialized and colonized Western logics as well as for how disidentification with the human may or may not emerge as disidentification with human as Man. In *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black*

Feminist Theories of the Human Alexander Weheliye argues that the Western conception of the human exists through the exclusion of persons of color and is therefore profoundly racialized. Weheliye imagines *habeas viscus*, which calls upon the racialized hierarchies etched in human flesh, as an “object of knowledge” that points towards the decolonization of the human (4). His conception of flesh is somewhat similar to my conception of creature; as both refuse to release the tension between the problems and possibilities of inhabiting these concepts. Weheliye calls out posthumanisms and critical animal studies for synonymizing human with Man, for assuming the human to be a universal category that all humans have access to, and for demanding that it must be gotten beyond, instead urging us to consider the shapes that the human and humanity has taken for and by those outside its parameters. Given these works, I am driven to consider disidentification with the human as Man within and beside of alternative modalities of the human. Must the human always be marked by non-human violences? Must claims to the human always threaten non-human beings?

I am offering creature hope as an unlocatable critical apparatus that is able to grapple with intimacies, desires, and hopes across and against species boundaries, but this hope that creature-beings may do together is not always based on a physical encounter nor does it necessarily rely on love or community. I am thinking about “trash animals,” non-human animal species that are viewed as “alien, invasive, or destructive to human enterprise.” (Nagy 5) A creature hope predicated on lovability and physical proximity excludes species that humans generally fear (eg. spiders), see as carrying disease (eg.

rats), or consider pests (eg. gulls). I am also thinking about humans with bodies that are sick and infectious, that may be seen as grotesque, with bodily fluids oozing and seeping in contagion. I am thinking about humans with depression, anxieties, or other mental health issues that may not want to be with others but still need hope as well as those humans who are differently abled, who may not be neurotypical, and may not be able to communicate in the way normative notions of love and community often require. Creature hope is not always based on affection, love, sympathy, affinity, emotional connection, or community. When I speak of creatures being and be-ing together, I am not alluding to a romanticized notion of togetherness or hope. Why must creatures be loveable to have hope? Justice? To be in community with one another?

This thesis springs from my interest in an ethical comportment that does not align non-human animal feeling with human feeling and/or understanding.¹ Disidentifying with the human and creature hope are not about imagining oneself as the non-human animal or human empathy for non-human animal. As Saidiya Hartman argues in *Scenes of Subjection*, empathy is tenuous, unreliable, and often a violence in and of itself. Furthermore, endless, loose, dramatized iterations of suffering that are often meant to provoke empathy may make one familiar with and indifferent to the pain of Others. Empathy also requires one to participate in Others' suffering, both through viewing and response (Hartman 3-4). Dr. Randy Laist's recent opinion piece in *The New York Times'*

¹ I draw my understanding of this project as a work on a posthumanist ethical comportment versus a posthumanist ethics from a personal communication with thesis committee member Dr. Sarah Cervenak. 21 October 2015.

“The Stone,” a forum for philosophers, exemplifies the need to conceive of disidentifying with the human and creature hope apart from empathy, affinity, and/or community. In “Why I Identify as Mammal” Laist details his reasons for identifying as mammal and contends that this mode of identification could resist rampant anthropocentrism and human destruction of the non-human world. He argues that despite the commonalities he shares with beings such as tuna fish or mosquitos, awareness of those commonalities “doesn’t compel [him] on a visceral level” while what he shares with other mammalian beings such as bears and squirrels arouse an “inherent sympathy that is at the center of my being” (Laist). Relying on human impulses towards other beings is potentially anthropocentric and leaves non-humans subject to the unpredictable and dissonant whims of humans. Laist’s empathetic capacities are bound by arbitrary species boundaries he himself insists upon:

... there is a danger in pushing the borders of affiliation so far out that they no longer have any resonance. Placing an emphasis on our mammalian identity is a reasonable compromise between a restrictive anthropocentrism and a vapid all-inclusiveness...drawing the line of sympathy at the base of the mammal branch on the tree of life provides a stable...frame of reference for considering the senses of both similitude and otherness through which we experience the non-human world.

In contrast to disidentification with the human, this concept of mammalian identification treats species identification as a choice, ignoring that one cannot simply cast off the human. Furthermore, Laist’s mode of inter-species identification remains dependent on human exception and is greatly limited by human resonance and reason as well as the

demand for the stability of interspecies relations. I am not denying that occupying and doing creature hope is affective but I want to resist giving these concepts over to human stirrings. That Laist deems shifting inter- and intra- species connections and intimacies that do not depend on the affinity of the human to be dangerous and vapid is particularly striking, as it announces such modes of being as a threat to the delineation and special status of the human.

Literature Review

For the purposes of this thesis, I am using creature in a primarily posthumanist critical animal studies and ecofeminist sense rather than locating creature in the realm of posthumanist theories of the cyborg, transhuman, and/or superhuman, which fall within or can easily slip into intensifications of the human and humanisms. At this particular moment I am less interested in prosthetics and technologies than in the beings that posthumanist ecofeminisms and animal studies have named as sentient: the creatures we normatively call “humans” and “animals” or “human and non-human animals.” I eventually hope to expand this project in such a vein, but that is currently beyond the scope of my exploration. Although I will engage with many scholars and artists in this thesis, my exploration will be primarily guided by the works of Jacques Derrida, Cary Wolfe, Donna Haraway, Stacy Alaimo, Mel Chen, Monique Allewaert, and José Muñoz. The first six scholars have developed their own terms in attempts to engage with the non-human world, while the last has developed a term that I believe has incredible potential

for posthumanisms. In this literature review I will walk through these concepts, such as trans-corporeality, animacy, and parahumanity, and engage with them separately so as not to have them lapse into one another or to have one concept eclipse others.

Jacques Derrida's works on "the question of the animal" are perhaps some of the most popular philosophical texts in posthumanisms, fundamentally challenging the human naming of those called animal, and I feel it is important to use them to guide disidentification with the human and creature hopes. I will chiefly engage with *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida's infamous address inspired by his experience of being naked before his companion cat, asking what the cat sees and thinks gazing upon his human nakedness through the cat's own non-sense of nudity. That is, the animal does not experience its own nakedness as nakedness in the way that the human does, which leads Derrida to ask "Who?" Who is looking? Who am I? "Who am I (following)?" (*The Animal* 6) Derrida is interested in relational modes of being and specifically what is at stake in the question of the animal, and being after, near, with, and before the animal. When Derrida writes that "*To Follow* and *to be after* will not only be the question, and the question of what we call the animal" he is setting up a conversation that deals with who can look and respond in its own name (10). For Derrida, this ordinary situation of looking at the cat looking at him—and thus seeing himself as naked—marks an intensely philosophical moment in which the absolute alterity of the other becomes clear. He ponders being with the animal and what that means for his own subjectivity: "The animal is there before me, there next to me, there in front of me-I who am (following) after it.

And also, therefore, since it is before me, it is behind me. It surrounds me.” (11) This following, this trace, is always there simultaneously in, through, containing, and surpassing the encounter with the animal. After Derrida’s vulnerable moment of nakedness before his cat, he laments that he can be relieved by receding back into the human and its account of non-human life. The human, naming itself into existence, lingers at its own threshold, which leads me to question whether disidentification with the human is a distinctly human practice within creature hope. Derrida speaks to this endlessness and groundlessness of the human, arguing that “As with every bottomless gaze, as with the eyes of the other, the gaze called ‘animal’ offers to my sight the abyssal limit of the human: the inhuman or the ahuman, the ends of man, that is to say, the bordercrossing from which vantage man dares to announce himself to himself, thereby calling himself by the name that he believes he gives himself.” (12) This passage does more than hint at the impossibility of working in any way apart from the human because for Derrida the human endlessly names and defines itself, thus disidentification with the human must always acknowledge its non-place in this limitlessness space. Whenever I think of this passage, I imagine a fun house full of mirrors, infinite reflections forming a human void. The human is announced to itself, by itself, unable to break from the loop of human named presence.

Derrida finds Bentham’s question “Can they suffer?” to be more important and useful than traditional questions of whether the animal can think, reason, or speak because it is a question founded on inability rather than ability (*The Animal* 27). In other

words, for Derrida the question of suffering is a radical departure because it is based on non-power/passivity rather than power/capability and leaves little to no room for doubting its existence. I admit that I find this question compelling as well, as have many others that posit suffering as the very thing that demands the ethical and political consideration of non-human animals. However, it is crucial to explore how this question may ultimately may work to uphold the human by extending it outwards. Who is asking the question? Who will relieve the suffering? Why is the non-human animal defined here only by the pain it suffers at the hands of those beings called human? In my introduction, I outlined Derrida's "*ecce animot*" and/or "*l'animot*" which he proposes to signify the plurality of non-human animal life and work against the human framing of animal in the singular. I would like to briefly return to that in order to elaborate on my concerns regarding suffering as an imperative for consideration of non-human beings. I previously shared my hesitations of using "*ecce animot*" and/or "*l'animot*" because they may collapse into the human as animal/distinct from animal trap given Derrida's insistence on maintaining the human; reading the question of suffering along with Derrida's new terms for the animal(s), I wonder if this plurality is already made singular through the insistence that the non-human animal is always suffering at the hands of humans and must be rehabilitated by those same humans.

Derrida's "'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject," is an interview with Derrida that primarily interrogates the question "Who comes after the subject?" (255) In this work I am most interested in Derrida's assertion that the blurred oppositional limit

between human and animal and the extended limits between animal and vegetal, living and non-living has rendered the ethical question of the animal not one of subjectivity or sentience in relation to being eaten, but rather *how* the other should be eaten, hence Derrida's larger question of what it means to eat well since, after all, one must eat ("Eating Well" 282). Despite Derrida's sympathy for beings that may suffer he does not follow the question to vegetarianism or veganism, what he calls sacrificing sacrifice (human, of the animal). This piece poses interesting questions for disidentification with the human, if the human is marked by sacrificing the animal. Does disidentifying with the human include sacrificing sacrifice? Does sacrifice preclude hope for non-human creatures?

Cary Wolfe, a scholar at the forefront of posthumanisms, also fundamentally informs this thesis. In *What Is Posthumanism?* Wolfe frames posthumanism as both before and after humanism but not after the human itself: "posthumanism in my sense isn't posthuman at all- in the sense of being 'after' our embodiment has been transcended- but is only *posthumanist*, in the sense that it opposes the fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy, inherited from humanism itself." (xv) Wolfe's work can be read as an unsettling of the proper subject and the humanist assumptions that ground and reproduce it. He claims that posthumanism in this form is "not posthuman or antihuman but rather simply *posthumanist*" which outlines his larger project of working towards and attending to the greater specificity of the human that has only come into being with and through non-human life forms rather than doing away with the human in

its entirety (Wolfe 120). Wolfe breaks down posthumanisms as humanist and posthumanist; for example, animal rights theory and discourse are categorized as humanist posthumanisms since animal rights is an extension of the human conception of personhood and rights (124). Conversely, posthumanist posthumanisms do not rely on humanist assumptions regarding subjectivity and knowledge (126). Oddly enough, while Wolfe disavows humanist posthumanisms, at certain points I do read his work as reminiscent of humanist posthumanisms in that working towards the specificity of the human undercuts his aim of ceasing to extend the human and retracting its reach. Wolfe's argument that the body or a body can no longer be spoken of because phenomena take place between rather than within bodies is of great interest in me in terms of disidentifying with the human and doing creature hopes (xxiii). However, I also want to contend with how Wolfe follows this argument in terms of the place and duties of the human:

... the human occupies a new place in the universe, a universe now populated by what I am prepared to call nonhuman subjects. And this is why, to me, posthumanism means not the triumphal surpassing or unmasking of something but an increase in the vigilance, responsibility, and humility that accompany living in a world so newly, and differently, inhabited. (47)

If Wolfe's ultimate project is working towards the specificity of the human, I am curious about the ways in which "vigilance, responsibility, and humility," as distinctly human notions, may increase without extending the human towards non-human beings. Wolfe engages with a great numbers of philosophers and writers in this piece, but I am

especially interested in his reading of and engagement with the works of Derrida and Cora Diamond. Diamond proposes that we open a distinctly human justice and compassion outwards to non-human animals and argues that it is only by emphasizing the special status of the human that we may have ethical, just relationships with “fellow creatures” (77). While Wolfe explicitly opposes the extending of the human, his exploration of Diamond’s work leads me back to the ways in which suffering may become a theoretical stop-gap for attending to the harms of non-human animals while preserving the human. Consider Wolfe’s interaction with Diamond as follows: “what generates our moral response to animals and their treatment is our sense of the morality and vulnerability that we share with them, of which the brute subjection of the body ... is perhaps the most poignant testament.” (74) I wonder what would become of the human and the animal if we did not focus so much on what we deem to be a distinctly human moral response to the sufferings humans themselves cause non-humans. That is, while it is crucial to acknowledge and deal with the ways in which all beings’ lives are already bound together in our shared lives and finitudes, why is the relationship between creatures always over-defined by pain and hopelessness? Addressing the work of Derrida, Diamond, and [Martha] Nussbaum, Wolfe seems to agree that “the fundamental ethical bond we have with nonhuman animals resides in our shared finitude, our vulnerability and morality as ‘fellow creatures,’” but what kinds of ethical relations between creature-beings are foreclosed if they are already eclipsed by suffering? (80)

For the purposes of this thesis, I find Wolfe's refusal of the human to be transparent to its self to be quite important for conceiving of disidentification with the human. Wolfe claims that "'we' are always radically other already in- or ahuman in our very beings;" the human arrives after that which enables it and therefore the human is created by and through the inability to know itself (89). I also find provocative Wolfe's work on trans-species modes of identification through the analysis of the work of Temple Grandin, which explores disability in relation to animality both ethically and politically. Wolfe argues that being differently abled enables a connection to non-human animals precluded by normative full human ability and that "a shared trans-species being-in-the-world constituted by complex relations of trust, respect, dependence, and communication" directs us to an ethics of compassion (141). I find this trans-species connectivity based on empathy problematic as it is largely based on human feeling and affinity towards non-human animals, which I cannot read as anything other than the extension of the human. Furthermore, if we are to move away from an ethics based on ability, how can we frame differently-abled human beings as having special abilities that open ethical connections between species?

Donna Haraway discusses her concept of "companion species" in *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*, *When Species Meet*, and *The Haraway Reader*. In *The Companion Species Manifesto* Haraway's expanded description of "companion species" as relations between species occurs in four main prongs: first, as a concept that keeps with evolutionary biology, with species announcing

biological sort; second, with species philosophically defining being difference; third, species as a tangle of sign and flesh; and fourth, species relations as written by labor, love, commodity, and cruelty (15-16). The exploration of “companion species” is primarily guided by dog-human relations, as Haraway suggests that dogs are perhaps the most significant example of companion species. This text analyzes how “an ethics and politics committed to the flourishing of significant otherness be learned from taking dog-human relationships seriously,” since, above all, companion species is about what feminist claims of kin and kind can do (*Companion Species* 3). The work of companion species is “Living with animals, inhabiting their/our stories, trying to tell the truth about relationship, co-habiting an active history.” (20) Haraway tells stories of relations in/with/between “companion species,” focusing on fleshy relations, accountability, love, and scientific significance and validity. Her insistence that we “must” tell a story, get the facts, and “stay hungry for the truth” is troubling for many reasons, because who gets to imagine and tell the story of companion species? (19) Who finds the facts or assumes that there are knowable facts? Whose truth is lusted for? The scientific knowledge “companion species” strives to gain and indeed, already assumes through its delimit of biological species, indicates not only its anthropocentrism but also its framing of non-human animals as objects of knowledge. In *The Haraway Reader* Haraway argues that “we have never been human ... Nonetheless ... people are human in at least one sense. We are members of a biological species, *Homo sapiens*. That puts us solidly inside science, history, and nature, right at the heart of things.” (2) I find these claims distinctly

anthropocentric regardless of their seeming disavow of the human. The latter claim implies that non-humans are ahistorical and that their being and evolution took/takes place in anachronistic space, in other words, species that are not in companionship with the human are not a part of true history, scientific or otherwise.

When Species Meet elaborates on companion species as “messmates” in the world, as a verb that describes beings “becoming with” one another (16-17). Species are constitutive and are only known through sites and moments of encounters; in other words, relationships, not individual beings, are the smallest possible unit of analysis. Haraway is most interested in “‘encounters’ that involve, in a non-trivial but hard-to-characterize way, subjects of different biological species,” particularly face-to-face meetings (*When Species Meet* 46). She asserts that this work of companion species is not posthumanist, but rather a “non-humanism in which species of all sorts are in question” that cannot “abide” human exceptionalism (164). However, I question the “non-humanism” of companion species, as it emphasizes the importance of inter-species direct relations and human curiosity about and understanding of non-human animals, assuming the superiority of human understanding and relying upon human proximity to non-human beings for respect and accountability to and for non-human beings. It also assumes that such proximity and knowledge will lead to less-violent inter-species relations, as Haraway claims that physical touch brings about accountability: “Accountability, caring for, being affected, and entering into responsibility are not ethical abstractions; these prosaic things are the result of having truck with one another.” (36) But if the ethical

implications of “companion species” require human proximity, touch, and affect, then what of non-human beings that do not live and evolve with humans? If “companion species” demands non-human being and be-ing with humans, then it cannot claim to resist anthropocentrism. Haraway’s understanding of knowledge, respect, and response are tied together, as is evident in her critique of Derrida’s naked encounter with his cat. She argues the following:

[Derrida] did not seriously consider an alternative form of engagement [with his cat] either, one that risked knowing something more about cats and *how to look back*, perhaps even scientifically, biologically, and *therefore* also philosophically and intimately ... with his cat, Derrida failed a simple obligation of companion species; he did not become curious about what the cat might be doing, feeling, thinking, or perhaps making available to him in looking back that morning. (*When Species Meet* 20)

Why must a human ethical response to non-human beings require “knowing something more?” What is this “something more,” why is it needed, and how can it be attained? Why would greater human curiosity, knowledge, and understanding necessarily lend itself to more ethical human/non-human encounters and engagements? Furthermore, while Haraway refuses to give suffering priority in “companion species,” a matter I will expand on in chapter two, her acknowledgement of the impossibility of eliminating or justifying suffering does not give rise to deeply questioning scientific knowledge practices that require non-human animal suffering.

In *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* Stacy Alaimo theorizes trans-corporeality as “thinking across bodies,” as a theoretical framework that

“explores the interconnections, interchanges, and transits between human bodies and non-human natures.” (2) Alaimo writes against the prevalent theorizing of matter named as bodies in a purely discursive manner and conceiving of matter as passive. She urges theorists to take matter seriously and to conceive of nature as a constantly active force rather than as passively acted upon and given meaning by culture. For Alaimo, culture is always already nature. *Bodily Natures* does not explicitly work to dismantle the human but instead denies the human its separation from the environment and from other beings, it works towards a material ethics born from grappling with trans-corporeality. Alaimo argues that the ethical and political possibilities that span trans-corporeality are capable of attending to the harms done to both bodies and the environment and holding humans accountable while refusing to deny non-humans their own ways of being and doing. She urges us to consider that “A material ethics may emerge from this trans-corporeal space, an ethics that is centered neither in individual humans nor in an external nature, but instead in the flows and interchanges between them.” (136)

Alaimo notes that the purpose of *Bodily Natures* is “to trace how trans-corporeality often ruptures ordinary knowledge practices.” (17) To accomplish this she explores environmental justice and health as it relates to gender, race, and class in various texts, including memoirs, literature, and theory. Through these texts she theorizes trans-corporeal spaces and the ways in which vulnerable human bodies are tangled with other creatures, the environment, and human-made substances, ultimately proposing a posthumanist environmental ethics that acknowledges the flux of bodies and environment

and “that builds connections rather than boundaries” (111). Here, the environment is figured as the worldly stuff that human bodies are always made of and in, as the human body as always open to “outside” forces that continuously shape and reshape its flesh. Human bodies are not only permeable, but are always coming into being through that which is understood as non-human: “Imagining human corporeality as trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world, underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from ‘the environment.’” (Alamio 2) Alamio’s conception of the human as never just human is important for my work on creature and creature hope because it complicates species boundaries and relationships between beings and their environments. Trans-corporeality will guide my work both on what disidentifying with the human means in terms of relating to other beings as well as hoping across hierarchal markers of being.

While I find Alamio’s work on trans-corporality necessary and useful, I also find it crucial to depart from trans-corporeality’s focus on the human and the breakdown of human corporeality/non-human nature. The possibilities of trans-corporeality are located overwhelmingly in the realm of the human and through the reconceptualization what it means to exist *as human*. Alamio briefly addresses charges of anthropocentrism as supposed misreadings of trans-corporality, arguing that the promises of the framework extend outward into the more-than-human world. Conversely, I would like to conceive of creature hope as not originating from the human, as a concept that is always collapsing inwards from the unknowable boundaries of creature-being. Alamio’s overwhelming

focus on the human corporeal leans towards the fetishization of the human body and its fleshy experiences.

Mel Chen explores the concept of animacy and animacy hierarchies most broadly categorized as words, animals, and metals in *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*. Chen finds it critically important to disturb normative understandings of life, liveliness, and agency, and argues that animacy is not limited to being or beings normatively “animate,” rather animacy is open to “both inquiry and resignification” (M. Chen 4). Chen positions *Animacies* in relation to the upswing in posthumanist theorizing on being and object life and claims that it “builds on these insights by digging into animacy as a specific of affective and material construct that is not only nonneutral in relation to animals, humans, and living and dead things, but is shaped by race and sexuality, mapping various biopolitical realizations of animacy in the contemporary culture of the United States.” (5) The purpose of Chen’s careful and creative theoretical work on animacies is not to revitalize various materialities in the sense of giving them life, but rather to explore the ways in which our understandings of life are bound by orders of sex, race, class, and ability. Chen also expands affect to account for feelings not contained or restricted by one body or being’s emotions, and considers the affectivity within affect, or “how one body affects another,” in relation to hierarchies of animacy (12).

For the purposes of this thesis, I am particularly interested in Chen’s explorations of “Words” and “Animals,” the former considering how language is animated as well as

the ways in which it animates, de-animates, and/or re-animates and the latter grappling with animality as “a condensation of racialized animacy” and its relationship to queer(ing) intimacies (M. Chen 14). Foremost a linguist, Chen looks at the possibilities of animacies (as animating beyond its typical usage) and queering together, as both continually work to recast the terms of be-ing and being together along and/or across certain subject/object, human/nonhuman lines. Chen’s work on affect and affectivity that has the potential to take into account multiple bodies and feelings will be very important to my work, as creature hope in the singular is really already plural and I openly acknowledge that those hopes do not always align or even directly address one another. Furthermore, to discuss what it might mean to *do* creature hope, I need animacies and affect as they are conceived of in *Animacies*, cutting across conceptions of proper being desires and responses to those desires, for example the human sterilization of companion animals for purposes of eliminating future non-human animal suffering.

Chen refuses to strictly delineate humans, animals, and objects, and although my aim is similar as I do not strictly define creature, I want to branch off of animacies to attend to the pains and hopes that may manifest through and/or against beings’ relationships to one another, especially when relationships across species boundaries are defined by violences. *Animacies* does very important work considering inanimate matter that may be categorized as objects in relation to beings human and non-human, but in my work I want a more explicit role in theoretically taking care of those non-human animal beings that so often suffer at the hands of humans, while refusing to define those beings

by their suffering. As previously mentioned, I conceive of creature as already existing within animacies; animacies exhausts creature and possibly even creature hopes, although I question whether it is sufficient on its own to fully consider the possibilities of disidentifying with the human and in particular performances of creature hope. Regardless, *Animacies* will undoubtedly play a fundamental role in the writing of this thesis, as it will enable me to deal with the fluxes, overflows, and ruptures of/in creature intimacies, desires, and hopes.

As I mentioned in my introduction, Monique Allewaert's conception of and work on the parahuman will be essential to my exploration of creature and creature hope. In *Ariel's Ecology: Plantations, Personhood, and Colonialism in the American Tropics* Allewaert theorizes parahumanity as "a condition of fragmentation between the human and the animal" (98). Parahuman beings then, are those who exist in a state marked by black bodies literally and figuratively torn and broken by colonialism. Neither elevated human nor organic animal, the parahuman is given over to by the slave body, a body always subject to possible dismemberment (Allewaert 90). "Para," in part, refers to the perversion of the human that refuses its recovery as well as the location of the parahuman to other beings: "In taking up the term *parahuman*, I aim to challenge the hierarchal organization of life forms that was common to the colonial anthropologies and natural histories: I put animals, parahumans, and humans in horizontal relation (that is to say, *para* or beside each other) without conflating them." (86) Allewaert refuses to position

the parahuman as after the human, but instead as “parasitic on and thus after and also beside the human.” (110)

Allewaert’s investment in the parahuman departs from projects that aim to rehabilitate human populations rendered Other *as human*; she is far more interested in black performances and stories of parahumanity and the possibilities of dwelling in this liminal space. By not fully retreating from animality, the parahuman is kept constantly open to other beings and the social and political possibilities of relating to both human and non-human animals intimately. Allewaert is particularly struck by the ways in which agency may take form in and from the space of the parahuman and its new mode of personhood accessible through and defined by fragmentation, a personhood not modeled strictly on humanity or animality (109). It is important to note that the parahuman never solidifies into new hybrid identities, which Allewaert sees as problematic and stifling because it does not allow for temporary relations and intimacies. Concerned with the hierarchal valuing of beings human, parahuman, and non-human, Allewaert argues that remaining in the space of the parahuman actively resists hierarchy and recasts parahumanity on the terms of parahumans rather than colonizers. The parahuman rejects the colonial human identity that “coheres over and against animal being.” (Allewaert 105)

The racial stakes of the parahuman and the human are central to Allewaert’s work; the parahuman highlights that only white people have the rights to uncontaminated humanity and that “the production of the human is often achieved through the

racialization of parahumanity” (103). Therefore, part of Allewaert’s insistence on remaining in parahumanity is that the alternative of (re)claiming humanity may operate within the logics of colonization. Parahumanity keeps the human open in such a way that it is against normative humanisms; Allewaert claims that the parahuman creates political possibilities for both parahumans and non-human animals, “producing a mode of personhood and politics not grounded on human exceptionalism.” (113) The parahuman illuminates amazing potential for the way beings can relate to one another in non-hierarchical ways while taking account of the racialized histories of the human, parahuman, and non-human. As I previously mentioned, I do not wish to dismiss or argue against the parahuman nor do I want to position creature in opposition to the parahuman, rather, I will consider creature and creature hope alongside of the parahuman. I wonder about the conditions for and agency of non-human animals that parahumanity may or may not be able to take into account. Is parahumanity open to and for non-human animal hopes *by* non-human animals? Does parahumanity offer possibilities for non-humans not bound by the human and parahuman? Does refusing hybridity close certain hopes for humans, parahumans, and nonhumans?

José Muñoz’s *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* and *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* will both be crucial to this project, as they will help me think through modalities of creature hope and what it means to disidentify with the human, respectively. In *Cruising Utopia* Muñoz asks us to consider that perhaps queerness has not happened yet and what possibilities might open

up to us if we refuse to discipline, define, and locate a knowable and foreseeable destination of queerness. He intervenes on current homonormative politics and gay pragmatic thought through considering utopian queer futurity. Muñoz critiques straight time and the dismal future it promises, which is no future at all but merely the reproduction of current violences, and instead looks forward (non-linearly) to an idealized queer future. He asks us to consider that perhaps queerness does not yet exist as well as what possibilities queerness might hold if we do not try to name it as the ways things are in the present. Muñoz summons the pleasures and idealism from the “no-longer-conscious” to envision a queer future, not looking back in history through straight time, but complicating the future and present with the past; he understands the past as performative, as doing and working right now as well as in the future (*Cruising Utopia* 20). Muñoz analyzes texts that he deems to possess a utopian impulse that invokes future generations and rejects straight time while conjuring a distinctly queer hope; these pieces referenced are said to be “doing in futurity,” that is, they work outside of straight time, in the future to create a queer future, operating against gay pragmatism (26). The hope the analyzed texts disrupt the homonormativity and pragmatic politics of the present; such politics supposedly have aims that are more attainable and accomplishable, but those aims are emptied of meaning, possibility, and pleasure (32). I envision using Muñoz’s work on hope, utopia, and futurity to structure my overall exploration of creature hope, but also specifically to analyze queer of color poetry that I read as *doing* creature hope in my third chapter as well as the ways in which queer theory may or may not be prepared

to contend with intimacies, desires, and hopes that arguably throw into question species boundaries.

In *Disidentifications* Muñoz builds on previous work around disidentification from multiple disciplines by analyzing cultural performances of disidentification as always both with and against dominant culture. He frames disidentification as “descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship.” (*Disidentifications* 4) In other words, disidentification works both within and outside of dominant culture, it can be understood as a complex and contradictory grappling with cultural logics as well as a strategy of resistance and survival for minoritarian subjects. The cultural workers and performances Muñoz explores in this text can be understood as “emergent identities in difference,” with their disidentifications creating a counterpublic with possibilities for new relations and politics (6-7). Disidentification does not mean that minoritarian subjects can treat identification as a buffet where all aspects of identity can be consciously and fully accepted or rejected, rather it is a decoding and recoding of dominant culture from a position of minoritarian subjectivity. Disidentification with the human is a useful framework for me to consider the ways that human Others may identify both with and against the human as a way to survive an existence as less-than-human and what possibilities and dangers lie in relinquishing the terrain of the human for various

creatures. Can certain disidentifications with the human be explored as doing creature hope?

This thesis is also greatly informed by the work of posthumanist ecofeminists such as Marti Kheel, Carol Adams, Lori Gruen, Josephine Donovan, Greta Gaard, and Vandana Shiva, amongst numerous others. While I will not engage explicitly with these scholars and their work, I want to acknowledge that their ecofeminisms sparked my interest in the connections between human and non-human animal violences and environmental exploitation and degradation. In regards to this particular project, I am especially inspired by Lori Gruen's "Facing Death and Practicing Grief," which deals with what it means to be in relationships with other beings, both human and non-human, both living and dying, and how those relationships render all beings vulnerable, dependent, and often in various states of grieving. When I think about Gruen's work, I am reminded that grief is an inevitable aspect of relations between beings and is therefore inseparable from the hope that creatures may do together. Furthermore, I am encouraged to fight the urge to retreat from or to try to do away with the vulnerability and pain of being with others, or of writing about being with others.

Chapter Overview

Chapter II: The Uninterrogated Category of Suffering will contain a deep and thorough theoretical engagement with works by the theorists I briefly addressed in my literature review, as well as other scholars that will play a secondary role in my

exploration of disidentification with the human and creature hope. I will be reading these texts through and against one another in order to develop and situate my own conceptual framework. This chapter will tease out how these different scholars invoke and portray the human, the animal, and most of all, suffering (especially of the non-human animal). I prioritize suffering not only because it so often functions as the most important connection that human and non-human beings have as well as the catalyst for ethical consideration, but also because so much of hope comes from places of harm. Suffering must be reckoned with in a way that does not define non-human beings as *only* suffering beings in the eyes of those called human. In taking up various works of posthumanism, I will discuss how questions and claims of sentience are effectively questions and claims of suffering as well as the conflation of sentience and suffering in relation to the larger question about how non-human animal suffering is being talked about, showing how many scholars end up taking recourse to the human through their arguments regarding non-human animal suffering. For example, if non-human animal sentience is always already suffering and other modes of being are eclipsed by pain, then those modes of being are placed exclusively in the domain of the human. I will also examine posthumanist scholars' theoretical reliance on human understanding and knowledge about non-human animal sentience and suffering. Other themes I will explore in relation to conflations of sentience and suffering include the difference between redressive and rehabilitative concepts in posthumanisms and empathy as human(ist) participation in non-human suffering.

In Chapter III: Creature-Being, Hopes and Anxieties I will begin unfolding my theoretical exploration of disidentification with the human and doing creature hope, furthering my understanding of these concepts in both their possibilities and their limitations, through various texts and socio-spatial circumstances that I read as pointing to a posthumanist way of being and theorizing not invested in discovering or recovering the human. These disidentifications and/as hope may or may not dispense with the human, as that seems an impossible project to me anyway, but they also do not attend to the human, locate the human, or even work towards its specificity. In chapter three I will look at works of queer of color poetry, most notably in the online journal *Nepantla* which includes the stirring poem “Necropsy.” The queer poets of color in *Nepantla* remind us that all beings’ pasts, presents, and futures are always already inextricably bound together, and so too are our hopes. I will explore Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*, through a disidentificatory reading which not only complicates species boundaries and call into question the very notion of the human, but expands on the problems of empathy and ethics that draw on likeness to the human. I will also look at stories of persons experiencing homelessness with their companion animals, considering the policing of intimacies and pleasures in spaces of social death and interspecies companionship and community in seemingly hopeless situations. An underlying theme in this chapter beyond my main concepts includes the hopes that arise between beings that may or may not live in the present, between the living and the dead, and beings that live(d) in various spaces.

Chapter IV: Interspecies Sexual Intimacies, Blindly will indirectly speak to my concepts of disidentification with the human and/as doing creature hope though a continuously faltering discussion of interspecies sexual intimacies, desires, and longings, understood most commonly through terms such as bestiality and/or zoophilia. I do not construct arguments for or against human/non-human sex, instead I call attention to and question the concepts and traps that surround these intimacies as well as the overloaded frameworks of bestiality and/or zoophilia. To guide my discussion, I will focus on two main texts: the novel *A Dog's Head (Une Tête de Chien)* and the documentary *Zoo*. I will also engage in a short analysis of the film *Wedding Trough (Vase de nocces)* in order to strengthen my watching of *Zoo*. My analysis of these texts includes the following themes: first, the excesses and absences of interspecies desire and/or/as bestiality—intimate desires and actions that resist full telling and/or viewership either through a saturated or empty presence; second, the limitations of various intertwined discourses surrounding bestiality/zoophilia considering violent footholds such as consent, agency, and protection, and what these concepts do for the human subject; and third, the rifts and ruptures of being, limitations of ever knowing or acting completely with another creature-being, and creature desires that cannot be fully known or understood. I consider this subject matter and these texts and their inquiries to be of the utmost importance for disidentification with the human and/as doing creature hope because they motion towards the incoherency and unknowability of creature-beings human and non-human and the problems with creating neat theories and ethics around them. To conclude, I will elaborate on what kind

of work disidentification with the human and/as doing creature hope can and cannot do. In my introduction, I posed the following question: “Can ‘creature’ offer us a new direction for hoping against the violences suffered by human and non-human beings and hoping apart from defining beings by the very violences they may or may not suffer?” In the conclusion to my final chapter I want to address how my framework struggles to account for hopes that are in themselves violent.

CHAPTER II

THE UNINTERROGATED CATEGORY OF SUFFERING

The Conditions of Posthumanisms & Attending to Suffering

What is it about suffering that makes it so compelling, so unquestionable? Why does suffering remain a largely uninterrogated state of *being*? Even Derrida, who so radically conceives of the human abyss, always retreats to the question of suffering. This chapter explores what it means to treat others well, and what I hope to show is that the fixed posthumanist ethical response(s) to non-human suffering needs the continuous suffering of non-humans and for non-human being to be over-defined by suffering in order to delineate the human; therefore, posthumanisms that frame non-human sentience as suffering horrifically meet liberal humanisms. I find it interesting that so many of the scholars I grapple with in this chapter keep coming back to vulnerability, and more specifically, shared vulnerability. There seems to be present the fear of being given over to one another, a fear that humans are much like non-humans, in the sense that non-humans are so often fully splayed open in front of the human. Perhaps our preoccupation with suffering stems from an anxiety about those painfully passive aspects of being which humans so readily and completely ascribe to non-human animals. The so-called radically shared vulnerability does not seem so radically posthumanist to me, instead, in

the vein of humanisms, it says that *even we, despite* our humanity, are vulnerable. I am not questioning the existence or importance of suffering, but rather its disciplinary functioning.

In its entirety, this thesis aims to explore and detail my theoretical contribution to posthumanist feminist critical animal studies: the open, messy, queered, and admittedly fraught concepts of disidentifying with the human and/as *doing* creature hope. As the subtitle of this thesis suggests, I understand these concepts to be offering something different from many other scholars in posthumanisms, where the broader theme of non-human sentience as suffering seems to form the limit of posthumanist work. This second chapter aims to contend with suffering (mostly of non-human beings) as simultaneously an inescapable aspect of being in the world that must be reckoned with in a meaningful, non-anthropocentric way; a state of being that is not shared equally by all beings human, less-than-human, and non-human; and as too often a means of over-defining non-human beings and giving non-suffering modes of being over to the human. Essentially, this chapter will investigate the key methodological features of posthumanism: first, the fusion of sentience and suffering for non-human beings, how non-human being and feeling are sutured to pain, and second, the reliance on human understanding and knowledge about non-human animal sentience and suffering. Ultimately, I argue that presenting non-human animal sentience as always already suffering and/or non-human animal sentience and suffering as matters legitimized by human understanding falls in line with the delineation and special status of the human. The purpose of this chapter is to

trace through the relationship between sentience and suffering in the works of the scholars I discussed in my literature review. I will be working scholar by scholar, so as not to glaze over the specificities of their work or present the relationships between these concepts as the same in various works. I want to be clear that my intention is not to disregard the importance of the work I may critique, but to put these works together like an unsolvable jigsaw puzzle, seeing what images repeat and what may be missing. I also want to be upfront and transparent about the personal importance I give to all beings' suffering, including non-human animal suffering for the production and consumption of animal flesh and feminized proteins (from female reproductive systems, such as dairy and egg products). I know the allure of clearly mapping non-human animal suffering and the changes I have made in my own life as a reaction to such suffering, but I have arrived at the position that it is not enough, not for humans and certainly not for non-human animals. When suffering becomes the only aspect of non-human animal being that matters this is actually a violence against non-human animals. All creature beings, human and non-human, deserve far more than the absence of suffering and the warped definitions of creature-being that come about in pursuit of it.

How does the conflation of and/or insistence on human knowledge of non-human sentience and suffering in posthumanisms take recourse to the human? Commonly the work of posthumanist, ecofeminist, and/or critical animal studies scholars has been to declare non-human animals sentient and to foster widespread recognition of non-human animals as beings capable of feeling so as to mitigate or eradicate human exploitations of

and violences towards non-human animals. The assertion of non-human animal sentience not-so-subtly functions as an assertion of non-human animal pain. Oxford Dictionaries defines “sentience” as “Able to perceive or feel things,” “suffering” as “The state of undergoing pain, distress, or hardship”, and “suffer” as the “Experience or be subjected to (something bad or unpleasant)” (“Sentience,” “Suffering,” “Suffer”). If the work of proving and exploring non-human animal abilities of feeling is circumscribed by non-human animal experiences of pain/trauma/loss/sadness made inescapable by humans, then the limit of posthumanisms is the non-human being always already in a state of suffering. I question the primacy of suffering, as, historically, various less-than-human and non-human Others have been considered to be always already in states of suffering, justifying exploitation and genocide. Thinking about the ability and capacity of feeling conjures notions of measuring limits and the fullness of being “at capacity.” How much feeling can one hold? If the feeling capacity of non-human animals is suffering, is there any room left for other modes of being within and apart from pain? Furthermore, if only humans can feel and experience ways of being that are not suffering, then those feelings and experiences can only be inhabited by the human. Hindering non-human animal abilities of feeling by states of being humans impose on them and relying on human measures, claims, and relation of/to Others’ abilities to feel and perceive is acutely humanist; yet, this is often the work of posthumanisms.

Thus far, I have broadly sketched what I understand to be significant issues in posthumanisms, which necessitates addressing the difference between redressive and

rehabilitative concepts as well as empathy as human(ist) participation in non-human suffering. The work of Saidiya Hartman best demonstrates why empathizing with and rehabilitating suffering populations is potentially problematic. My reasoning for using Hartman lies in her own discussion of methodology in *Scenes of Subjection*, where she argues that there is no right, good, unburdened way to do this work, no way to go about discussing the suffering of abject Others. Nothing can narrate or account for their experiences of pain, and the fantastically brutal spectacle exceeds any sort of discussion or analysis. There is no unproblematic way to talk about these happenings and acknowledging injury is not enough, it has to be always present in the ultimately impossible and constantly failing discussion of harms. Bringing posthumanist works into conversation with Hartman's work, as well as the work of other scholars in critical race studies such as Monique Allewaert, Che Gossett, and Alexander Wehylie, and the work of queer theorist Jose Muñoz, highlights the conditions of posthumanisms. That is, I argue that excluding ideas that do not fit the mold of posthumanisms enables issues such as the fusion of sentience and suffering.

In my thesis proposal and well as in my first chapter, I wrote of my affective need to “theoretically take care” of non-human animal beings that may suffer through disidentifying with the human and/as creature hope, prompting a discussion in my thesis proposal defense as to what this impulse might mean and the kind of work it may do. Is the work of disidentifying with the human and doing creature hope redressive or rehabilitative? Oxford Dictionaries defines “redress” as to “Remedy or set right (an

undesirable or unfair situation),” “Set upright again,” or “Remedy or compensation for a wrong or grievance” and rehabilitate as to “Restore (someone) to health or normal life by training and therapy after imprisonment, addiction, or illness,” “Restore (someone) to former privileges or reputation after a period of critical or official disfavor,” or “Return (something, especially an environmental feature) to its former condition” (“Redress,” “Rehabilitate”). For Hartman, the work of redress is always incomplete because wrongs and violences cannot be fully compensated for or entirely righted: “redress does not or cannot restore or remedy loss” (76). Redress is distinguished by actions restricted by circumstances of exploitation and violence that seek to re-member, relieve, and re-articulate [desires of] the pained body. Hartman takes up Victor Turner’s conception of redressive action as limiting or containing a breach and expands upon it, conceiving of redress in liminal spaces as discordant actions that remedy and care for the pained body and rework the conditions of social death, considering pain and pleasure/desire together in tension rather than in opposition to one another (77-78). Hartman argues that “redress is itself an articulation of loss and a longing for remedy and reparation.” (77) In other words, a crucial aspect of redress is that it calls attention to harms done and the rippling effects of those harms.

Thinking through the work of disidentification and creature hope, I enthusiastically borrow from Hartman’s ideas about redress, although to be clear I do not analogize the subjectivity and conditions of less-than-human and non-human Others. Disidentifying with the human and/as creature hope does not aim to restore non-human

beings to their state prior to human use and violence or assume that harms can somehow be undone, a task which is not only impossible but also seems tragically humorous given the connotations of the term posthumanist. Instead, these concepts imagine an ethical comportment in the wake of injury and what it means to constantly attend to harms and desires in tandem. This thesis is not about bringing back a prior state of creature-being and it does not assume that the non-human animal needs to be or can be rehabilitated. More importantly, it does not define redressive action as human action but rather takes into account human and non-human acts of relief, pleasure, desire, and hope both within and against pain, despair, and boredom. These actions may be mundane, small, seemingly insignificant doings, especially juxtaposed with the awful spectacle, but they give rise to hope “beyond” the human. If posthumanist works conflate non-human sentience and suffering, then they foreclose redressive acts that offer the alleviation of pain or pleasure inside of pain.

The posthumanist fastening of non-human being and feeling to pain is largely the result of attempts to facilitate human empathy for non-human beings, which I argue is a mode of human(ist) participation in non-human animal suffering. Hartman asks “what does exposure of the violated body yield?” (3) What is the project of empathy? What work does it do? What does it require? Hartman argues that empathy requires participation in Others’ suffering as viewing and response and blurs “witness and spectator” (3-4). The frequency of the spectacle of the pained body and the simultaneous distance from and nearness to the body brings about a detached and immune participation

that borders on the fetishization of pained and suffering bodies. Empathy attempts to conceive the inconceivable and is ultimately self-interested and absorbed, unknowingly and impossibly assuming the positionality and conditions of the pained subject. Stirring empathic impulses displace and dilute the specificity of the subject. The problems of empathy in relation to non-human animal suffering in particular is that it is distinctly human and humanist participation in non-human animal pain. In other words, why must the human be able to imagine the pain of the non-human animal for it to be legitimate? Why must non-human animal relief be predicated on the affective whims of the human? If the human cannot imagine or understand the suffering of the non-human animal, is the non-human animal still suffering? Disidentification with the human and/as doing creature hope does not require human empathy for the non-human animal, does not need human legitimization of non-human animal being or feeling, and does not call for the continued participation of humans in non-human suffering or endless iterations of the horrible spectacle. The all-too-common posthumanist utilization of human empathic impulse is not only anthropocentric but also maintains and furthers human violation of non-human beings, to say nothing of what it means that there is a presumed uniquely human response to suffering.

Sentience, Suffering, & Human Knowledges in Posthumanisms

Jacques Derrida's "*ecce animot*" and/or "*l'animot*" in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* at first seems to be a concept that does not conflate non-human animal sentience and

suffering as it does not limit human violences against animals to corporeal suffering or singularize non-human animal being, however, I argue that the plurality of these terms is actually still a singularity of the animal due to Derrida's focus on non-human animal suffering. In other words, Derrida's concept is theoretically supposed to be able to take into account the multiplicity of non-human animal being, yet Derrida is most compelled by the question of non-human suffering as posed by the human. Derrida is drawn to Jeremy Bentham's question "Can they suffer?" because it focuses on inability instead of ability, unlike questions of whether non-human animals have language or reason (*The Animal* 27). While any ability is about having power and being capable, suffering is a non-power, it is just about being, and for this reason Derrida finds the question of suffering to be more capable of ethically considering the animal(s). The passivity that suffering denotes is especially compelling for Derrida, as is evident in the following quotation: "The question is already disturbed by a certain passivity. It bears witness, manifesting already, as question, the response that testifies to a sufferance, a passion, a not-being-able. The word can [pouvoir] changes sense and sign here once one asks, 'Can they suffer?'" (27)

Derrida argues that this question should be "*first*" and "*decisive*," as it is tantamount to that of "Can they *not be able*?" (*The Animal* 27-28) I take issue with the importance this question is given, as it must be asked, spoken into existence by the human; it still relies on human knowledges about non-human animals. After all, it is the human that asks "Can they suffer?" and then must endeavor to answer the question,

through both scientific and philosophical knowledge practices. Moreover, what does it mean to witness and testify to suffering? Derrida frames this work as that of the question itself, but if the question is constructed and spoken by the human, must the human witness and testify to non-human suffering? For Derrida, the question of suffering removes the doubt that remains in questions of non-human language and reasoning abilities, but even posing the question suggests a doubt to which a human “one” must attend. Furthermore, Derrida argues that the question of suffering stirs in us a recognition of our own finitude, and ultimately, a “surge of compassion ... (yes, they suffer, like us who suffer for them and with them)” (28). This assertion brings us back to the work of Hartman and the problem of participating in the suffering of Others, creating a knot of witness, spectator, participant, and responder. I opened this section with Derrida because he is conceivably one of if not the most popular scholars in posthumanisms and because his work exemplifies the popular position in posthumanisms that the most important and ethically compelling aspect of non-human animal being is the (non)ability to suffer and that the human/non-human connection of suffering is an impetus for thinking about human experiences not bound by personally embodied experiences pain, such as compassion. In the next passage Derrida writes of the non-power and possibility in shared vulnerability, suffering, and death, but gives the “experience of compassion” to the human:

Being able to suffer is no longer a power; it is a possibility without power, a possibility of the impossible. Mortality resides there, as the most radical means of thinking the finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the

very finitude of life, to the experience of compassion, to the possibility of sharing the possibility of this non-power, the possibility of this impossibility, the anguish of this vulnerability, and the vulnerability of this anguish. (*The Animal* 28)

This positioning of non-human animal suffering provoking other-than-suffering modes of being for the human leads me to wonder what experiences other than suffering are available to non-human beings.

The question of non-human suffering inevitably leads to how one (the human) must respond to suffering, and Derrida wonders on the same page how one must take it into account, be concerned, and respond. What comes of compassion in the face of suffering? Understandably, there are no direct answers here or elsewhere in his work that I have encountered, but I do want to address where Derrida does and does not take response to suffering in “‘Eating Well,’ or the Calculation of the Subject.” Thinking about human eating practices, Derrida is interested in eating *well*, conceived here partly as addressing the other through the self since one never eats alone (“‘Eating Well’” 282-283). The question of “Can they suffer?” does not lead Derrida to advocating for vegetarianism or veganism (what he would deem to be a form of sacrificing the sacrifice), though non-human animal suffering is undoubtedly an inextricable aspect of eating non-human animals. That eating the animal requires its death demands that Derrida address what shape this death takes, that is, human killing of the human is murder, human killing of the animal is sacrifice (of the animal). This speaks to the larger topic in this interview, “the violent institution of ‘who’ as a subject,” which Derrida sees as the foundation of the refusal to deem human killing of the animal to be murder (283).

Let us think of sentience, suffering, sacrifice, and the subject together. For Derrida, suffering is so important because it is the non/ability to feel pain, in his view it is also the primary connection between human and non-human animals, this suffering demands response vaguely described as addressing the other. If, as Derrida suggests, responsibility and response can never be predicted, measured, or assessed, then this address, this response to the question of suffering is always open, even in the forms of killing and violating the non-human animal subject (by refusing to see the animal as a “who”). While Derrida’s question is framed as leaving no doubt as to the existence of non-human animal suffering, there is nothing but doubt when it comes to how to respond to this suffering. Perhaps more importantly, responding (to suffering) is given over to the human as non-human beings are not conceived of as capable of response. The question of suffering (or rather, the way it is posed and utilized here) does not seem to me posthumanist in the sense of working within and against the human, instead, it relies on the human to ask, witness, and respond to suffering and requires the continued suffering of the animal to elicit human compassion in the face of human cruelty.

Cary Wolfe, another prominent scholar in posthumanisms, similarly and dissimilarly seems to take recourse to the human via connotations of non-human animal sentience and suffering as well as linkages between shared being suffering and an overtly human compassion. I will be engaging with Wolfe’s *What Is Posthumanism?* as this work not only attempts to define posthumanism(s) and what that work requires, but also engages with the work of numerous scholars who have grappled with questions of the

human and animal and categorizes them by their “level” of posthumanism. In the introduction, Wolfe begins his breakdown of the work and meanings of animal studies, fleshing out humanist posthumanisms and posthumanist posthumanisms, the latter of which he argues “fundamentally unsettles and reconfigures the question of the knowing subject” (xxix). This labor seems promising to me, especially regarding its implicit aim to sever ties between human knowing and non-human animal knowing, feeling, ability, and ways of being. However, as the piece unfolds I find even Wolfe’s “posthumanist posthumanism” to vacillate between embracing and untangling posthumanist connotations of sentience and suffering and relying upon and casting off human knowledges. Wolfe identifies two forms of finitude that human and non-human animals share, the “radical passivity and vulnerability” of bodily suffering and death and secondly, the binding condition that is Derrida’s “trace,” that which “exceeds and encompasses the human/animal difference and indeed ‘the life/death relation’ itself.” (xxvii) Regarding the former, Wolfe focuses on a shared embodiment that does not allow escape from pain, suffering, and ultimately, death. We should question why finitude must inherently involve suffering, that is, why can corporal finitude not be viewed as comforting and/or relieving? In a quite telling analysis, Wolfe looks at the work of Daniel Dennett, who differentiates between pain and suffering based on who is an “enduring subject,” that is to say, non-humans may feel pain but human consciousness is required for suffering (45). Wolfe account of Dennett is that his argument is not about “a difference in degree but a difference in kind, an ontological difference,” and it is worth noting that Wolfe himself

argues that human and non-human beings do not experience the suffering of the same “kinds or levels” (however that could be measured and by whom) (46). Wolfe’s issue with Dennett “is not the ethical foregrounding of pain and suffering” but rather that “Dennett’s ontological distinction between pain and suffering is based on a set of phantom abilities, anchored by but not limited to language and its imagined representational capacities in relation to the world of things, that no subject, either nonhuman or human, processes in fact.” (46) Although Wolfe analyses the work of many scholars, this engagement with Dennett clarifies two key aspects of his posthumanism: 1) giving ethical prominence to suffering over other modes of being does not preclude a posthumanist posthumanism and 2) sentience and suffering differs in kind for humans and non-humans. The latter aspect may possibly loosen the tethering of human sentience and suffering, while tightening it between non-human sentience and suffering; Wolfe’s subsequent turn to Derrida’s quite different take on suffering, which calls for rethinking consciousness and its ethical implications, does not minimize this possibility.

In chapter three, “Flesh and Finitude: Bioethics and the Philosophy of the Living,” Wolfe explores how non-human animal suffering is differently handled by Peter Singer, Martha Nussbaum, Cora Diamond, and Derrida. I am interested in not only how these scholars handle suffering, but how Wolfe’s exploration of their work reveals his own precarious position on non-human sentience and/as suffering. Wolfe seems to agree with famed animal liberationist theorist Peter Singer that “the question [of the animal]” is not one of weighing or valuing human and non-human moral being and interests equally,

but rather arguing that given similar interests, humans and non-humans share a similar interest in avoiding pain, and that interest (in light of all other interests being aligned) must be given consideration regardless of species being (57-58). My problem with this position is that human interests are clearly privileged, while non-human interests are only given importance if they have to do with pain; non-human interests that are not based in avoiding pain are sidelined in favor of any and all human interests that do not require human and/or non-human species suffering. Wolfe positions Singer's reading of Bentham as an opening for the philosophical variations on the posthumanist question of suffering, that the capacity for suffering (and pleasure) "is a prerequisite for having interests at all," and therefore the capacity for suffering must inherently take precedence (63). I am struck by the inclusion of pleasure here as opposed to non-suffering and I do not argue that various human and/or non-human interests should take precedence over that of suffering; however, that Wolfe thinks this argument would inevitably lead to philosophical agreement on the question of suffering signals for me the function of suffering as the limitation of posthumanisms (64).

Wolfe's engagements with Nussbaum, Diamond, and Derrida are most interesting to me in terms of non-human animal being passed over as suffering. Nussbaum is concerned with non-human animal recourse for justice in the face of "slavery, torture, and lifelong subordination" and argues that justice has more potential than calculating well-being by interests when it comes to the "maltreatment of any sentient being" (Wolfe 64). Nussbaum's conception of "embodiment and finitude" is "not reducible to

sentience and suffering per se” as, in Wolfe’s words, she is more concerned with how human treatment of human or non-human subjects “enables or impedes their ‘flourishing,’ a flourishing that is based on a more or less empirical assessment of the capabilities, needs, characteristic behaviors, and so on of the particular being in question” (66). Wolfe is trying to get away from Nussbaum’s reliance on human knowledges and justice as well as human and non-human animal competing interests and flourishings, but, I argue, too quickly dismisses the potential of flourishing *apart* from human knowledge. This knowledge is clearly problematic in Nussbaum’s greater conception of non-human animals being direct recipients of justice, but nevertheless considering non-human animal flourishing has merit beyond sentience as suffering. As long as non-human flourishing is kept open, not bound by human definition and measure, it presents possibilities for non-human being that Wolfe blanket rejects in the name of posthumanist posthumanism. Cora Diamond also finds the concept of justice to be the most useful response to non-human animal suffering. Diamond advocates for a non-rights-based justice opened to non-humans by humans, that is, it is not by abandoning the special status of the human but intensifying it in order to be in ethical relations with “fellow creatures” (Wolfe 77). These ethical relations require not only human justice, but must be prefaced and followed through with an exclusively human compassion. Wolfe’s understanding of and response to Diamond is that “what generates our moral response to animals and their treatment is our sense of the morality and vulnerability that we share with them, of which the brute subjection of the body ... is perhaps the most poignant testament.” (74) The

aforementioned quote points to what I see as a major problem in the conflation of non-human animal sentience as suffering: its preservation of the human, here mostly notably through human notions of compassion, empathy, and justice, and indeed, of justice *as* compassion. Diamond argues that appeals to the human to prevent suffering lose their footing without species difference as the human no longer has a distinct moral impulse or response; human sympathy through imagining the plight of the animal is the key to justice (Wolfe 77). This notion of human ethical response to non-human suffering actually needs non-human being to be only suffering in order to delineate the human, therefore, non-human sentience as suffering can be understood as in line with liberal humanisms.

Nussbaum, Diamond, Derrida, and, it seems, Wolfe, agree that “the fundamental ethical bond we have with nonhuman animals resides in our shared finitude, our vulnerability and morality as ‘fellow creatures’” (80). This position strongly suggests that the most important capacity of non-humans is the capacity to be harmed, and moreover, to be harmed *by humans*. Yet, Wolfe criticizes the link between Derrida’s posthumanist posthumanism and Diamond’s humanist posthumanism:

... vulnerability, passivity, and finitude are recuperated as a ‘being-able’ and a ‘transitivity,’ thus ontologizing and hypostatizing the split between the human and the other—*all* its others—across which the human then reaches in an act of benevolence toward an other we imagine is enough like us to warrant ethical treatment. This only reinforces our suspicion that this human being is an essentially homogenous and undifferentiated creature that is capable of a more or less transparent relationship to its own nature, a relationship that *it then* expresses in and through language and may *then* extend benevolently—or not—to the nonhuman other. (85)

Wolfe's articulation of non-human sentience as suffering seems to me, quite inconsistent, sometimes pushing shared suffering to the forefront and other times retreating from the implications of this push. Wolfe appears to agree with the importance suffering is given, even to non-human beings, but challenges the way the question of non-human animal suffering projects itself back onto the human. In response to Derrida, Wolfe states that:

... humans and animals may share a fundamental 'non-power at the heart of power,' may share a vulnerability and passivity without limit as fellow living beings, but what they do *not* share equally is the power to materialize their misrecognition of their situation and to reproduce that materialization in institutions of exploitation and oppression whose effects are far from symmetrical in species terms. (95)

In other words, humans may twist non-human suffering for human interests but the opposite is not possible. For Wolfe this power changes the question from what *should* be done in light of non-human suffering to what *will* be done, but the notion of non-human suffering exceeding non-human being actually has not changed at all. While these two passages allude to the limitations and possibly even the violence of human compassion, Wolfe returns to shared human/non-human vulnerability and human compassion in the fifth chapter, "Learning from Temple Grandin: Animal Studies, Disability Studies, and Who Comes after the Subject." Through the work of Grandin, Wolfe elaborates on the connection between differently abled human persons and non-human animals and how it may produce shared being relations that "points us toward the necessity of an ethics based not on ability, activity, agency, and empowerment but on a compassion that is rooted in our vulnerability and passivity" (141).

Throughout *What Is Posthumanism?* Wolfe touches on different types and positionings of posthumanism(s), such as Derrida's posthumanist posthumanism and Diamond's humanist posthumanism in the third chapter. In the fourth chapter, "'Animal Studies,' Disciplinarity, and the (Post)Humanities," he further draws these categorizations in relation to how one practices within a discipline, mapping humanist humanism (eg. Heidegger, Habermas), posthumanist humanism (eg. Foucault), humanist posthumanism (eg. Singer, Nussbaum), and posthumanist posthumanism (eg. Derrida, Haraway). While Wolfe does not argue that only works he deems to be in the way of posthumanist posthumanisms are useful for posthumanisms, I am greatly concerned by how these categorizations may cement the two main issues I identify in posthumanisms: 1) joining sentience and suffering for non-human beings and 2) relying on human understanding and knowledge of non-human animal being and feeling. I am less interested in why certain scholars are placed where they are in Wolfe's disciplinary matrix than in what it means to define the level of recourse to the human. Is Nussbaum's dependence on human justice, for example, any *less* posthumanist than, say, Donna Haraway's dependence on human knowledge sites and practices?

Donna Haraway's work on "companion species" in *The Companion Species Manifesto* explores interspecies relationships and what it means to be accountable to, love, and live with each other less violently. While some posthumanist scholars conflate non-human animal sentience and suffering, I do not see Haraway doing this kind of work, instead she explores these interspecies relationships as snares of cruelty, pleasure,

sadness, joy, work, and play (*Companion Species* 12). Embedded in beings' flesh are our histories of living and laboring together, using one another, yet there is also great happiness for all beings in companion species (38). In *When Species Meet* Haraway elaborates on the place of suffering when considering non-human animal being and beings, making it clear that companion species are made of and bound by just as much by experiences of play, work, and comfort as they are by experiences of pain and exploitation. However, I take issue with what I understand to be Haraway's ambivalence with regard to non-human animal suffering for the purposes of scientific knowledge as well as her investment in human understanding and knowledge practices. Her position on suffering is most clearly explained in the third chapter of *When Species Meet*: "Sharing Suffering: Instrumental Relations between Laboratory Animals and Their People," which opens with a story from Nancy Farmer's *A Girl Named Disaster*. The story takes place in Zimbabwe, at a sleeping sickness research testing site where guinea pigs are smothered with topical poisons and inflicted with parasite bites. An old man, Baba Joseph, introduces a young girl to the site, sticking his arm into the guinea pigs' cramped, infested cage in order to share their suffering. I believe that this story best demonstrates the way that Haraway thinks about human/non-human labors and scientific knowledge practices, but it also reveals her larger conceptions of humanity, animality, sentience, and suffering not limited to the research lab and the human/non-human relations that occur within them. In other words, Haraway's position on human/non-human being relations inside the lab has great implications outside of it.

Haraway argues that there exists “the practical and moral obligation to mitigate suffering among mortals—and not just human mortals—where possible and to share the conditions of work, including the suffering, of the most vulnerable lab actors.” (*When Species Meet* 70) The “most vulnerable lab actors,” of course, are non-human animal testing subjects, who Haraway does not deny all agency but instead considers “significantly unfree partners.” (72) For Haraway, non-human animal suffering does not equal victimization or sacrifice as it is an unescapable part of non-human animal labor in the lab. Emphasizing the importance of sharing, response, and responsibility, Haraway deems both human and non-human laborers to be responsible and “response-able” in the lab (71). From Farmer’s story Haraway claims the (non)position of the human with regard to the non-human animal suffering one may take part in: “Baba Joseph’s bitten arm is not the fruit of a heroic fantasy of ending all suffering or not causing suffering, but the result of remaining at risk and in solidarity in instrumental relationships that one does not disavow.” (70) Non-human animal suffering, then, is necessary and may be met with always-inadequate human justifications, but it does not relieve the human obligation to care for and share the suffering of non-human beings. From Haraway’s position, the problem is not the instrumental human use of non-humans, but rather human defiance of the demands of these relations, namely recognition of, caring for, and sharing pain. While this position does not reduce non-human animal being to suffering, it gives to the human control of the conditions which systematically produce non-human animal suffering and leaves humans with little accountability beyond a non-response. It elevates the human

“gaining” of knowledge above non-human animal being, and this, I argue just as violently defines non-human animal being as confections of sentience and suffering. Haraway acknowledges that “acquiring knowledge is never innocent” but too easily accepts the non-human suffering that such acquisition requires (70). At once, human suffering in the name of research and knowledge can be both necessary and good, but not legitimate (72). These points shape a human way of being with animals that does over-define them by suffering, but at the same time will not cease human claims to cause that suffering.

Haraway argues that human responsibility towards non-human animals might be best considered and cultivated through labor rather than rights, as rights-based frameworks rely upon the special status of the human. We should “take animals seriously as workers” although they are allowed little to no part in forming or shifting the conditions under which they labor and suffer (*When Species Meet* 73). Thinking through work, pain, freedom, and necessity together, Haraway refuses to denounce human use of non-human animals, even when such use leads to or requires their suffering. For Haraway, human use of non-human animals does not equate to violation of non-human being, especially for the purposes of knowledge production, as “relations of use are exactly what companion species are about.” (74) Companion species, while promising as a theoretical framework to explore being relations, is not the “non-humanism” it promises to be if its human ethical comportment towards the non-human animal takes suffering as a given, albeit in a different way from posthumanist confections of non-human sentience

and suffering (164). Haraway contends that the fact that suffering can never be endured evenly by all parties working in the lab does not mean we should do away with laboratory use of animals even if it causes non-human pain and death, instead, it means “that these practices should never leave their practitioners in moral comfort, sure of their righteousness.” (75) The infinite unsettledness of the human pertaining to the non-human is the work of “culturing a radical ability to remember and feel what is going on and performing the epistemological, emotional, and technological work to respond practically.” (75) But who defines what is a practical response in the face of suffering, especially if the action of causing that suffering is already deemed to be practical by those who would cause and respond to it? Who is given a “radical ability,” radical feeling, radical being, in performing and theorizing interspecies labors? How is this work non-humanist if it exploits non-human beings not only to produce human knowledges, but also “new” human ways of feeling and being? While Haraway does not conflate non-human sentience and suffering, her assumptions concerning the share-ability and know-ability of non-human suffering is intensely problematic for posthumanisms as it builds a new way of being and knowing (while) human on the backs of non-human beings.

Returning to Haraway’s encounter with the story of Baba Joseph, if the important part of the action of putting his arm in the cage was not taking their place but rather attempting to understand their pain, then we must once again turn to the issue of human empathy and what it can and cannot do. Haraway is interested in “nonmimetic sharing,” affectively springing from reading about Baba Joseph: “There is an element of mimesis

in his actions that I affirm: feeling in the flesh what the guinea pigs in his charge feel.”

(*When Species Meet* 75) Why must humans feel this, affirm this non-human pain in their own flesh? If the human does not or cannot feel it, is it still there? Is the act of feeling what the non-human animal may feel an adequate, ethical response? Haraway argues that given that there is no truly sufficient or justifiable reason for inflicting pain on non-humans, the human response is to witness it, share it, and not take it for granted; this response must be “material, practical, and consequential.” (75) Responding to this pain while working to maintain it instead of eradicate it is, in Haraway’s view, not humanist, yet, there is nothing present in the text about how the non-human being may respond or even room in the text to account for non-human response. Thinking back to Derrida and whether the animal can respond in its own name, it seems the lab site both requires and prevents this response, indicating for me that Haraway’s position does take recourse to the human. Of what sharing pain as a response to causing suffering does, Haraway claims that “Human beings’ learning to share other animals’ pain nonmimetically is, in my view, an ethical obligation, a practical problem, and an ontological opening. Sharing pain promises disclosure, promises becoming. The capacity to respond may yet be recognized and nourished on this earth.” (84) Why is it important to disclose to the human? What does this make known? If the acceptable border of human ethical response to the non-human animal is sharing pain, what does this reveal about non-human animal being? That is, if sharing suffering is response, and response is respect, then sharing suffering is

respect, and interspecies becomings rely on continued non-human suffering that humans both set up and share (88).

Stephanie Jenkins argues that Haraway's work on non-human animal suffering and response is a "nonresponse" endemic in "hypo-critical animal studies." (506) Haraway's answer to Derrida's violation of the (non-human animal) subject and the sacrifice is that killing is not the problem because one cannot be outside of killing but rather "The problem is to learn to live responsibly within the multiplicitous necessity and labor of killing." (*When Species Meet* 80) Here Haraway is making a distinction between killing and killing responsibly, the latter of which forecloses further response to suffering. Haraway argues for killing (non-human beings) responsibly and with (human) consequence, calculation, and reason, though she acknowledges no reason can ever be entirely adequate. Jenkins points out that Haraway does not differentiate between "degree, kind, and intent of killing," that is, the various rifts between *and* within killing and making killable (507). Haraway adamantly "defends" the killing of non-human animals so long as there is thought given to it that is meaningful to the human (*When Species Meet* 87). It is crucial to note that the relationship between sentience and killability in Haraway's work comes down to the question "who falls below the radar of sentience and so is killable." (89) Thinking through this linkage, if the problem is killability (killing irresponsibly, for Haraway) then does Haraway also take issue with measuring sentience and suffering though these measurements are key to the functioning of scientific sites, practices, and knowledges?

Ultimately, Haraway's position on suffering is that humans must hold the tensions of non-human animal suffering, especially in instrumental use, "acknowledging shared pain and mortality." (*When Species Meet* 83) She stresses the significance of caring and care work, though it is elucidated as "the work of paying attention and making sure that the suffering is minimal, necessary, and consequential" (82). Questions that are sadly already answered spill from this definition: Minimal in whose eyes? Necessary and consequential for whom? Haraway may not explicitly conflate sentience and suffering but she does offer suffering as a crucial aspect of human relation to the non-human while remaining somewhat indifferent to actual non-human suffering. While I praise the importance Haraway gives to flourishing rather than "just" relieving suffering, that she proposes this flourishing via "compassionate action" ties together practices of love, affinity, empathy, and still, knowledge. Haraway titles this chapter "Sharing Suffering: Instrumental Relations between Laboratory Animals and Their People," and near the end writes of "good experimenters and their critters." (90) I would like to close my exploration of Haraway by briefly troubling the meeting of these possessive claims. If the conditions and pains of labor, especially in the research lab, can never be borne or shared equally, then human and non-human being actors in the lab can never equally or even comparably belong to one another. Given the state of relations in the lab, the qualification of "good" for experimenter coupled with the possessive claim makes me wonder about what it means to be a non-human being as a scientific instrument that warrants ethical

response. If response and respect are sharing suffering, then does the human act of sharing suffering give some kind of having or owning over to non-human being?

Stacy Alaimo's work in *Bodily Natures* develops the concept of trans-corporality as "thinking across bodies," acknowledging "the often unpredictable and unwanted actions of human bodies, non-human creatures, ecological systems, chemical agents, and other actors." (2) Alaimo focuses on trans-corporality mainly in relation to the human, particularly human bodies, but argues that its implications expand outward to non-human beings. Alaimo's trans-corporality is committed to bodies as active rather than passive matter, and she contends that trans-corporeality can address and attend to pains, sufferings, and harms done to bodies both human and non-human. Alaimo argues that an ethics arises from trans-corporality, but does not elaborate on these ethics or how they may or may not attend to suffering through entanglements of vulnerable bodies. I find her framing of human corporeality and (with, as well as opposed to) more-than-human nature curious, as she never directly addresses non-human corporealities. Defining trans-corporeality as "thinking across bodies" is questionable to me for two main reasons: first, Alaimo never explicitly discusses non-human bodies *as bodies*, never really attends to the difference between non-human beings and objects, and second, trans-corporality as a concept accepts that all bodies are already given over to each other in their becomings, therefore, defining the movement as "across" seems odd. Furthermore, the fetishization of bodies and connections that birth and effect the flesh and the push for a fuller material and fleshy (here, meaning even deeper the skin) exploration of being, if curbed by human

exploration, requires the occupation of human flesh (Alaimo 6). Alaimo appears to be far more interested in what trans-corporeality might mean for the human, or rather, what it might for rewriting the terms of humanity through human (trans-)corporeality. The porosity and penetrability of bodies, and the potential for their harm, injury, and toxicity are the foremost issues of Alaimo's trans-corporeality, which work to overlay bodily vulnerability with experiences of trespass, pain, and illness. That Alaimo conceives of what is unpredictable as already what is unwanted delivers the limits of a trans-corporeal ethics, and this seems to me a different iteration of posthumanist confluences of non-human sentience as suffering. That is, it is not so much that sentience equals suffering for non-humans, but the connectedness of the vulnerability of all bodies as the imperative for ethical consideration and action. The ability to feel pain and illness (especially at the hands of human industry and endeavor) stills functions as the primary connection between human and non-human beings, whether directly or mediated through created environments.

While the interconnectedness of bodily harms forms the core of Alaimo's concept, in the text itself Alaimo is most concerned with human bodies and the "invisible movement of xenobiotic substances across human bodies and more-than-human nature." (125) Present in the text is the consistent phrasing of human bodies versus nonhuman natures, which leads me to question the wording of bodies and natures. I use the word "versus" to point to the contrast between bodies and natures because of the regularity in which Alaimo uses these terms, stabilizing their links to humanity and other-than-

humanity. Why bodies and natures? If Alamio aims to dissolve human/non-human, nature/culture, and active/passive humanist dualisms, are these terms invoked to bring about their own dissolution or is this pairing indicative of a humanist leaning in this particular ecofeminism? Can only humans harm through bodily connection? Does that position non-humans as only absorbing human harms? In either case, Alamio's work is a branch of posthumanist confluences of sentience and suffering given the persistent juxtaposition of acting individual humans with the collectivity of receiving non-human beings and environments, even though Alamio writes against the opposition of passive nature and active culture (136). Alamio does not deny non-human agency, or being and acting apart from or within suffering, but neither does she engage with non-human possibilities of being (145). She rejects the somatophobia, or fear of the body, that is a part of traditional Western philosophy, liberal humanisms, and liberal feminisms (Spelman 119). Fearing the body, particularly the loss of bodily control and corporeal pain and death, still haunts feminisms, but what does Alamio's rejection mean for non-human beings and less-than-human beings who already bear the burden of excess embodiment and are differently vulnerable to the unpredictability of the body in itself and at the hand of others? (Alamio 5) In other words, does her rejection of somatophobia coupled with her concern for the "unwelcomed and unexpected" things that human bodies do or that other things do to/in them take recourse to the human? I argue that it does, not only because in trans-corporeality the human ripples outward but also because it

enthusiastically occupies the (human) body in all its feeling while nearly exclusively addressing human harms.

Alamio gives importance to human knowledge but not necessarily human knowledge practices, as Haraway does. She uses the work of Ursula Heise to emphasize the importance of human understanding, aligning her project of trans-corporeality with Heise's project of ecocosmopolitanism: comprehending environmental connections; both projects, she argues, require "the mediation of scientific information." (Alaimo 16) This mediation, through trans-corporality, "ruptures ordinary knowledge practices," unsettles our understanding of both what and how we come to know, and produces multiple, dissonant epistemologies (17). Alamio calls for knowledge practices which include "nonhuman nature as a participant rather than as an object of inquiry," which is in line with my gesture towards an unknowable posthumanism, but without specification, could easily slip into Haraway's instrumental use of non-human beings recast as non-human "participation" (42). The locations and purposes of such knowledge are also in question, given Alamio's attraction to the "often hazardous landscapes of risk society." (17) She argues that we do not have enough information on human-made substances and human processes and practices that harm bodies, and that we cannot "protect" and "preserve" vulnerable bodies and environments separately (18). I adamantly agree with both of these arguments, but I want to further consider the language Alamio uses. "Hazard", "risk", and "toxicity" crop up throughout the text, warning of interconnected harms and the consequences of chemicals, poisons, pollutions, and "pernicious substances" (104).

Modern “risk society” and culture is given meaning through human-produced matter that permeates bodies human and non-human. When I asked after the locations and purposes of human knowledge, I am thinking about what these ominous words mean in terms of vulnerability as vulnerability to harm; this is especially interesting to me given Alamio’s rejection of somatophobic impulses. Alamio calls for a recognition of and accountability for harms and who bears the burden of trans-corporeal exchanges, most thoroughly engaging with humans who have been gravely harmed but also condemning environmental justice projects for their failure to consider non-human beings. This demand for interspecies recognition and accountability is the most hopeful aspect of her work for me. While being vulnerability is over-defined by harm, especially at the hands of humans, trans-corporeality insists that we rethink what and who well-being and health includes.

A groundbreaking work which, I argue, shatters the aforementioned limits of posthumanisms and hints at where posthumanisms could go is Mel Chen’s *Animacies*. Chen defines “animacy” as a “quality of agency, awareness, mobility, and liveness” with the “capacity to rewrite conditions of intimacy.” (M. Chen 2-3) Chen’s exploration of animacies, broken into categories of words, animals, and metals, troubles intra- and interspecies differences and hierarchies and disrupts how we define life, liveliness, wellness/well-being, awareness, affectivity, and agency. Animacy is unfastened and largely undefined, but certainly not neutral with regard to the bio- and necropolitical stakes of animacy hierarchies (5). Chen’s “animacy” undoubtedly complicates sentience

and suffering for human and non-human beings, as it agitates what is categorized and understood as living, non-living, dying, and thriving; bodies may not move or be animated in the normative sense of living matter and objects, words, and noises may affect and effect in ways that are typical of living matter. Chen does not seek to give a sense of life to those beings and objects that are regularly denied it, but instead to look at how lively being and being lively is defined and the affects and effects of those definitions. Affect is rethought of as feelings and stirrings that cannot arise individually, with affectivity coming about through bodies and things together, within, across, and against animacy hierarchies (12). *Animacies* recognizes the complexities of being relations, not over-defining being by suffering yet not ignoring or defending suffering or practices that require suffering. Importantly, against many posthumanisms Chen's *Animacies* does not fetishize the corporeal, refusing the given body/cyborg binary that many posthumanisms rely upon (3).

As a linguist, Chen's work can be read as playing with language more than anything else, beginning with what it means to be animate, full of life, and well-in-being. Because Chen conceives of animacy within and away from these meanings, this work has, perhaps, the most potential of all the theorists I explore in this thesis to resist non-human animal being and feeling as always already one of pain. At the same time, probing hierarchies of animacy—of what/who is lively, livelier, who can suffer, suffer greater, deeper, more significantly—this work inherently calls into question humanist arguments that other human capacities enhance their/our abilities to suffer more than other creature-

beings. Chen's analysis of the U.S. contemporary bio-necro-political terrain includes non-human being and object lives that expands understandings about the raced, sexed, and sexualized managements of life and death and I am interested in what this kind of work tells us about how we could approach non-human animal being and feeling without falling into what I deem to be the traps of posthumanisms. There is something there in the slipperiness of animacy, in imagining the ungraspable tactile quality of the term and the constant evasion of the certainty of what it may refer to which at once refuses and alludes human knowledge and the fixity of non-human being (M. Chen 9). Animacy and sentiency are connected life (and lacking in life) concepts and therefore reworking animacy reworks sentience (8).

Although *Animacies* as a whole project refuses to play by the posthumanist "rules" I have outlined in this chapter, I am most interested in Chen's work on "Words" and "Animals" and the implications of this work to untether non-human sentience and suffering. In "Words," Chen argues that language itself is animated but also that it has the power to animate, de-animate, and/or re-animate. Languages' animations and capacities to animate both structure and undo animacy hierarchies and the ordering and valuing of human, animal, plant, and object life, living and nonliving matter. Chen states that "For linguists, animacy is the quality of liveness, sentiency, or humanness of a noun or noun phrase that has grammatical, often syntactic, consequences." (M. Chen 24) The consistent significance of the concept across languages coupled with the variations on definitions and hierarchies of animacy together reveals both the importance and utter instability of

animacy and adjacent concepts. Contesting animacies from within, then, can possibly release the barring of the non-human from the realm of sensate beings while not cycling between sentience and/as suffering. If (human) language users can harness animacy hierarchies to affirm or alter the position of beings and matter, as Chen suggests, then conceiving of creature beings and creature hope within constantly disturbed and contested animacies may be able to detached sentience and suffering or even call into question the theoretical power of suffering itself. Chen asks “if language helps to coerce certain figures into non-being, or to demote on an animacy hierarchy, then what are the modes of revival, return, or rejoinder?” (14) Here, reclaiming as reanimation is the work of political possibility, although reclaiming assumes dispossession, lack, and/or loss (79). In *Animacies* de-animation and/as dehumanization are forms of objectifications, with dehumanization meaning towards non-life, non-*being*, and death (social and/or corporeal). Chen’s work on “living states of being that have been marked as equivalent to death” reminds me of how beings human, less-than-human, and non-human have differently been addressed as beings that it would be better to do away with rather than allow them to exist in so-called continuous and inescapable states of suffering (43). Is the overextension of suffering a posthumanist attempt to reanimate non-human beings? If so, what does this assume about suffering’s relationship to non-human being?

These questions leads me to Chen’s work on “Animals.” Chen argues that “the animal transubstantiates beyond the borders of our insistent human ontologies” (M. Chen 13). In other words, non-human ways of being and feeling cannot be defined or contained

by human philosophies on the nature of being. Animals are non-human beings constantly created and existing in the (human) social imagination and so Chen issues a caution not to conflate the human imaginings of animals with non-human animal beings. This at first may appear to be obvious, or a differently-worded caution against anthropomorphizing animals, but Chen is not warning about ascribing human attributes to the animal, but presuming to know anything about the animal at all (90-92). For me, the unquestionable posthumanist question of suffering, that the suffering of non-human beings is knowable, is a part of this caution. Chen is concerned with “*how* the sentience of animals is assessed, especially with regard to its primary criteria: language and methods of communication.” (90) This is interesting, because here Chen is not speaking to sentience as ability in the humanist sense nor to sentience as suffering in the mainstream posthumanist sense, instead urging us to question sentience itself within animacy hierarchies. Referring to hierarchies of animacy in non-human animality, Chen states:

Thinking—and feeling—through sentience promises a revising of dominant animacy hierarchies, through its allowance of a broad range of interanimation and uncognized recognition. But sentience is also not without its problems, particularly if it is either restricted to what could be discoverable (and falsifiable) through experimental research or conceived in terms of the presence of pain and pleasure. (93)

The aforementioned passage brilliantly illustrates the two main problems with posthumanisms I have outlined in this chapter: first, how sentience is sutured to pain and second, that sentience can be somehow discovered and understood by and through human knowledge practices. While posthumanisms that conflate non-human sentience and

suffering are located primarily in questions of being and the ethical response to being, Chen's work is not about questions of being nor is it about coming up with the right questions or actions that will enable us to treat each other well. In other words, there is no linchpin for ethical response. There is nothing fully capable of answering for and to violence in any form, however, that there is no linchpin for a posthumanist ethic does not mean the only response is a non-response. Truly, the never-ending plurality and constant reflexivity of a posthumanism that does not seek *the* thing to return to does not violate beings in its quest to end violence against beings.

The work of Monique Allewaert, along with that of Che Gossett and Alexander Weheliye, together highlight not only posthumanisms' conflation of sentience and suffering but its focus on other-than-human suffering as non-human animal suffering; together, these issues illustrate the necessity of posthumanisms taking the work of critical race studies seriously and using it as both a foundation and a guide for the field. Parahumans, as conceptualized in Monique Allewaert's *Ariel's Ecology*, are persons of color, fragmented and broken by colonization, but while the category of parahuman is borne of experiences of pain and anguish Allewaert refuses to define the parahuman by them. Instead, she gives greater importance to the possibilities of staying within parahumanity, as her interest in parahuman stories and performances is driven by the pleasures and political possibilities within pain, explicitly apart from rehabilitative projects (Allewaert 86). That is, Allewaert does not seek to rehabilitate the parahuman to the category of human, but looks to the redressive possibilities of the fragmented state of

the parahuman. Allewaert argues that the parahuman may generate political possibilities for not only parahumans, but non-human animals as well, “producing a mode of personhood and politics not grounded on human exceptionalism.” (113) Existing between humanity and animality presents different avenues of relating to human, less-than-human, and non-human animal beings, and these relations are not limited to shared abilities to suffer nor are the political possibilities limited to alleviating or eradicating pain. What parahumanity offers are ways of existing and relating to other beings differently while not forgetting harms done or releasing accountability, because the possibilities of the parahuman can never make those harms right, good, or in any way justified. The signifier of parahumanity, the broken, brutalized body, is not just a body dismembered and made to suffer, but a body that supports and needs support from other beings (98). This body does not allow us to forget the suffering it continues to endure, yet it demands something more than the hollow promise to end that suffering or a fixed understanding of that state of being as only suffering. Allewaert believes that taking parahumanity as a purely negative state of being or parahumans as always pained beings is completely in line with definitions and intentions of colonizers, therefore, exploring the possibilities of staying within parahumanity is a crucial anticolonial resistance (100). Dissimilarly, presenting non-human being as pain, loss, and absence does not do non-human animals any favors, arguably, this is one way in which some posthumanisms meet liberal humanisms and colonizing logics.

Che Gossett's "Blackness, Animality, and the Unsovereign" considers the close relationship between Blackness and animality that links human and non-human animal abolition, disrupting assumptions about distinctions between human and non-human rights, conditions, protections, and pains. Gossett's work makes clear the importance of not analogizing or comparing less-than-human and non-human exploitations and sufferings, but rather considering their connections and the ways in which they maintain or may even undo one another, and this, I argue, has far greater, more radical potential than posthumanisms that focus on non-human animal sentience as suffering. Gossett, reading the work of Frederick Douglass and Donna Haraway together, defines abolition "as a means of worlding or 'becoming with,'" acknowledging the impossibility of ending different being exploitations and pains apart from one another. Gossett argues that "Animal liberationists must confront the devaluation of black life and racialization as animalization and the prison industrial complex as part of a movement for abolition," but this work is also impossible if non-human animal sentience is already suffering or Human knowledges are needed because it dismisses alternative human knowledges and ways of being and becoming with non-human animals. One of Gossett's main problems with critical animal studies is its timeline, locating the present as a time for non-human animal liberation that must come since we are now *past* human chattel slavery, a timeline that not only denies non-human animals modes of being that are not suffering, but denies less-than-human humans modes of suffering and exploitation that are now supposedly solely animal. The conflation of non-human animal sentience and suffering then, doubly

functions as a speciesist and racist mechanism. In *Habeas Viscus* Alexander Weheliye talks about suffering in a way that does not flatten or universalize injurious experiences. That is, suffering is not a universal experience that can be recognized and understood in others, nor can it be responded to after recognition. I would like to note that Weheliye is exclusively talking about humanity and Black claims to (human) flesh given the violences and exploitation of chattel slavery. I do not wish to twist his ideas to fit my argument regarding the delineation of the human, but I do think that his work highlights the way that many posthumanist scholars invoke a Eurocentric idea of suffering devoid of particularity and how they take less-than-human suffering as non-human suffering. Perhaps this is the reason that some scholars in posthumanisms, critical animal studies, and ecofeminisms so easily analogize the systemic violences against human and non-human Others while only explicitly attending to the suffering of non-human animals.

José Muñoz's queered concepts of disidentification and hope have the potential to work against conflation of non-human animal sentience and suffering and dependence on human knowledges of non-human animal being and feeling. Muñoz does not explicitly grapple with the non-human but his work does not reduce explorations of being and feeling to solidifications of objects of knowledge, in fact, for Muñoz "knowing" is always questionable. He specifically separates knowledge and expectation from desire, positioning disidentification as an unstable and unpredictable de- and recoding of dominant culture that only arrives from spaces of marginalization and hope as a longing for that which cannot yet be known. Keeping the spirit of Muñoz's disidentification and

hope presents, to my understanding, an opening for posthumanisms to consider non-human being and feeling without scrambling to have it within human grasp or comprehension, or to use it for some foreseeable end, even with the intent to benefit non-human animals. While I consider dismantling human-controlled systems that cause non-human animal suffering to be of great importance, I cannot believe that the human imposition on non-humans the excess burden of corporal agony could possibly lend itself to the amelioration of non-human conditions of being. This theoretical overextension seems to make impossible relief and hope for all creatures, non-human and otherwise. What Muñoz's work enables me to do is to break from and with the unstated requirements of working in posthumanisms, namely from writing non-human sentience as always already suffering, which I consider to loop back to liberal humanist understandings of non-human animal being. Is defining non-human animals entirely by one mode of being any better than denying them that mode entirely?

In *Cruising Utopia* Muñoz imagines a hope and futurity that is not defined by the present and asks us to consider the possibilities of resisting definition (here, of queerness). He looks to both the “no-longer-conscious” and the “not-yet-conscious” to critique the present and bring forth what could be, throwing consciousness itself into question, as well as abilities of being, feeling, affecting, addressing, and being addressed (*Cruising Utopia* 20). I see this work as complicating what it means to be present in the world, with far reaching implications for creature-being. Queering consciousness in this way has the potential to rework the way we think about non-human animal sentience,

conceiving of desire and pleasure within violence marginalization, hopes and imaginings not defined by current times and conditions. Muñoz's hope is always looking to what might come and refuses define the future by the present, which is a much welcome change from posthumanist works that seek to create a future for non-human beings by leaning on human inflictions of harm. Although I want to attend to hurts non-human beings have endured, are enduring, and will continue to endure, I am also inspired to look to creature-beings that have not yet been born into the world as well as those long-passed for unknowable ways of hoping in violence. In this work, Muñoz's hope is somewhat limited by way of Ernest Bloch, who conceives of hope as purely and uniquely human. Muñoz does not completely agree, as is evident in the following excerpt: "I talk about the human as a relatively stable category. But queerness in its utopian connotations promises a human that is not yet here, thus disrupting any ossified understanding of the human." (25-26). I take issue with this, as I argue that we must not predicate hope on the continued existence of the human, assuming that the human, even in a different and unknowable form, will be on the horizon. Regardless, Muñoz's refusal to discipline or define being and feeling is hopeful "beyond" the human, and in my view, this refusal is the key to shifting what posthumanist work means and does. He sees the pragmatic queer politics of the present to be emptied of meaning, possibility, pleasure, and promise; conversely, hope and futurity are not about what aims are most easily attainable and accomplishable. Dissimilarly, the limits of posthumanisms addressed here may be seen as a means to achieve what is practical and do-able for non-human beings, but ultimately

denies hope to creature-beings human and non-human alike. Admittedly, it is more difficult to grapple with the complexities, contradictions, and inconceivabilities of what it means to be ethically with other creatures than to rely on mapped truths of being and relating to one another, however, the accomplishability of the latter forecloses the hope of the former.

I understand disidentification as Muñoz details it to be a form of redress, as disidentification alters the conditions of systemic marginalization, exploitation, and harm. The queered performances Muñoz analyzes in *Disidentifications* rupture and rework minoritarian subjectivity. I am thinking about disidentification with the human as more than an overly simplistic identification with non-human being, form, movement, experience, or feeling, but rather questioning what it means to be human, non-human, animal—not trying to fully know what any of it means but constantly trying to rewrite the terms of occupation and identification in and with them. Disidentification, like and maybe as an act of (creature) hope, takes what is with few assumptions what will be(come) and can work against cementing non-human being in inescapable, constant states of damage. Reading Marga Gomez's performance that parodies lesbian stereotypes, Muñoz writes "she performs her disidentifactory desire for this once toxic representation." (*Disidentifications* 3) This stirs in me the question of what it means to alter posthumanisms from within, enclosed by humanisms. What if posthumanist exaggerations (as in the spectacular spectacle in the vein of Hartman, not a dismissal) of the sufferings of non-human beings could function differently? That is, could they be

used to point to the need for considering creature-being seriously? To call the human into question while rejecting non-human sentience as suffering? This transformative work would necessitate navigating jagged ethical and political terrain, considering disidentification as not just about the identities of those performing, but the ripples of those actions. Muñoz states that “disidentification is a step further than cracking open the code of the majority, it proceeds to use this code as raw material for representing a disempowered politics of positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture.” (31) In this, I see disidentification with the human as not only pointing out the problems with humanisms, as posthumanisms so often do, but utilizing the problems of the human to rethink how all beings are in the world with one another. Disidentification is fragmented and sometimes insufficient; there are no grand claims about this work as the answer, as *enough*, or of any single concept or framework as capable of fully dismantling systemic violence and exploitation. The unsettledness of the term, as if the word itself is in motion—back and forth, but always existing in multiple genres of being—betrays its incomprehensible possibility.

Implications & Hoping Within/Against Suffering

Disidentification with the human and/as doing creature hope are clumsy concepts. As I write this thesis I am fumbling with them, and not just in the metaphorical sense. I stare at my notes and my flickering, waiting cursor too often at a loss for words, wildly waving my hands in a frustrated attempt to call them forth, in an attempt to figure out

how to convey what words can never express. I ask myself if this work even makes sense outside of my head, if its incoherency prevents connection; yet, this incoherency is what draws and endears me to these concepts. The unspoken demand for cogency and coherency in posthumanisms, in the ethics that will supposedly give us *the* answer for how to treat other beings well, is really a demand for the same in non-humans, in all creature-beings; that is, a demand for a cogency and coherency of *being*. Suffering is important and compelling, so I am not trying to downplay or deny its existence or its gravity, but when it becomes the only aspect of non-human being that matters posthumanisms meet humanisms in their circumscription of non-human animal being. Regarding posthumanist conflations of non-human sentience and suffering, I understand the logic behind trying to create rational, compact, deployable arguments; it simplifies and clarifies what ethical response within and against violences looks like. I understand why so many focus on empathy, because pain can seem absolute. I understand why some draw upon human knowledges and knowledge practices, after all, we are not abstract individuals capable of shedding the human. However, I cannot ignore that there are heavy issues with how suffering is being talked about and how it is made untouchable.

This chapter is my attempt to question the ostensibly unquestionable thing we call suffering, especially its function in posthumanisms. Reading through these theorists, I have noticed disturbing patterns in the way suffering that is talked about: the assumption that there is a singular experience of suffering that all beings experience the same or similarly, that we can understand to the extent that a single word is capable of

summarizing it; the notion of a natural, *human* response to suffering that can be provoked; and that beings that are conceived of as always already suffering, which may lead to the position that they are better off not existing or *being* at all. When we presume the primacy of suffering, I wonder what we are not asking. What pathways to ethical relations are we not pursuing? What are other ways we could be discussing suffering? Why does the question of suffering already fall under questions of being? I would like to (formally) close this chapter by circling back to Derrida and his continuous return to the question of suffering. Following Derrida's human abyss, I argue that the question of suffering can only ever lead back to itself, to its own posing, in much the same way as the human infinitely announces itself to itself.

CHAPTER III
CREATURE-BEING, HOPES AND ANXITIES

Creature Hope in Practice

I originally envisioned this chapter as an exploration of disidentification with the human and/as creature hope through texts that I read as not invested in discovering, recovering, or attending to the human. I will do this work, in part, through a disidentificatory, hopeful, creaturely analysis of Franz Kafka's classic text *The Metamorphosis* and works of queer of color poetry in the online journal *Nepantla*; however, this chapter has transformed into a scattered, circuitous development of my understanding of these concepts in all their possibilities and limitations, hopes and anxieties. I diverted from my original plan in order to include my work on (creature) hope in places of hopelessness, considering humans experiencing homelessness with non-human animal companions, the policing of intimacies and pleasures in spaces of social death, and interspecies companionship and community in seemingly hopeless situations as well as creature hope(s) in dissonance, remembering my experiences in mental health institutions where my own hopes were predicated on non-human experiences of exploitation and violence. The scatteredness of this chapter is intentional and important to me because I want to consider the concepts of disidentification with the human and/as *doing* creature hope from various spaces and in various modes but also because I see

many stories playing out in this thesis. This thesis winds from the first chapter introducing disidentification with the human and/as creature hope as concepts that I understand to crucially differ from many posthumanisms, to the second chapter that questions the posthumanist limit of non-human sentience as suffering, to this chapter that explores interspecies hopes and anxieties that I understand through my concepts, to the fourth and final chapter about interspecies intimacies and sometimes competing, dissonant, unknowable, and/or violent creature hope(s). This chapter flows from a widely-read classic Western text to a very personal experience that sets up the final chapter. In its entirety, this thesis is a parallel scholarly project and personal story, the latter is woven throughout my exploration, mapping my naivety, disillusionment, frustrations, pain, and hopes in both intentional and unintentional ways.

In the following sections I want to be clear that my aim is not to overlay these texts and subjects with my concepts of disidentification with the human and/as *doing* creature hope, make claims about authors' intentions with regard to the human, or twist their words to suit my project, rather, I want to see what new possibilities they may present if read alongside these concepts. I imagine using these concepts as a prism rather than a lens, to see the aforementioned "objects" in new and unpredictable ways. Just as disidentification with the human and/as creature hope is not about presenting "the" ethical answer for how to exist with other beings, my own practices of *doing* creature hope in terms of these texts are not about the finding and presenting "the" correct interpretation but reading and writing about them for and with purpose. At various points

in this project I have italicized “*doing*” in terms of creature hope to place emphasis on creature hope as a way of actively working with what beings have available rather than making grand claims of conceptual discovery or positioning one’s work as new or entirely apart from and/or against previous offerings. This doing of creature hope is my methodological guide for the following readings. What joins these readings, despite their vastly difference subjects, is the hopelessness of nailing down the human and non-human and the consequences that arise when we try to do just that. Creature-being and hope is about the impossibility of an absolute human or non-human, exposing human/non-human comparisons and analogies, particularly within posthumanisms, as products of the human itself with all its accompanying violences.

***The Metamorphosis*, a Disidentificatory Reading**

The Metamorphosis by Frank Kafka is a classic text, very well-known and widely-taught. In my reading and analysis of this novella I am not primarily concerned with how it is normatively taught nor with Kafka’s original motivations or intentions for the story, rather I want to analyze this text through my concepts of disidentification with the human and/as *doing* creature hope in order to further unfold these concepts and to express their non-location. That is, I did not discover or come up with these concepts and I do not own them; this work of disidentification and hope is already happening and has been happening for a long time and can be found in vastly different places and times. I will not argue here that Kafka wished to shed the human or that he would take issue with

recourse to the human in the same way I do, instead, I will consider his work in *The Metamorphosis* in relation to two main themes in this thesis: first, how my reading allows for a more flexible, open, and complex understanding of relations within and between creature beings than approaches that look to and rely on non-human similarities to the human; and second, how my reading lets me explore what disidentification and hope mean when confronted with intra- and interspecies disgust and demands for affinity, compassion, and empathy.

In *The Metamorphosis* Gregor Samsa awakes one morning to find himself transformed into a large insect, retaining his human mind and memories but entirely insect in bodily form. Gregor's contradictory and competing desires, despairs, pleasures, and pains, human and non-human, function as the primary conflict in the piece. Gregor's seemingly abrupt transformation is initially only in body, but as time passes his mind begins to change in accordance with his new species form. There are numerous conflicts between Gregor's previous and current states of being, and he finds he cannot bring the human and insect parts of himself together in harmony, only hold them in tension with one another. He cannot hang on to the human parts of himself and be physically comfortable at the same time and he cannot fully let go of the human and be mentally alright with himself. His physical changes bring about new being desires: what to eat, where and how to move, and what his space should look like. While inhabiting his human body Gregor had loved milk, but when it is brought to him in his insect body he finds it now repulses him and finds trash far more appetizing. The longer he lives in his non-

human body, the more Gregor prefers a different habitat, such as the dark, cramped space under his couch. Objects that used to be meaningful and comforting as a human, particularly a much-loved painting, are now in the way, impeding his movement across the walls of his room. Gregor finds new pains and pleasures in his now body, not only new tastes but new sensations and ways of being and moving: the random and uncontrollable movement of his many legs, feeling and knowing through his antennae, the fresh perspective from crawling on the walls and ceiling of a long-familiar dwelling space, and the new spatial longings for darkness and close confines. The pain of newly-acquired injuries in his insectuous legs and jaw is coupled with the pleasure of inhumanly quick healing and new bodily vulnerabilities are matched by new corporeal resiliences (Kafka 21, 26). Gregor's complex feeling about his state of being is indicated by simultaneous senses of "shame" and "ease." (20) His sorrow and worry at the loss of his human body is juxtaposed with breathing "more freely" and feeling "relaxed and almost happy" in his distinctly creature-being (26). At one point, Gregor experiences a sudden sense of alright-ness with and within his new body; of course, this feeling does not last, but his affective fluxes and switches point to a complexity of being and feeling that cannot be discernably human or non-human. Generally, Gregor has great difficulty existing with his "human" mind and insect body and is both troubled and relieved by how his mind changes in (dis)conformity with his body. He accepts, however grimly, his new state of being and ultimately his fate, even though it means a slow, lonely, uncomfortable death.

To think of Gregor's contradictory and competing aspects of being and feeling, human and non-human, is to think of his disidentification with the human and distance from human (kind). Gregor's physical transformation separates him from the human and from his family in very painful ways, but this separation was also felt prior to transformation. In other words, Gregor's alienation precedes, not follows, his metamorphosis. Prior to the morning he wakes to find himself an insect, he worked as a traveling salesman in order to keep his struggling family afloat and dealt with feeling isolated from others, frustrated with the demands of his career and of the human world at large, and exhausted from lack of sleep and content. Gregor always felt disconnected from humanity, and as a traveling salesman and an insect he felt a lack of control of circumstances. I argue that his metamorphosis from human to insect is a literal embodiment of all his fears, anxieties, isolations, and disappointments he felt in his human form. Gregor's way of being following his transformation is one of disidentification with the human, though this concept can project back onto his previous human form. Muñoz conceived of disidentification as the decoding and recoding of dominant culture by way of minoritarian subjectivity and I have used it in this project to study the ways that human Others may identify with and against the human as a way to survive their less-than-human status and to be differently with other creature-beings. This concept enables a reading of *The Metamorphosis* that allows for an unmarked analysis of being and of what is at stake for those denied and/or at odds with the human. Oxford Dictionaries defines "metamorphosis" in the non-zoological sense as "A change of the

form or nature of a thing or person into a completely different one, by natural or supernatural means.” (“Metamorphosis”) This definition seems to adhere to both normative readings of *The Metamorphosis* as well as normative understandings of being kind and/or form. My reading of the story of Gregor’s metamorphosis offers is not one of a human changed into an insect, but of a creature-being dealing with an unexpectedly altered body and inconsistent and sometimes incompatible desires and disgusts, none of which are entirely human or non-human. Gregor’s story also gestures beyond its own telling throughout the decades since its introduction, to an approach to what ethical relations between creatures could be without trying to find human likeness in non-humans, unlike posthumanisms the rely on the human acknowledgement of shared vulnerability, finitudes, and suffering. Just as Gregor could not clearly differentiate between or neatly align his human and non-human aspects of his being, only hold them in indistinct tension with one another, so too is that how we should think about disidentification and creature hope “after” the violence of the human. Holding the “human” and “non-human” in indistinct tension is important because it offers a way to think about ethically being with other creatures that does not rely on difference or the maintenance of difference from the human while taking into account the violence that humans have done to less-than-human and non-human beings.

The transforming relationships between Gregor and his family members also allows me to further explore a theme that has flowed throughout this thesis: the problems with ethical considerations for other beings that are contingent on sympathy and/or

empathy. The rampant disgust and repulsion for certain beings and the insistence on familiarity, affinity, compassion, and empathy for ethical being relations are problematic apart from one another, but together foreclose any ethical consideration of less-than-human and non-human beings that does not rely on human impulse. In *The Metamorphosis* Gregor's family, consisting of his cohabitating father, mother, and sister, each differently feels some combination of sympathy and disgust, former love and current horror. All of his family members, who Gregor previously worked very hard to fully support, feel only the echoes of love for their son/brother, as the potent feeling is apparently irreconcilable with his current insect body. While they allow him to stay in his room, it now functions as his holding space. While they fulfill his most basic needs in the beginning, they feel extreme discomfort and animosity at his very existence and presence in the house. Gregor's mother claims to still care for Gregor, but at first she refuses to visit him and later has great difficulty coping with the very sight of him. His sister is his primary caregiver, but in the end practically begs for his death and is the one to decide to let him die. His father displays towards him both some sort of compassion and recognition of being but also great violence, finally causing his death. He mortally wounds Gregor and following the initial violence is reminded of his blood ties to his son "despite his current sad and revolting form," however, this recognition does not seem to eat away at his utter disgust, as he precedes to neglect a dying Gregor (Kafka 32). Once again, I am thinking of trash animals, of pests to humans, of what it means to predicate ethical relations on loveability and proximity against Kafka's choice for Gregor to turn

into a “horrible vermin” (7). Gregor’s body as giant insect conjures tremendous revulsion from his family, even as they weakly and sporadically attempt to sympathize with him. The unloveability of Gregor as a vermin, the ineffectiveness of sympathy, and the grossly violent workings of the human are made perfectly clear in the final pages of *The Metamorphosis*, which fittingly coincide with the final days of Gregor’s life.

Near death, Gregor experiences physical and mental pain, loss of mobility, neglect, and misunderstanding, yet in the end he also feels comfortable in his pained insect body and at peace with his feelings of love for the family that ignored and abused him. Gregor’s family members’ actions in his last days shed light on why we cannot continue to affirm hope through the human and human affectivities. After Gregor is injured, his mother cleans his room in order to help him heal, but she cleans it too well for his insect body and the dampness exacerbates his condition and makes him gravely ill. For me, this leads to a way of thinking about living with other creature-beings that is away from human intentions and (mis)understanding. However kind the intentions behind the action of cleaning the room were, they sealed Gregor’s fate and this misunderstanding only intensifies the uneasiness, disgust, and apathy felt for Gregor. The family then allows the room to become very soiled and begins to clutter the room with object unwanted elsewhere in the house, as this is also how they feel about Gregor. In a conversation in the room below Gregor’s floor, they have a conversation about what to do with him in which they deem themselves to be tortured, forced to endure, and “persecuted” by an animal, by his mere existence (Kafka 40). They decide to let him die

and after this occurs they feel hope, all having found jobs that hold “particularly good promise for the future,” a future absent Gregor who had previously financially supported all of them through a job that made him miserable; with their “new dreams and good intentions” *The Metamorphosis* comes to a close (44).

On September 6, 2000, Dr. Warren Breckman delivered the Penn Reading Project Lecture at The University of Pennsylvania, titled “Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* In His Time and In Ours.” Breckman began this lecture as follows:

... with its exploration of identity, of belonging and exclusion, of tolerance and intolerance, *The Metamorphosis* raises many questions for people like you, students who are facing a time of transition and transformation. Of course, my hope is that your education ... will not transform you into beetles, but into less earth-bound creatures. Nonetheless, the tale of the unfortunate Gregor Samsa can make us think more deeply about our own identity, about the fluidity of what we take to be stable and fixed, and about the perils and miracles of our own metamorphoses.

I find Breckman’s call for the students he is addressing to become “less earth-bound creatures” quite interesting considering that my reading of *The Metamorphosis* calls for a deeper, more complex consideration of what creature-being means for ethical engagements with one another. Why can the seeming fixedness of the human *not* be dismantled by the fluxes and flows of creatures? Why is the relationship of creature to environment one of constraint? In my reading, this story is not one of strict identification or of binaries such as belonging/exclusion and tolerance/intolerance; rather, it is about the disorder, grunginess, and inconceivability of being. That is, Gregor never fully identifies as human or insect nor does he ever completely belong to or become excluded from his

family or the human. Furthermore, the question of (in)tolerance does not get at what it means to disidentify with the human and/as *doing* creature hope facing disgust, apathy, hostility, and/or fear. To tolerate is to endure, which as *The Metamorphosis* so clearly shows us, does not generate ethical thought or action towards other beings. My point here is not that we should dismiss or condemn Breckman's lecture, or any reading and analysis for that matter, but that we must be constantly open to and committed to practices of disidentification and hope in order to see what these concepts offer us and all the places they can be found.

Nepantla, Liminal Spaces & Species

Bridges span liminal (threshold) spaces between worlds, spaces I call nepantla, a Nahuatl word meaning tierra entre medio. Transformations occur in this in-between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries. Nepantla es tierra desconocida, and living in this liminal zone means being in a constant state of displacement—an uncomfortable, even alarming feeling. Most of us dwell in nepantla so much of the time it's become a sort of "home." Though this state links us to other ideas, people, and worlds, we feel threatened by these new connections and the change they engender. — Gloria Anzaldua

The above quote by Gloria Anzaldua appears on the welcoming page of the inaugural issue of *Nepantla: A Journal Dedicated to Queer Poets of Color*. I believe that this quote speaks to the possibilities of disidentification with the human and/as creature hope, of existing and working in boundless, murky, creaturely space, both within and against the human. From liminal spaces the poets of *Nepantla* grapple with their

experience of marginalization, violences, pleasures, and hopes, sometimes calling into question the very notion of the human, muddying the boundaries of the human/in/a/non-human, and reaching out to Other creatures across time and space. The unlimited promise of disidentification and creature hope can be seen in the poetry of those persons existing in the margins of humanity. The realities and imaginings of these queer of color poets are hopeful beyond the human, reminding us that all beings' pasts, presents, and futures are always already inextricably bound together and so too are our hopes. In this section, I will be looking at Naima Woods' "Necropsy" and Amber Atiya's "if my slumlord allowed pets" from the first issue of *Nepantla* and Joshua Jennifer Espinoza's "I Dream of Horses Eating Cops" and Jess X. Chen's "The Last Words of the Honey Bees" from the second issue.

When I first read *Nepantla* in November 2014, "Necropsy" by Naima Woods was the poem I became most fixated with, and then reading Muñoz's work last Spring I became overwhelmed with the possibilities of this piece. "Necropsy" was my stimulus for this thesis, as Woods queers the human and non-human, alive and deceased, real and imagined; through these queerings Woods imagines a possibility and hope not predicated on the human. An amateur version of a necropsy is performed in this poem, a necropsy being "the examination of an animal after death. The purpose of a necropsy is typically to determine the cause of death, or extent of disease." ("Necropsy Factsheet") While a "necropsy" can refer to the procedure performed on any animal species, the term "autopsy" is traditionally and typically reserved for humans; however, "autopsy" is being

used more frequently as it may be “more palatable to pet-owners” and “reinforces the concept that animal and human health are inextricably linked” (“Necropsy Factsheet”). Woods, prodding the splayed corpse of a chick, reimagines their self as this bird, vulnerable and open to the investigation and interpretation of sex. Since “necropsy” is not a commonly used term I want to think about the significance of its usage here; perhaps it could point to the bodily similarity/difference that Woods is searching for, for some difference in possibility for the bird that Woods has not yet found (but hopes for) in the beginning of the poem. Instead of allowing a human-specific term to be extended to the non-human, Woods insists on using a broader term for examine both their person and the fallen bird. I also find the discovery aspect in relation to death or disease to be telling, because Woods is not trying to find the bird’s cause of death, but rather its (and her own) cause for hope. This chick, now free from the confines of its socially determined body through death, inspires Woods in life. The human and non-human meld at points in this piece and at other points are quite distinct; Woods operates on the chick and looks to it for form, and at other times the boundary is blurred through a poetic melding of the two bodies. When the poet searches the bird’s body for sexed parts, it could be their own body search taking place. The wing and beak in the last line of the poem is both of the chick and the poet; the chick now and the poet in the future. The body “escaping its skin, hunting for purpose” is that of the bird, but becomes a form that Woods will presumably seek to emulate in the future (Woods).

Did this morbid exploration, this necropsy, actually take place? This necropsy, real or imagined, both comforts and inspires Woods. The poet articulates the necropsy as happening in the present, but looks towards a future of possibility, even though that future is actually in the way of escape through some form of death, corporeal or otherwise. When Woods describes the bones of the bird no longer holding the body's form and the very structure of the body transforming, I hear Muñoz's queer futurity. Must the "no-longer conscious" be human to be able to bring about utopian queer futurity? (*Cruising Utopia* 20) Woods' poem throws the very state of the human body into question, calling upon a mode of hope that can only exist beyond the human in the way of disidentification. What I find particularly striking about this piece is the slippage between human and non-human corporalities. Throughout the poem there are moments where it is unclear whether the bird, the author, or both persons together are being referenced. Perhaps even more interesting is when Woods chooses to include or exclude the claiming of "I." Of the seven stanzas in "Necropsy" five locate the author as "I;" in the third and final stanzas there is no such claim to subject position. "This body turns outward" begins the third stanza, and although the previous stanza spoke specifically of the bird's body, ending in a semi-colon, it is telling that a break occurs before the body referenced becomes more abstract (Woods). In Woods' exploration of the body it reads as though they are turning their probe inwards before the next stanza cleaves them again.

I read "Necropsy" as a poetic form of disidentification with the human and/as doing creature hope. The physical forms named "human" and "animal" are continuously

muddied, the intimate exploration of the bird's body troubles normative conceptions of material forms, and most importantly, the body of the corporeally dead bird not only represents hope and possibility for Woods, but hopes and possibilities arise from the action of performing the necropsy. Woods explicitly acknowledges the possibilities the chick quite literally conjures for the poet. "The bones have reinvented themselves" "the body no longer weighted with work or conditioned by movements" "It's just a body escaping its skin, hunting for purpose" "let death be a marker of possibility. Become something more than a body." (Woods) Woods seems to be calling for a mode of death different from that which the bird experienced, but a death still full of freedom and hope. This poem, perhaps more than any other in this collective, exemplifies my argument for the need of a hope beyond the human and a posthumanism not indebted to the human as a valued category of existence. Woods' intensely hopeful postmortem dissection of the chick simultaneously makes obvious the need to dismantle the human and the impossibility of doing so due to its endlessly regenerative violent manifestations of human subjectivities. I would also argue that Muñoz's notion of "utopian impulse" or a performance of utopia is very much present in "Necropsy" (*Cruising Utopia* 26). The act of doing this green necropsy is not only a physical performance of an operation, but a performance that enables new hope and potentiality for queer lives: freer, more pleasurable, unconfined queer embodied experiences.

This poem was the catalyst for my concept of disidentification with the human and/as doing creature hope. No one can step out of the human, but Woods imagines a

new way of being through an exploration of a non-human being's body, a way of being that does not rely upon violent human notions of sex and gender. The chick, while dead in body, is not just a passive figure that Woods physically dissects or imagines on, rather, the chick is active in Woods imagining and becoming. The bird and Woods are both participants in the necropsy, and more importantly, the gesture towards new ways of creature being is done together. The action of performing the necropsy is doing creature hope, as Woods' hopes spring forth from the stirring of the body, physically and affectively. In the final stanza of "Necropsy" Woods writes the following: "A dead bird knows how to avoid [line] self-pity [line] let injury be swaddled [line] let death be a marker of possibility." The imagery of swaddling injury, of possibility coming from harm and what seems to be the ultimate finality, perhaps best illuminates what it means to keep creature-being and hope open.

"I Dream of Horses Eating Cops" by Joshua Jennifer Espinoza primarily addresses police brutality against people of color. This poem both full of despair and hopeful, or more fittingly, hopeful from within despair. In this piece Espinoza is mourning state violences while fantasizing and imagining the unimaginable: a kind of futurity for queer persons of color. Espinoza's poem does not strike me as an act of disidentification with the human and/as doing creature hope simply because they mention non-human animals multiple times, but because they locate reincarnation as animals as a site of possibility and an answer to "the same violence swallows itself and produces bodies [line] and names for bodies." Espinoza opens with "i dream of horses eating cops

[line] i have so much hope for the future [line] or no i don't." This imagery of horses eating cops is jarring because of their historical working relationship; cops riding horses, getting around on them, performing duties, and committing violences turns into the consumption of not only human persons but figures in a position of state power. Dreaming of horses eating cops turns positions of exploitation and consumption on their head, and this imagery is especially vivid because horses are herbivores, and there is a terrifying and terrific strangeness to imagining human flesh, torn body parts, and blood dangling and dripping from bitted equine mouths, harnessed for state use by now-victims. "I Dream of Horses Eating Cops" brings together the human exploitation of non-human animals for state service, police brutality against dehumanized persons of color, and the state's reliance on violences against less-than human and non-human animal others. This piece also invokes a hope that comes from within a space of social death, and perhaps can only be found through disidentification with the human: "i name my body full of hope despite everything [line] i name my body dead girl who hasn't died yet." (Espinoza) Espinoza uses non-human animals in two ways within and against injury, first, in a reversal of horse-cop power dynamics and second, in ending with a hope for a rebirth on what I understand to be the level of creature-being: "i hope i come back as an elephant [line] i hope we all come back as animals [line] and eat our fill [line] i hope everyone gets everything they deserve." This is Espinoza's wide-open wish for something new that does not and cannot lead back to this place of being-value stratification.

In “The Last Words of the Honey Bees” Jess X. Chen sets up and continually builds on a metaphor between the lives and work of bees and women of color as well as harms against them. Chen’s poem highlights how much our lives and hopes rely on each other, both in ways that are natural and essential to life on earth (such as bees pollinating flowers and crops) and ways that are constructed (persons of color, especially women of color, have their labors exploited for the benefit of white supremacy). Dissimilarly, both the labor of bees and women of color is exploited and the fruit of their labors are claimed by white humans: “You found our hive and renamed it colony” (J. Chen). Chen notes that this claiming is also a denial of reliance; that when the bees die, vegetation will die, food will run out, non-human animals will die, and humans will die. When women of color die and cannot labor for others, what will die with them? Honey bees and women of color differently hold the world up in their labor and being, but they also are differently being harmed and killed by the very beings that rely on their work. To my sight, reading this poem beside disidentification with the human perfectly illustrates how this work of disidentification is already happening, especially in the margins. Chen seems to identify more with the lives and fates of honey bees than the fully human humans. It may also call for a kind of creature hope because it urges readers to think about the connections between creature-beings; the lines “The poison in the pollen is poison in our colony is poison in your children” and “Honey? [line] Who will raise the flowers [line] when we are gone? Honey, [line] do you see our queen? [line]She is next. And then [line] the Earth, and you, [line] Honey” collapses the privileged, untouchable Human (J. Chen).

Considering this piece and my analysis of Dr. Randy Laist's "Why I Identify as Mammal" from the first chapter together makes me think about different modalities of identification and disidentification, how and why disidentification flourishes in liminal spaces, and what it means to be in a position in which one must disidentify. That is, Laist is choosing to identify as something other-than-human *in addition* to the category of human that he will always be afforded while marginalized humans are barred from the human and may disidentify as a means of coping, survival, and socio-political transformation. Chen's "The Last Words of the Honey Bees" does not require human affinity or make empty attempts at empathy, but instead recognizes the value of beings such as honey bees and women of color and how both are differently dying from violences perpetuated by those who rely on their labors.

Amber Atiya's "if my slumlord allowed pets," the final poem I would like to consider from *Nepantla*, explicitly discusses the living conditions and experiences of non-human animals on the streets along with the conditions Atiya faces as a queer person of color living in an impoverished urban area. "These streets weren't paved for tenderness" is a stanza on its own, describing the state of the circumstances for all beings in this space and time (Atiya). Atiya begins this piece by explicitly relaying their wish to adopt all the non-human animals experiencing homelessness, hunger, and violence, if only their living situation could accommodate such a wish. This hope that the poet expresses is both for themselves and other creatures, human and non-human, to live together in support. Perhaps more than any other poem in this journal it calls for a bond

between human and non-human animal Others, as both live in precarious states of being, liminal spaces where the future is so unclear and unpredictable. The “if” in the title of this piece means that Atiya is imagining another time in this place, an alternate reality or even a future, in which all those who live in Nepantla could do away with certain spatial boundaries marked by species and live better, more livable lives.

I argue that like the poems above, “if my slumlord allowed pets” is performative, “doing in futurity” for queer persons of color and for non-human animals in its call for a mode of collective belonging that is not limited to humanity (*Cruising Utopia* 26). The subjects in this piece are not always completely distinct; the following stanza in particular asks the reader to consider whether the poet is only writing about the non-human animals scraping by: “trimmed with scabs [line] toppling trash [line] for fries and wing tips.” (Atiya) The boundaries of the human and animal are convoluted not only by condition but also by the potential for comfort and shielding from the harsh realities of the past and present. Atiya figuratively reaches out for those non-human animals suffering in the streets, even though they themselves also live in liminal space, and in doing so works to break down the boundaries of species and value. They imagine an unlocatable point in time and space that would allow for their communal existence and in doing so actively works for this future. This poem implicitly attends to sex, gender, race, class, and species in tension with one another, which I believe opens us to a posthumanism not bound by its own object of study. The tone of this piece is overflowing with the desire to care for Other(ed) creatures, sadness and disgust at the conditions that all of the current

inhabitants must grapple with (but not disgust of beings), and the hope that in some other time affection and closeness could occur between human and non-human inhabitants alike. The overt desire in this piece is for a pleasure that comes with safety and security across the borders that reproduce species difference. Of course, relying on human affinity for non-human animals is highly problematic, as I have previously discussed, but it would be equally problematic to dismiss or invalidate tangled desire to care for others and the desire for survival in liminal spaces.

(Creature) Hope in Places of Hopelessness

In Mid-October 2015 I took a trip to Asheville, North Carolina; it was the weekend before my thesis proposal defense and I needed to get my mind off of my project for a bit. Moving through the crowded streets, I came across an outdoor wall where passersby were encouraged to write their hopes for their lives and to read of others' hopes. One could read on this wall scribblings about future travels, finding love, and dream jobs. Leaning against a fence beside this wall sat a homeless woman and a dog. As we passed the pair, I heard a woman behind us loudly remark to her partner "Why would you even have a pet on the streets? You can't even take care of yourself." Although this trip was meant to take my mind off my thesis, it sparked a curiosity about what creature hope means in places of hopelessness. Why was this woman so affronted by the brief sight of an interspecies intimacy on the streets? What could this reaction reveal about the anxieties surrounding the human? I began thinking not only about

policing intimacies and pleasures in liminal spaces, but also how those beings in the margins live intimately, both pleasurably and painfully, with other creature-beings. Thinking through these questions in relation to persons experiencing homelessness with non-human animal companions affords one the chance to consider expanded notions of companionship, community, and survival. What does it mean to hope in and from liminal spaces in which all aspects of being and living are supposed to be defined by hardship, loneliness, and dispossession? What does it mean to survive and even thrive with another being in these spaces, resisting scripts of human/non-human animal relations and often facing extreme animosity from others? The policing of persons experiencing homelessness living with non-human animal companions seems an anxious, angry response to interspecies intimacies, disclosing the violence of the human towards human, less-than-human, and non-human beings and the intimate, hopeful possibilities of living with Others in the margins of the human and human societies. Without romanticizing homelessness or erasing the dangers and precarities of being in that position, we need to consider what the loud rejection of relationships between homeless human and non-human beings says about how proper humans treat both their own kind as well as non-human animals.

I will examine these questions through an exploration of Leslie Irvine's *My Dog Always Eats First: Homeless People & Their Animals*; this text is not without its issues but it tells the stories of persons experiencing homeless with non-human animal companions, and, unfortunately, this is not a topic that has been written about

extensively. It is important to consider that this is a sociological study, but I am reading and interacting with it from the concepts of disidentification with the human and/as *doing* creature hope. That is, I will be engaging more with the stories told than with the sociological study itself. The stories, for me, play with human; some stories I read as persons disidentifying with the human, refusing to talk about their companions in terms of ownership. These stories demand that we think about what the condemnation of human/non-human relationships on the streets may mean for the human. These stories arise from spaces of social death, where human ideas of life value and being value are troubled. Irvine describes her study as exploring “what it means to care for and be in a relationship with an animal, and the role of the animal in one’s sense of self.” (3)

Specifically, she is interested in what parts “pets” play in homeless persons’ identities and narratives, in how these persons narrate their relationships with non-human animals in order to navigate life on the streets. I want to explore even deeper, to what these relationships and reactions to these relationships tell us about the human. Read with disidentification and creature hope, these stories highlight not only a hope for humans beings abandoned and disregarded as humans by others of their normative species kind, but also hope for a way to be and live that is not measured by typical standards of human success and happiness. My theoretical framework for this exploration is greatly informed by the work of Lisa Cacho in *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected*. In this text Cacho “examines how human value is made intelligible through racialized, sexualized, spatialized, and state-sanctioned

violences” and the ways in which social death makes “certain vulnerable and impoverished populations ... deserving of discipline and punishment but not worthy of protection” (4, 5). Cacho is talking about populations with different relationships to the U.S. legal system, particularly persons of color who exist in permanent states of rightlessness and ineligibility for personhood due to the makeup of their bodies rather than their behavior (6). However, her work makes me think about how not only certain bodies are needed for criminalization but also certain bodily relations to public and private spaces. Persons experiencing homelessness are vulnerable in that they are Others dead to others, and their very presence in the world is already one of trespassing. That is, their socio-spatial position defines them as failures in the ways of human property ownership and labor contributions as well as largely unworthy of love, companionship, and hope. Cacho argues that “Value is ascribed through explicitly or implicitly disavowing relationships to the already devalued and disciplined categories of deviance and nonnormativity” and that “we are all recruited often unwittingly and/or unwilling to devalue lives, life choices, and lifestyles because valuing them would destabilize our own precarious claims to and uneasy desire for social value” (18, 27). If we read this argument regarding social death, being-value, and disposability beside interspecies intimacies on the streets, then what does our admonishment of persons experiencing homelessness with companion animals tell us about the instability of the human and the disjointed ideas we hold about values of human lives, non-human lives, and certain relationships between these beings? When one distances themselves from persons experiencing homelessness

and decries their relationships to other beings, they reify the human, the values of the human, and their standing in relationship to the human.

In the opening of *My Dog Always Eats First* Irvine recounts an experience many years earlier in which she and other person encountered a homeless man and his dog: “We took turns telling him how his dog deserved a better life. He might have chosen homelessness, we said, but his dog had not.” (2) They tried to call Animal Control but were brushed off as they were not able to say that the dog was suffering in any way. Irvine not only assumed that the dog would be better off without their human companion but that they would be better off in a human-designed institution for non-human animals, one which regularly devalues, abuses, and kills non-human animals. The homeless persons telling their stories in this study discuss frequent confrontations over their non-human animal companions, and when Irvine approached these persons she found that they were eager to prove that their relationship was one of care: “Accustomed to criticism, they were quick to assure me of the health and safety of their animal. They showed me bags of food and jugs of water.” (23) Irvine argues that these confrontations are “an attack on the homeless person’s character that deems him or her unable to care for the animal and therefore underserving of animal companionship.” (46) I argue that such confrontations are about more than just concern for non-human animal well-being, operating on the assumption that persons experiencing homelessness are unworthy of any kind of intimacy regardless of the care they may or may not be able to provide. I believe that the confrontation functions as an act of interspecies intimacy policing, revealing

anxieties about human and non-human beings existing in spaces of social death, on the margins, apart from normative ideas of human institutional control.

Ideas about property, ownership, success, and status come together in many of these stories. In Pali's case, for example, she had to scrape together money and fake an address in order to adopt Leadbelly, a coonhound, who was scheduled to be euthanized (Irvine 133). That Pali had to call upon property ownership in order to save a being whose relationship to humans is commonly defined by ownership reveals how human/non-human animal relationships in the margins threaten the human. The juxtaposition of poverty and "pet ownership" is jarring to many people (46). A common reaction to this sight is "they shouldn't have a pet if they don't have a home," as home property ownership is seen as a prerequisite for proper ownership of a non-human animal (48). If the rage around this issue was about the care of non-human animals, then people would be inclined to rescue non-human animals from shelters; after all, around 2.7 million dogs and cats, common companion animals in the United States, are killed every year just for existing in spaces outside of human control ("Pet Statistics"). However, their offers to buy non-human animal companions off homeless persons makes clear that the rage is primarily about an uncontrollable intimacy that breaks down normative human values and relationships to Others. Why are we more concerned about homeless non-human animals existing in caring relationships with homeless humans than with the staggering number of non-human animals killed every year simply for being homeless? In my reading of these stories, I have often found that non-human animals are not usually

viewed as commodities in spaces of social death. In the following paragraphs, I will explore the ways in which persons experiencing homelessness with non-human animal companions disidentify with the human and *do* creature hope by recasting their relationships with non-human beings in distinctly posthumanist terms.

Irvine argues that “Most homeless pet owners responded to affronts by redefining pet ownership to incorporate what they do in the course of caring for their animals.” (53) I would argue that these people not only redefine pet ownership, but work within and against human/non-human relationships and intimacies as well as notions of the human, conceptually and institutionally speaking. This is an action, this is lived, this is the *doing*, the practice of creature hope. This is not just a simple, reducible, clear, concise (re)definition, but a way of living and being with other beings that continually points to the problems with normative human relationships to human, less-than-human, and non-human beings. Irvine identifies three main avenues for this “redefinition” (53-54). First, homeless persons articulate that their companion animals eat first, eat well, and/or eat with sacrifice on the part of their human companion. Second, they emphasize constant companionship and care, recounting that these beings are rarely or never apart from one another. Many of these person see leaving a non-human animal companion alone, in a house, yard, and/or cage as tantamount to abuse. One person interviewed argued that leaving a non-human animal objectifies it, de-animating into a “thing,” twice stating “It’s their pet,” thus gesturing to the concept of pet ownership as a violence in and of itself (Irvine 55). Third, homeless persons frequently spoke of non-human animal

freedom, the ability to “run and romp,” as one homeless man put it. In these stories, homelessness is sometimes spoken of as a better situation for non-human animals, as houses and leashes are viewed as significant unfreedoms and a violence against non-human natures and habitats (56). In this way, there is great meaning in one man’s simple statement about his dog: “He never has to be on a leash except when we come down here.” (2) Clearly, persons experiencing homelessness ascribe different meanings to their non-human relationships than is typical of human “pet ownership;” meanings that often push against the human identity of owner and notions of non-human beings as property.

Given the frequent rejection of proper human and non-human relationship scripts by homeless persons, perhaps there lies the potential for greater human/non-human intimacies in the margins. Homeless persons report a greater attachment to non-human animal companions than other populations (Irvine 5, 9-10). In Irvine’s study “A majority of those interviewed identified their pets as ‘their only relationships with other living beings’ (10). The stories told by homeless persons cast non-human animals as best friends, family, children, and as both friend and family in one. As Irvine notes, these descriptions of non-human animal companions as friends and/or family may seem typical and unimportant but they actually speak to the specific precarity and liminality of homelessness (72). These persons narrated their lives around their non-human animals, challenging notions of kinship, as in family, and of kin and kind in a way that throws the delineation of distinct and differently valued species, especially the human against the non-human, into question. Besides discussing their fellow creature-beings in terms of

family and friend, homeless persons describe them with existential meaning, as is evident in one woman's story: "Maggie reminds us of what life can be like ... She gives me that little piece of 'I'm still here.'" (75) Non-human animals sometimes were spoken of as being "everything" and perhaps most affectively, as a "home" (85-87). Many spoke of their non-human animals as the only thing keeping them from committing suicide, as lifesavers and life changers keeping them being in the world (118, 143). One woman, Denise, referred to her cat, Ivy, as her "suicide barrier" (147). Many mentioned their disappointment in humans in relation to their non-human companions, but maybe this is also a disappointment in the human, and looking to other-than-human beings and worlds is an act of necessary, disidentificatory resistance. In some of the stories, people spoke not only of survival with non-human beings but of healing them. Candy, a trans woman living in a bus in an industrial yard with her partner and many cats, all of which have their own names and stories, treats the injuries and illnesses of cats she finds or who find her (91). Candy joyfully claimed that "There's no limit on how many I could love," and told Irvine that she did not want her living situation to change because there was no other place she could live with "all these cats." (92)

Vulnerable in their homelessness, many people discussed their non-human animals not only in terms of companionship or company, but as a comfort, commitment, and constant presence (Irvine 41). Human/non-human intimacies in the margins offer belonging and hope in a place of deep uncertainty and instability. One homeless man, James, pointed out they live largely unnoticed, unacknowledged, and uncared for by

“our kind.” (100) In disparate ways, human and non-human beings living on the streets are seen as not mattering, not mattering not only in the sense of not being significant but also in not being mattered, as in not existing to others. Forging intimate relationships with non-human animals means living with, caring for, being cared for, and mattering to and with another being. Irvine writes that in homeless persons’ stories of “possibility and promise ... the animal represents hope.” (80) I think this is a bit flattened for narrative consumption; companion animals do not just represent hope for persons living in the margins but their relationships are also hope in action. Living together and surviving together, that is not merely a representation of hope, is it *doing* creature hope by and for human and non-human beings that have been differently violated, expected to suffer, to be in constant states of loss and pain, and to die social and corporeal deaths alone.

Irvine writes that “Defining oneself in coexistence with another species represents a form of borderland thinking. A ‘borderland’ is a shared space, often a site of negotiation and struggle over who holds power within it.” (104) Borderland, *nepantla*, liminal space, the margins—these terms all lead me to disidentification with the human. What if we read these stories beside the concepts of disidentification and creature hope? Instead of thinking about being and doing in relation to human ideas of morality and worth in the way Irvine does, of the relationship as a means to achieve human ideals, what if we thought about how being and hoping against species boundaries looks different from a place of minoritarian subjectivity? I do not want to force these stories to fit human ideas of being and being together, but rather to see them apart from these

notions, to what they may disclose about how fully human humans are supposed to treat and relate to human and non-human Others. I cannot claim that these stories completely get away from the human; for example, some rely on the “perceived unconditional love” of non-humans and a “speaking for” companion animals (Irvine 81, 116). However, they do actively work against human scripts of coexisting with other beings, often refusing any stratification of existence, nearing creature-being.

Creature Hope(s) in Dissonance, a Non-Conclusion

Bridging my work in this chapter on interspecies intimacies, hopes, and anxieties and the fourth and final chapter about interspecies intimate desires and actions and the theoretical and visual splintering that occurs around bestiality is this brief piece that I am calling “creature hope(s) in dissonance.” I want to discuss my own experiences in mental health institutions and the conditions of existing in and exiting that space in relation to how creature hope(s) are not impervious to contradiction and harm, especially given that through my academic research I have come to consider mental health institutions largely to be a containment for social ills and as captive spaces onto which cultural sickness and failure are projected. I also take issue with these institutions because they rely on the subjugation of less-than-human and non-human animal Others through certain anthropocentric, androcentric, racialized assumptions about rationality, logic, intelligence, and a healthy mind. As is mentioned in the beginning of the first chapter, writing this thesis has been a very raw process; it is my attempt to write within wounds,

both of others and of my own. Given the way I have set up this project, I cannot omit my institutional experiences of captivity, violation, despair, and hope and the ways in which my hopes for escaping a form of captivity were predicated on non-human experiences of exploitation and violence. Discussing these experiences and my hesitancy and need to include them my thesis chair rhetorically asked “How do you survive this?” In other words, how does one grapple with the forced complicity in other beings’ violences that run alongside your own harms and pains? I do not have an easy or orderly answer for this, and that is a crucial aspect of disidentification with the human and/as *doing* creature hope: one can only think, act, and hope with what is available to them in any particular place and time. In that sense, what matters is not finding and laying out a “right” posthumanist ethics, but contending with the impossibility of an ethical answer to unethical situations with everything one has at their disposal.

When I was sixteen I was institutionalized twice, first in an in-state psychiatric hospital and later in an eating disorder rehabilitation hospital halfway across the country. At this point in my life I was already very much invested in eradicating non-human animal suffering and had been a vegetarian for some time. In these facilities, vegetarianism and veganism are often pathologized and considered disordered forms of eating, even when they are not a part of the main issue. What does it mean that refusing to participate in this form of violence is tantamount to mental illness? In the psychiatric hospital I had the option to consume animal products or to not eat at all. Oddly enough, at first the doctors did not notice that I was not eating, and later did not seem too concerned

with whether or not I was eating but did tell me that it was not normal, that perhaps it was part of the reason for my suicidal ideation rather than my ever-changing SRI cocktail. I remember resigning myself to the non-choices offered and eventually eating a tuna melt sandwich every day. I remember the savory sadness of that consumption. Was I sick for not wanting to eat it? Immoral for doing it anyway? In the eating disorder rehabilitation center, I was told that my vegetarianism was quite possibly an eating disorder in and of itself. In this hospital, there were levels of institutional “freedom” based on behavior, which could lead to outings and eventually home. Did I want to leave the grounds? Did I want to go home? These questions were clearly tied to another: Was I going to eat what they provided? That is, animal products— foods that were physically and mentally healthy and right for a human to eat. My captivities were written over by normative ideas of what constitutes a mentally healthy human relationship with non-human animals. What does it mean to have to be complicit in a system of non-human animal captivity and violence in order to fulfill the conditions of your treatment and secure your own release from an institution which has dissimilarly held you captive and violated and exploited you?

I have decided to tack on “A Non-Conclusion” to the title of this section because this is not only a short conclusion to the penultimate chapter, but a broader motion to the work I will do in the fourth and final chapter. Chapter Four is about interspecies sexual intimacies, normatively understood through the concept of bestiality, which we cannot talk about without already violent conceptual footholds such as consent, agency, and

protection. I will explore how creature hope(s) themselves can be violent and destructive to other creatures as creature hope even when used in its singular form is always plural and these hopes do not always jive with one another. The desire to fuck a horse or a pig, the desire to escape my institutional captivity and misery, these desires do not seem so different to me as they both may require violations of other creature-beings. Desires for and/or acts of bestiality continue probing how the human undergirds what our ideas of sane interspecies relationships look like as well as the ultimate unknowability of desires occurring both intra- and interspecies.

CHAPTER IV
INTERSPECIES SEXUAL INTIMACIES, BLINDLY

Bestiality, Proper

For me, practicing creature hope in terms of writing this thesis means attending to the aspects of creature hope that may be contradictory, irreconcilable, violent, or that resist any sort of analysis at all—this is the incoherency of beings, hopes, and ethics that I have been asking after across all the chapters in this project. In the closing chapter to this thesis I am not so much specifically speaking to the concepts of disidentification with the human and/as doing creature hope, but gesturing more broadly to them by unpacking interspecies sexual intimacies, desires, and acts, understood most commonly through terms such as bestiality and/or zoophilia. “Bestiality” may refer only to some form of sexual penetration between humans/non-humans or to a number of sexual human/non-human sexual contacts including masturbating on a non-human animal or masturbating that non-human animal, oral, anal, or genital contact, watching sexual contact between human and non-humans, harming or killing for sexual pleasure, or consuming pornographic materials (Beetz 57). The term “zoophilia” is typically used to describe “an exclusive or predominant desire for sexual contact with animals” and it may be used on its own or in addition to bestiality (Beetz 56) “Zoos” feel sexual attraction to non-human animals and possibly romantic love as well (Miletski 18). The aim of this chapter is not to

condemn or sanction bestiality and/or zoophilia, but to discuss how interspecies sexual intimacies, desires, and longings are dealt with in texts that question and complicate these intimacies' relationships to bestiality and/or zoophilia, focusing on two main objects: the French novel *A Dog's Head (Une Tête de Chien)* and the 2007 American documentary *Zoo*. I will also briefly analyze the 1974 Belgian arthouse film *Wedding Trough (Vase de nocces)* to highlight my watching of *Zoo*. My analysis of these texts includes the following themes: first, the excesses and absences of interspecies desire and/or/as bestiality—intimate desires and actions that resist full telling and/or viewership either through a saturated or empty presence; second, the limitations of various intertwined discourses surrounding bestiality/zoophilia considering violent footholds such as consent, agency, and protection, and what these concepts do for the human subject; and third, the rifts and ruptures of being, limitations of ever knowing or acting completely with another creature-being, and creature desires that cannot be fully known or understood, as they may be aligned, at odds, or somewhere in between. To conclude this chapter and wrap-up my project for the time being, I will consider the impossibility of thinking beyond the human, even within disidentifications and creature hopes, elaborating on the limitations of these concepts given the stickiness of the human. I feel this is an appropriate way to close both the chapter and my thesis as a whole, as I will address how these concepts struggle to account for hopes that are in themselves violent.

For me, what the various objects I will explore in this chapter show is that creature beings, hopes, and desires cannot ever fully be known or understood.

Interspecies sexual intimacies, whether contemplated through the discourses about these intimacies or texts that probe them from the inside, reveal that certain human and non-human hopes, desires, pleasures, and pains are not always knowable or communicable to others. How can a human ever know that a non-human wants to engage in sexual intercourse? How can a human not attracted to beings of other species ever know why or how another human can feel that way? There are limits to knowing, speaking of, and viewing these intimacies and the beings engaged in them. There are gaping faults between creature-beings even when their bodies are intertwined or their minds are supposedly linked by way of species being. Derrida's abyssal limit of the human envelops even these deep gorges, as the desires that drive acts of interspecies sex are both embedded in the human and may threaten its partial unraveling. Put another way, interspecies sexual desires and acts may uphold the human by screwing the non-human or somewhat work against it by screwing species lines, but it is all still the about the human.

In *The Beast & the Sovereign, Volume I* Derrida argues that "bestiality, characterized either as perversion or sexual deviancy, zoophilia that pushes people to make love with beasts or to make love to beasts, or as cruelty - this bestiality, this double bestiality (zoophilic or cruel) would also be proper to man." (69) He goes on to say that, the work of Lacan and Deleuze show that "bestiality and (transcendental) betise ... are reserved for mankind ... they are proper of mankind ... beasts are incapable of them ... one cannot qualify as "bestial" or bete (bete in the sense of betise) beasts that have no relation to the law, that they cannot be cruel and responsible." (*The Beast* 178) What this

pairing of quotes tells us is that the “bestial” in bestiality refers not to a non-human that is sexually desired and acted upon by/acts with a human, but to a human behaving as an animal either in sexual perversion or inhuman cruelty (the two forks of bestiality that Derrida speaks to). Therefore, bestiality is not about non-human desire, pleasure, or pain in relation to human/non-human sexual intimacies but the seepage of the human’s base “animality” into human desires and actions towards a non-humans. In this understanding of interspecies sex as bestiality, non-human animals cannot act *with* a human in sexual intimacy and are only objects of desire for a human-beast, they themselves cannot act on their desires or consent to those of humans. What this discloses is that consent is more about the subject can give consent than consent itself. Bestiality is proper to man, the proper subject. Yet, accounts of human/non-human sexual acts in which humans claim to know something about non-humans desires and wants (such as in *Zoo*) are also bound by both human ways of knowing and human desires, which also seem to shore up the proper subject, albeit in different manner.

What I am getting at is that any answer to the implicit questions of human/non-human sexual desires and intimacies is bound by the human and therefore we cannot pretend to know anything about non-human desires. Non-human desires, and human/non-human sexual intimacies for that matter, cannot be adequately accounted for, so perhaps it is better to address them in all their unaccountability. These intimacies defy explanation and justification whether they may be for allowing or disallowing them, so I am more interested in exploring the limits and traps of knowing, understanding, seeing, or

speaking of these intimacies than in making any sort of argument for or against them. I find an analysis (however broken) of these limitations in terms of bestiality and/or zoophilia important for the concepts of disidentification with the human and/as doing creature hope because they tap into the unknowability of desires and the beings that have them and the futility of ever “sufficiently” viewing, discussing, or theorizing them, never mind creating a coherent, deployable ethics around them.

“Did you think of a dog while you were pregnant?”

Jean Dutourd’s *A Dog’s Head*, originally published as *Une Tête de Chien*, relies on a fantastical element much in the vein of *The Metamorphosis*, dealing with a man, Edmond, born with a human male body and the head of a spaniel. Just as *The Metamorphosis* points to problems with the human (namely, trying to find similarities to/differences from the human to guide relations with non-human beings) so too does *A Dog’s Head*, and although these problems could certainly be addressed more generally for the purposes of this chapter I am most interested in how this novel invokes and retreats from bestiality, often simultaneously. I will be addressing this double movement through two key themes: first, the dual absence/excess of bestiality always in tension in this piece, as bestiality is omnipresent but is often denied or eclipsed, and second, how creature beings and desires cannot be completely known or understood, as the ubiquitous questions regarding Edmond’s sexual desires may leave the reader teetering and frustrated. In the forward to the 1998 English translation Wendy Doniger calls Edmond

“a crossbreed, a half-caste creature” (Doniger viii). What a subject steeped in species hybridity means for bestiality is that it is inescapable. Whether Edmond sexually desires, is desired by, and/or engages in sexual relations with human or non-human animals the relationship can be viewed and understood in terms of bestiality. In other words, there is no sexual relationship for Edmond that would not be overwritten by bestiality. This calls into question not only proper human/non-human relations and the desires of non-humans towards humans, but how bestiality and zoophilia are predicated on distinctly human and non-human beings. What this means outside of fantastic fiction is that bestiality and zoophilia may be particularly violent speciesist concepts, even if certain human/non-human sexual desires and acts themselves are deeply rooted in speciesism. Doinger writes that *A Dog's Head* “toys throughout with the idea of bestiality.” (x) For me bestiality is a much larger part of the novel, as Edmond’s very existence brings to mind (and holds it there) the possibility of the impossible springing from interspecies sexual relations. Although Dutourd does more than hint that human/non-human intercourse was not a part of Edmond’s creation the notion of bestiality is lurking, ever-present just by way of Edmond’s character even if the question of his sexual exploits were not at issue in the novel. Doinger clearly writes that this novel is partly about the marginalization of queer persons, claiming that “The dog’s natural wish to mate with dogs, when his parents and their world would want him to marry a nice girl, is not very hard to decipher in this way” and that bestiality must mean something else for “human parable” (xii). I want to work apart from this automatic alignment of bestiality and human queerness, to an

analysis beyond analogy, metaphor, or a search for something fully human to learn; instead, I want to ask after the tensions and rifts at play.

I am particularly interested in the absence/excesses of bestiality in the way of interspecies sexual acts and desires. Bestiality is always present in this piece whether it is being discussed at the moment or not; there is an absent presence of bestiality just by way of the question of Edmond's very existence. There also lies an excess in the stacked bestialities of dogs sexually desiring Edmond, while he may or may not sexually desire them, while he desires human women, who often throw themselves at him precisely *because* they believe he desires and has sexual intercourse with dogs. This absent yet excessive question of bestiality is introduced on the very first page of *A Dog's Head*, which opens with Mme Du Chaillu being told that she had "just given birth to a child with a dog's head" after "twenty years of sterility" (Dutourd 1). Given the circumstances of both former sterility and the newborn baby's species hybridity, her husband is briefly distrustful of his wife's fidelity, both of the marriage and of the human species, but for readers this possibility is not absolutely foreclosed. M. Du Chaillu goes on to ask his wife "Did you think of a dog while you were pregnant?" to which she answers "Never! Not once!" he presses her further "And ... before?" to which she repeats "Before?" in definite surprise but not definite answer (2). So while Dutourd suggests that Mme Du Chaillu never engaged in sexual relations with a spaniel, the lack of her answer to her husband's questions leaves the reader's question unanswered as well. This unanswered question signals the prospect of bestiality that is always open throughout the book; in

fact, it is nodded to at various points, such as when Edmond jokes with his future wife that ““My mother obviously made love with a dog. That’s why I have this head.”” (123) Furthermore, M. Du Chaillu’s pressing question of whether his wife thought of a dog while pregnant or while conceiving Edmond highlights an extended idea of what may be considered bestiality, overloading possible personal and perhaps secret interspecies desires with acts and accusations of bestiality.

As Edmond grows up, his father does not allow him near dogs, even chasing them away whenever they come near. Once, when Edmond pets a poodle on the street, his father whips and berates him, instilling a deep sense of intense shame around dogs (Dutourd 5). Of the incident M. Du Chaillu says to his wife ““That child distresses me. He is unquestionably attracted by dogs, and we must avoid that at all costs.”” (6) Edmond’s mother does not seem so concerned but his father, perhaps still anxious about Edmond’s species paternity or perhaps his wife’s desires but unquestionably anxious about Edmond’s sexual inclinations, says that for Edmond to be with dogs (sexually or non-sexually) is ““Catastrophic! Besides, there’s the question of morality. Understand me, Henriette. That boy has a canine predestination. We must do everything to fight it. As far as I’m concerned, I shall be inflexible on that point.”” (6) Together they decide not to even speak of dogs and when they must be addressed, to make them seem monstrous. Edmond’s parents even go as far as to consider letting a dog attack Edmond ““so as to imprint their hatred in his flesh”” and he soon fears, hates, and is disgusted by dogs (7). I read this reaction to young Edmond’s affection towards and non-sexual touching of dogs

as a gaping excess of bestiality, that is, Edmond himself brings to mind the question of bestiality which overlays his every relationship with a dog (however brief) but Edmond is oblivious to the very existence of what might be called bestiality. At this point Edmond is very naïve of his father's worries, a point which Dutourd makes very clear, posing a layered functioning of bestiality in this piece that brings together the constant doubt of his species origin, the overreaction to any intimacy with dogs, and the lacking knowledge of any such interspecies sexual intimacy.

At fourteen, a few years after he overcomes his fear of dogs, Edmond suggests that the family get a dog as a pet, which his father promptly and adamantly refuses. When Edmond inquires as to the reason his father replies that he knows why, but Edmond truly does not understand what his father is implying. When Edmond persists his father says he will not abide by Edmond's "unnatural proclivities," telling him to "try to develop the tastes of [Edmond's] age" to be "normal" and "healthy" (Dutourd 23). Edmond is then suddenly "overcome by a Christian's recoil before the sins of the flesh." (23) The double bestiality of M. Du Chaillu's assumption of Edmond's sexual tastes blurring into the question of his wife's tastes is signed only by Edmond's doggy head, and it is around these empty bestialities that Edmond's naiveté meets his sudden and overwhelming sense of shame. There is also present in this scene the excesses of assumption and mortification closing around the dearth of non-knowledge, which positions bestiality as a continuous and inescapable aspect of Edmond's life. For Edmond there is no desire around non-human beings, even non-sexual desire, that is free of bestiality. It is interesting that

Edmond's potential desire to be with dogs is seen as immoral, always invoking bestiality, but a human woman's potential desire for Edmond is proper and permissible, though it still is marked by the deviance of bestiality. Edward's father is anxious at the thought of him being with a dog in any capacity, but Edmond seems to sexually prefer human women; this preference is clear, though it does not preclude his possible desire to sexually be with dogs as well. Later, others will encourage him to marry a human woman, which fantastically pleads for consideration of what it means that a half-human belongs to humanity, at least in part. In other words, the bestiality of a human-dog hybrid with a human is somehow a lesser bestiality than the bestiality of a human-dog hybrid with a dog. Considering Derrida's work in *The Beast & the Sovereign, Volume I*, Edmond, at least in part, is human and therefore accountable for his desires and actions with regard to non-human beings. Moreover, for Edmond to act upon sexual desires for the non-human sets up a dog-human acting as a human acting as a beast, creating a doubly-fissured human.

At the age of fifteen, Edmond braggingly lies about his sexual exploits with human women, which his classmates easily believe even though in truth he has never had a sexual experience with any other being. During one story, a lover's greyhound scratches and whines at the door while Edmond and a woman are having sex. Edmond says "She got pretty well worked up ... that one," presumably referring to the human woman (Dutourd 26). He elaborates that afterwards he kicks her dog. There are many absences/excesses of bestiality in this story, first, Edmond's own inexperience coupled

with the strikingly bizarre sexual encounter he describes, secondly, the classmates' gullibility with regard to the story it itself, thirdly, the imagined woman's arousal at having sex with a hybrid human-dog and her own dog's frenzied noises, and finally, Edmond's actions in the story—violently engaging with his lover's canine to punctuate his sexual encounter. Later, after earning higher degrees, Edmond enlists in the military where he is propositioned by quartermaster-sergeant. The sergeant comes on to Edmond with the following "I've always had a weakness for doggies. Not to the point of going with them exactly, like in the *Bat d' Af*. But with you it's different ... you remind me of a drummer boy I knew, and your little mug's like Bonzo's—it gives me funny ideas'" and Edmond rejects the advance "with horror" (35). A crucial movement is happening here, where homosexual and bestial sexual desires are joined and overburdened with one another in both the sergeant's advance and Edmond's rejection, echoing Doinger's association of queerness with bestiality and bestiality with queerness. Upon uttering his desires, the sergeant is immediately fearful of his suggestion of sodomy combined with bestiality, a bestiality that is somehow more pronounced when Edmond could sexually be with a human man than with a human woman. Edmond despairs at the "excesses" in this sexual suggestion, at the excesses of desire and the uniqueness of such excesses as there is no other beings like him (36). After all, his superior finds in him qualities that viscerally summon two previously desired beings. The sergeant also calls upon the conditions which supposedly facilitate interspecies sexual relations in the "*Bat d' Af*," elaborated on in the footnotes as "*The Bataillon d' Afrique*, a disciplinary corps in which

conditions are extremely hard and vices are extremely developed.” (35) This invocation links measures the sergeant’s actions and desires against actions in another unit, assuming that the conditions in the corps necessitate bestiality and fracturing desires for interspecies sexual relations and presumed acts of interspecies sex. What these absences, excesses, and fractures mean for bestiality is that it is a concept caught in a double movement towards and away from it, resisting both definition and certainty.

I am also struck by the way in which *A Dog’s Head* makes a motion towards the inability to ever fully know or understand a creature-being or the desires that they may or may not have. Most notably, the reader can never be quite sure of all of Edmond’s sexual desires in terms of the species of potential partners, though it is spoken of a few times throughout the novel. At certain times his sexual desire for canines is completely closed, both from Edmond’s perspective and from Dutourd’s perspective as narrator, and at other times it is left open, posing the omnipresent question “Does he or doesn’t he?” Following this question are others, such as if Edmond even realizes the full range of his own desires, if it matters either way, why must we know, and can it be known? Much like Gregor in *The Metamorphosis*, Edmond is written as having both human and non-human desires, never fully reconciling or even delineating his human and dog aspects of self. Just because he has the head of a spaniel does not mean that his mind is that of a dog, whatever that may mean, as Dutourd implies that he possesses a “human” intelligence paired with doggy desires and impulses; this complexity of being, thinking, desiring, and acting also seems to be present in his sexual desires and actions.

By age eleven, Edmond has overcome his fear of dogs seared into his mind and flesh. He once again is able to feel affection for dogs and it seems that this affection is returned. Dogs are drawn to him and revel in his caresses, though it is unclear whether their desire is for a distinctly human affection given their propensity to approach Edmond over non-hybrid humans (Dutourd 19). This question is not definitely a sexual one, but implores that we consider possible non-human desires for humans and the problem of assuming anything about non-humans' consent or lack thereof given that no creature-being, non-human or otherwise, is completely knowable to another. Such an unknowability forecloses any meaningful ethical consideration within a fixed and definitive posthumanist ethics. After being discharged from his military service, Edmond begins working at a bank and falls in love with co-worker, a human woman named Marianne, and she interacts with him with playful affection. Dutourd describes her as "a depraved little person. For the length of two hours she was eaten up with curiosity at the idea of making love with a man-dog." (67) In the midst of a date with Edmond she feels intense shame and flips to speaking to and treating him as a misbehaving dog, a behavior that she continues to engage in for the entirety of her presence in Edmond's life. Edmond feels both love and sexual desire towards Marianne, which Dutourd makes clear and seems sympathetic to as narrator, however, Marianne's sexual desires are written as debased and perverted. The movement of sexual desire seems to divide the desires with regard to bestiality, that is, Edmond's desire for Marianne is normalized and moves away from bestiality while Marianne's desire for Edmond is made deviant and moves toward

bestiality. It appears that Marianne's curiosity coupled with sexual desire is part of what makes her desire perverse while Edmond's love purifies his desire. This brings the double movement I previously analyzed together with the utter unknowability of creature-beings and the reasons for their lusts and longings.

Edmond himself has similar thoughts on the sexual inclinations of any woman who might bring herself to sleep with him: "I'll never succeed in seducing any normal girl or woman. What's left, then? Prostitutes and depraved creatures." (Dutourd 74) The presumption of the deviancy of their desires does more than assume something about their being, desires, and motivations, it also obscures Edmond's own longings in the way of non-human beings. Edmond later buys four dogs for companionship but "did not go so far to analyze the affection he bore his dogs." (96) From this it can be gleaned that Edmond's desires are obscured even from his own mind, unknowable even to himself. A well-learned being inclined toward Cartesian thought, he mostly tries to think of himself only as a human man, though his undistinguishable human/non-human body and desires are present throughout the book. That is, the humanist mind/body dualism inherent to Cartesian philosophy allows Edmond an escape from the possibilities of his own interspecies sexual desires, supposedly based in the lesser, animalized lusts of the body.

Dutourd writes that Edmond's "sexual desires inclined him naturally toward women" but reading this I am unsure if this desire is so "natural" and if his desire towards dogs is one of purely non-sexual species company (96). To be sure, Edmond outwardly regards his dogs mostly as his children, as some humans are apt to do, but he

also feels things that are decidedly less typical and straightforward in terms of sexual desire (Dutourd 99). He is said to be “a little in love” with one of his dogs, Lucian, and refuses to pet his short-haired dog, Alexander, as “To stroke such a naked animal seemed reprehensible to him. He protected himself from all confusion of feeling. When Alexander, lying on his back, offered the spectacle of his stomach, Edmond would turn away his eyes in embarrassment.” (100-101) His happiness at interacting with this particular dog is tied up with a potent feeling of shame, feelings that he dares not probe as they have the potential to unravel his carefully crafted species being. Lucien is described by Dutourd as approaching Edmond with “a real lover’s shyness which stirred our hero to the marrow.” (101) Edmond “believed that Lucien loved him, and he reproached himself for the voluptuous pleasure this idea incurred.” (102) So while Edmond sexually desires human women, it seems that he has sexual stirrings and excitements at the mere thought of near sexual intimacies with his pet dogs. Whether or not Edmond genuinely wants to be with dogs in a sexual sense is not so important to me, I am more concerned with the arcane aspects of Edmond’s desires as well as the desires of his dogs. Any assumption of these desires is *only* that, even to Edmond, straddling the human and the non-human. Others presume that Edmond’s relationships with his dogs are at least in part sexual, yet, at this point it is clear that he has not acted upon any desires that he may have. Edmond does indeed sexually desire and act with human women and they revel in his presumed bestiality, though he does not pick up on these feelings. During intercourse, one woman exclaims ““Edmond, take me like a bitch!”” and a different woman asks if he likes her as

much as his dogs (104). Edmond is unaware of the full meaning behind these impassioned utterances, calling to nesting bestialities that he cannot bring himself to entertain even in the privacy of his own mind.

Edmond later meets and falls in love with a society woman named Anne who he regards as his intellectual match, yet he recoils from even the imagining of him and Anne together sexually, “debasement herself” (Dutourd 117) Anne is not easily pushed away, as she is in love with Edmond as well, and Dutourd writes that “When one looks at it coldly, it must be admitted that Anne’s love for Edmond was disturbing.” (125) Edmond is initially captivated by Anne’s quirky insanity, though it becomes less endearing to him after she reveals that she sees him as a human prince who was spelled to have the head of a spaniel and he realizes she is actually mad. Anne’s confession that her love is for a tragic figure is a pivotal moment for Edmond and he embraces parts of his canine desires, developing an “increasing taste for dogs; for by now he constrains himself no longer and pursues males and females with the same ardor. This equal attraction toward either sex deserves to be pointed out: it is completely animal.” (147) The book draws to a close with Edmond, Anne, and a number of dogs living in squalor and the last line of the book acknowledges that Anne is pregnant. With the developing relationship between Edmond and Anne, the absence/excess of bestiality joins the inability to comprehend incomprehensible beings and desires. The final line loops back to the opening of the book, reposing a slightly different iteration of the never-answered question of bestiality in terms of three characters: Mme Du Chaillu, Edmond, and Anne. The circumstances

surrounding Anne's pregnancy are foggy, the only discernible aspects of their lives at this point being her insanity with regard to Edmond's species hybridity, Edmond's deteriorating humanity, the pack of dogs that now lives with them, and the various ghosts of bestiality that haunt their lives. The only question that is answered by the end of *A Dog's Head* is the one that M. Du Chaillu asked of his wife many years earlier: "Did you think of a dog while you were pregnant?" (2) In any case, Anne would undoubtedly answer "Of course."

Mr. Hands, Offering a(n) In/Sight that Isn't

Apart and especially together, 2007 American documentary *Zoo* and the 1974 Belgian arthouse film *Wedding Trough* (*Vase de noces*) exemplify the unknowability and incalculability of creature-beings and their desires, particularly in relation to interspecies sexual intimacies that may be framed through bestiality and/or zoophilia. The title to this section refers to the primary subject of *Zoo*, whose nickname was Mr. Hands even within a community of people with propensities for having sexual relations with horses; for a long time, it was the *only* name they knew him by. What I find striking about these two films is that they both deal with interspecies sexual intimacies, but neither offer an orderly or pointed analysis of these intimacies. *Zoo* is riddled with disturbed visuals and audio that is matched by the presentation of irregular, competing, and blurred bits of knowledges that do not lend themselves to any kind of comprehension of a thing which we might call bestiality and/or zoophilia. *Wedding Trough* has no dialogue at all nor does

it steer the viewer through scenes that always make sense, it allows the viewer to wander to nowhere in particular by only the disjointed sounds and scenes of the farm. *Zoo* and *Wedding Trough* offer neither sight nor insight in the typical usages of those terms, they do not lead one to any specific position on interspecies sexual intimacies, because there is nothing and nowhere to be arrived at. The absent and unwatchable penetration of Mr. Hands and the present and unwatchable penetration of the unnamed pig in *Wedding Trough* presents to my sight the utter impenetrability of creature-beings and desires.

Zoo is about the paradoxically hidden yet very exposed life and death Kenneth Pinyan, a Boenig engineer who died in July 2005 after suffering a perforated colon sustained during sex with a horse (Lim). As alluded to in the title and introduction to this section, one of the most remarkable aspects of *Zoo* is the way the film is shot so as to portray how interspecies sexual intimacies refuse full disclosure through troubled audibility and visibility. Scenes of bestiality are never shown and yet bestiality is always present, bringing me back to the absences and excesses of interspecies sexual desires and acts; the obscured visual that refuses to show bestiality yet does not allow the watcher to think of anything else. The film plays with unusual visuals: spots of harsh light in darkness, faces halfway or completely cloaked in shadow, barely discernable outlines of dark human and horse figures against only slightly lighter backgrounds, low camera angles in dark corners looking up through lighted tunnels and dark barns, trucks driving into dark grey-blue horizons, a light sky jaggedly cut by black forest, scenes of almost complete darkness with a horse snorting, wide open rural scenes juxtaposed with visons

of closed barns and tunnels, a distorted reflection of a human face in a pot of water as he discusses his first sexual encounter with a horse. One zoo (short for zoophile), Coyote, talks about zoo gatherings and what it means to them to finally be able to let their guards down and to be able to talk openly about their desires and experiences while their faces are partially masked in shadow. It is clear in the movement of the camera, the overwhelming darkness punctuated by points of light, and the obscuring of documentary subjects the instability of seeing and sensing and more importantly what is/is not seen or sensed. There is a scene near the beginning of the film in which Jenny, a woman who “rescued” the horses from the barn where members of the local zoo community engaged in sex with them, randomly talks about how one of her horses’ hurt his eyes by continually poking in blackberry bushes and that they had to remove both eyes. Towards the end, while the rescued horses are discussed, a veterinarian shines a light into the viewer’s eyes before the perspective suddenly shifts to the viewer being the third party watching a horse’s eye examination. *Zoo*’s focuses a great deal on sight and viewership, on what it means to see and who can doing the seeing. The story of the blackberry horse asks of me what it means to see in relation to non-human desire as well as to whom that sight might be open or closed. The rapid perspective shift that imagines the viewer first as the rescued horse then as a witness to the exam displaces subjects in relations to unthinkable intimacies, shaking loose positions on and in bestiality.

The closest we get to seeing human/horse sex in *Zoo* is seeing a group of people watching tapes depicting the doings of Mr. Hands and other zoos in the barn. We can

hear the sounds of the tapes but we cannot see them; we see only those sitting around a table watching the tapes, their faces lighted by the screen, flickering with the actions of the tapes and their own feelings toward what is going on. There is something about this watching others watching interspecies sex, this meta viewership, which turns the focus not to what is happening on the tapes but both inward and outward, to our own perceptions of human/non-human intimacies and how they may or may not be reflected in the faces of others. It also leads me to think about the impossibility of seeing bestiality, literally and figuratively. In other words, bestiality cannot be seen because it is not actually shown on film, but also because a thing called bestiality may not exist at all in the sense of Derrida's betise/bestiality as reserved for man given that bestiality functions as a marker of the human and of legal personhood (*The Beast* 178). Furthermore, even if we were to watch the tapes, would we see bestiality in the way of knowing what happened? We can hear what it means to view and hear about others engaged in interspecies sex from the perspectives of two zoos. One man remarks that even after his first sexual encounter with a horse, he did not understand the significance of this encounter or that it could be considered zoophilia; Coyote similarly emphasizes the importance of the internet and new avenues of participation, saying "if you can't be there, at least you can see it" (*Zoo*). For some, desires and intimacies can be somewhat communicated through a digital mode of seeing, intangible but not without bodily feeling. In a dark barn with the only light bleakly coming through dirty windows one can see the outline of a man, named only as H, and listen to what his life is like after Mr.

Hands' death: "My secret is out. Everybody in the world knows what I did ... I was evil because I have a love for my animals more than most people do ... [they said] 'Go away. Just get out of our sight.'" (*Zoo*) I find this particular scene's work on sight to be quite complex, splitting seeing and knowing and using the sight-play of the video to stress the communicated wishes of those who think they know something about the intimacies the man engaged in or even about the man himself. H, covered in darkness, discusses this revelation as his undoing, a revelation which made others want him to be unseeable, and indeed, at many points in this film he is just that.

A dark pasture with one bright spot, gentle horse snorting sounds, a naked human man steps into the light and H speaks: "You need to go out in a pasture with a bunch of horses. They're going to come to you. They're gonna see who you are. See what they do to ya. That's what you need to do." (*Zoo*) Jarring, overlapping audios with mismatched pictures: shadowed shots of a bare-chested man nuzzling a horse, harsh whispers of mathematics, an atomic bomb explosion, the sounds of horse trotting. End scene. *Zoo's* use of music cut with static, voice overs without necessarily matching visuals, and seemingly irrelevant clips are crucially important. In "The consummation of the swallow's wings': A Zoo Story" Kevin Ohi deems this to be the a- and desynchronization of visuals and audio; such "asynchronicity ... drives apart intelligibility and conviction, an asynchronicity that means that human experience escapes human language and meaning." (739) Reading Ohi and Derrida with my own watching of *Zoo*, I am thinking that the work of *Zoo* may be to fundamentally disrupt bestiality through highlighting the

absences/gaps/excesses of such. In other words, the lack of interspecies sex scenes joining the constant discussion of them, the reflexive viewing of others' viewing, and the fiercely discordant and puzzling visual/audio may all be pointing to the way that bestiality folds against actual interspecies sexual intimacies.

Taking doing creature hope seriously as a practice means watching and writing about *Zoo* with the violent footholds of consent, agency, and protection in mind and dealing with the way both advocates and condemners of interspecies sexual acts rely upon these humanist concepts. Ohi argues that “consent itself poses questions about the boundaries of human subjectivity ... a subjectivity present to itself experiences sexuality as governed by intention.” (717) In this way, consent essentially protects fully-human humans and is far more about creating and bolstering the subject that *can* give consent than about ethically caring for violated creature-beings in any form. This unfortunately means that populations such as human children and non-human animals that are framed as particularly vulnerable to violation are also framed as unable to give consent, denying them a subject position that may in fact make them less vulnerable and subject to various violences. To be clear, I have no interest in arguing that children and/or non-humans can give consent but I have a deeply vested interest in pointing out the destructive traps of consent and adjacent concepts, especially the ways in which they are deployed to serve privileged interests and to uphold the human. As *Zoo* seems similarly disinterested in focusing the exploration along the lines of criminality and legislation the analysis of this theme is a bit shorter but nevertheless equally important in my eyes. Consent is called

upon during a panning shot of Enumclaw, Washington fields, while Senator Pam Roach talks about the morals of the area, the beauty of the farm lands, and of the people who love animals, adding that it is a “great place to raise children.” (Zoo) She goes on to say that she “could never believe that an animal would do this on their own” assuming some degree of coercion must have taken place due to children and animals’ innocence (Zoo). This is right in line with Derrida’s deconstruction of bestiality, where the non-human cannot possibly participate or be held accountable yet the non-human is still insulted as humans become lesser human-beasts through interspecies sexual acts (*The Beast* 178). The non-human cannot consent because the non-human is not the proper subject to consent, the subject proper of bestiality. The senator tellingly ties together the inability for non-humans to consent with the innocence of children and non-humans and the need to love and protect non-humans and children, supporting a certain subject that can know, decide, and exercise an afforded agency in accordance with the human.

Protection is very closely related to consent, as those who are not deemed to be capable of giving consent must be protected from those who will take advantage of this inability. Imagine now a scene of an anesthetized horse being lifted up on an operating table by an apparatus hanging by the ceiling. After the horses were rescued from the farm, Jenny explains that “We didn’t want anybody showing up here who was part of that circle who would want to adopt him, so we made the decision to geld him that night.” (Zoo) The “rescuers” castrated the horse that Mr. Hands had sex with in an attempt to protect him from other zoos that may want to purchase him in order to have sex with him,

sex for which the horse could never give consent. There is a humanist disconnect present here, where consent matters for sex but does not matter for castration. Never mind that horses do not consent to being eaten, harnessed and ridden in the non-sexual sense, existing as pets, working on farms, and being shown, their consent does not matter to humans in other situations involving genitals, including breeding, birthing, and gelding, and therefore they are not protected from these violations even though they may do equal or far greater bodily harm. The difference that suddenly warrants frameworks of consent and protection is that of sexual desire, human and/or non-human. Consent as it relates to bestiality does not ask us to consider what the horse would have wanted, it assumes that it is better for the horse that he not have intact genitals than genitals that could be used for *that*, the unspeakable and unseeable.

Humans who engage in interspecies sex and those who do not necessarily oppose it are not exempt from the problems of using consent to discuss interspecies sexual relations. In an extended audio clip there is a conversation in which two men on a show, one being Rush Limbaugh, joke about the Pinyan case and mock the resulting call for a bestiality ban and felony convictions for animal cruelty because non-humans have no cognitive ability to consent and humans must protect them. Limbaugh and another man on the show pose the following questions: “But how do they know the horse didn’t consent?” “How in the world ... Can this happen without consent?” “If the horse didn’t consent then none of this would have happened.” (*Zoo*) Here, Limbaugh is essentially arguing that for a horse to penetrate a human consent must be present in some way; the

zoos in the film seem to echo this sentiment in a multitude of ways which I will later discuss. The three main problems I see with assuming non-human animal consent is present in any given interspecies sexual act are that non-human sexual arousal does not necessarily equate to sexual willingness, non-human sexual arousal in the presence of a human does not mean that the sexual arousal is *for* the human, and that consent is a violence to non-humans in any form as it functions to uphold the human subject. Consent is not a part of the non-human world, at least in its human iteration, and therefore certain perceived actions or non-actions by non-human beings as read by humans may be mistaken as consent. Calling upon consent may also serve to justify non-human sexual exploitation. Ultimately, whether consent is being used to argue for or against allowing interspecies sex it makes clear both its own investment in the human and the impossibility of ever knowing another creature-being.

The interviews of zoos as well as *Zoo*'s explorative framework give nods to the infinite failures that accompany any endeavor to fully know or completely act with another creature-being, to the impossibility of the complete alignment of beings, desires, and hopes. As is evident in the film, zoos, particularly zoos that act on their sexual desires for the non-human, may assume non-human wants and smother the non-human with human understandings of being, feeling, and acting. One zoo discusses non-human initiation of sexual intercourse: “... if you stand too long in one place it's going to happen. If you just stand there, they'll walk up behind you and put their head on your shoulder and talk to you. They're going to pick up that pheromone that your body's

putting off, and they're going to mount *you*." (*Zoo*) It is not necessarily the act itself that I take issue with, but rather the account that the zoo gives that makes the human sexually passive, largely removing accountability. I am not subscribing to the notion that the human is always active and the non-human passive, but the wording of "*just* standing there" (emphasis my own) seems to suggest that because the human is physically still the action of the non-human is a consensual one. Zoos' mentions of love and assumptions of non-human feelings about interspecies sexual intimacies is also open to doubt. Of "being zoo," zoos describe the following: "closer affinity to non-human animals than their own kind," "I love horses," "It's the love of animals ... it's like your wife, your kids, it's the same thing," "You're connecting with another intelligent being who is happy to participate, be involved." (*Zoo*) If you will kindly recall from the beginning of this chapter, zoophilia is about more than sexually acting with non-human animals, it is also about desiring and even loving non-humans sexually and/or romantically (Miletski 18). But what does this love require of the non-human? What does love of non-humans assume about the sexual reciprocity of the non-human? Does the human understanding of love impart on the sexual relation a happiness and willingness that is simply not present, or rather, not able to ever be known? Human feelings towards non-human animals should not have to be returned or presumed to be returned; both are violences of the human even apart from the ways in which they may become fastened to sexual actions, or to concepts such as consent and/or coercion. On sexual relations with non-human animals, The Happy Horseman explains:

It's a simpler, very plain world. And for those few moments you kind of can get disconnected. It's a very intense, wonderful kind of feeling. I don't think anything really can kind of compare to it. There's no pain. At no time, in any way, shape, or form has anybody forced, coerced, drugs, ropes, whatever. There's no bondage or anything like that involved in any of this, because these are ... your friends.
(*Zoo*)

The feelings of friendship felt by this human during their sexual experiences with non-human beings is assumed to be matched by the feelings of the non-human. Moreover, these friendly feelings linked to sexual desires and actions may change what being forced or coerced looks like, especially since there is no and can be no baseline understanding of what indicates non-human non-complicity.

Among the zoos that discuss their experiences in *Zoo*, there is the impression that they feel that they know and understand non-human animals on a much deeper level than any other human precisely *because* of their sexual desires and actions. A member of the Enumclaw zoo community that met Jenny after Mr. Hands' death argues that Jenny's experience with horses counts for very little in comparison to that of zoos. Amidst scenes of a wild, bucking stallion, this zoo says "Well, my impression of Jenny is that, uh ... She doesn't know her ass from a hole in the ground when it comes to a horse. Period. She comes across as being a person who knows everything there is about horses, but to me, she doesn't know anything about them at all. Even her husband doesn't know how to handle a horse." (*Zoo*) The zoo regards Jenny, who is quite knowledgeable concerning horses in the standard sense, to be ignorant of their bodies; this ignorance supposedly can only be overcome by intimately "knowing" a horse. I find the everything/anything

qualifier of knowledge to be extraordinarily interesting; it is as if all knowledges regarding horses are completely irrelevant in the face of a zoo's knowledge, and furthermore, no non-zoo human can truly act *with* a horse in the way a zoo can, as is evident by the statement about handling a horse. In a voiceover that comes after this account Jenny herself insinuates the limits of her own understanding of horses' sexual desires and actions, describing what happened when she came for the stallion and argued with a zoo about the bill of sale. She recounts that during the argument a mini horse came up to the stallion and started giving him a "blowjob," an incredibly disorienting scene of which she says "It was the strangest thing I've ever seen. Ever." (*Zoo*) The Happy Horseman discusses the kind of uniquely deep connection that zoos have with non-human beings, saying that "The sex was just a small component of it ... I'm talking to you on the same level that you're kind of staring at me. Mammal to mammal." (*Zoo*) This account hints at a different and more profound kind of knowing, relating, and being with a non-human animal, one that depends on sexual intimacy but is not bound by it, leading to a knowledge on a mammalian plane. For this zoo, it is clear that the meeting of warm blood and warm flesh betrays the secrets of the non-human and, if only for a few moment, dissolves the line between human and non-human mammal; such an account echoes the visceral resonance of non-human mammals to Dr. Laist. That is not to say that sexual intimacies reveal all of the non-human, as another zoo argues that some knowledge of individual non-humans is required prior to engaging them sexually in an explanation of what went wrong the day that Mr. Hands' was fatally injured: "Something bad happened

out there. I don't think Mr. Hands knew this particular animal very much and I don't think that the gentleman that was with him was really attuned to that animal as well."

(*Zoo*) So while some zoos in the film automatically link knowledge of non-humans and sexual actions with/on non-humans, others see sexual intimacies as at least somewhat divorced from knowing.

In the final moments of *Zoo*, over the view from a trotting horse's back, Jenny speaks to her surprise at the intense love relationships that a zoo may have for with their "animal partner." Of this love, she explains that through her research "I don't yet quite know how I feel about that, but I'm right at the edge of being able to understand it."

(*Zoo*) For me, the film plays at the edge of this understanding, of not being able to fully understand zoos and of not being able to understand any creature-being completely, of not being able to fully see, hear, witness, know, or be with. While the film exposes some aspects of the zoo world it also purposely obscures certain scenes, faces, and facts. An example of this obscuration is that *Zoo* never plays Kenneth Pinyan's name aloud nor does it show it on screen, imitating Mr. Hands' own actions, as H says that "There was things in him that he really didn't want people to know ... it was about a year before I knew Mr. Hands' real name ... it was just always Mr. Hands 'I go by Mr. Hands.'" (*Zoo*) At the time of his death, the media originally would not reveal the name of the victim and during an audio clip of the name finally being revealed on air, the documentary cuts out before the name is said. The abrupt cut off after "an employee, now deceased, who worked at Boeing Corporation named K ... " announces the striking unknowability of the

subject of the broadcast, a built-in argument that knowing the name says little about who this persons was, why they desired who/what they did, and why/how they engaged in the sexual activities they did (*Zoo*). Similarly, *Zoo* “does not offer any sustained account of the psychology of zoophilia” (Ohi 721). In other words, the film is not concerned with the causes of human/non-human sexual desires or what drives one from desire to action and it does not attempt to fill in the ruptures and rifts between desire and understanding desire, running parallel to my larger argument about the unknowability of creature-beings. Perhaps the reason that this film resonates with me so strongly is that it does not seem at all interested in understanding but in a project of stretching how we think about human and non-human intimacies and shaking loose our bestial certainties about those intimacies. Indeed, Charles Mudede, writing partner of director Robinson Devor, once called *Zoo* a “thought experiment” (Lim). In its mundane portrayal of human/horse sex against the scandal of bestiality the documentary has been criticized for “evading moral issues” but Ohi argues that it does not “sidestep ethical questions around bestiality. Its form is a mode of ethical inquiry, and of desire.” (736) I am thinking along these same lines, that *Zoo*’s persistent uncertainty is its ethics and that posing a “thought experiment” as an “ethical inquiry” is imaginably the *most* useful way to consider the questions that interspecies sexual intimacies birth, because it cannot not build the answer into the question.

Wedding Trough, also known as “One Man and His Pig” “The Pig Fucking Movie,” is about a lone, clearly mentally ill male farmer that lusts after a pig and has sex

with her (“Wedding Trough”). She delivers piglets, although it is not clear if these are fully pig or fantastically human-pig offspring, and the piglets eventually provoke his frustration and disappointment so he hangs them and displays their bodies. Seeing their decaying bodies, the Sow, mad with grief, runs around until she is trapped in muddy water and drowns. When the man finds her body, he buries her and tries to bury himself alongside her. He suddenly gets up in a rage, destroying and consuming his jars of bodily waste until he finally he hangs himself. *Wedding Trough* is a black and white film with no dialogue, although it is far from a silent film. It too teases the absences and excesses of interspecies desire and the unknowability of beings through its film choices; no dialogue is far from no noise, no telling, and clear viewing is far from clear seeing, clear understanding. There is present an excess of viewing in *Wedding Trough*, it shows everything from sex, to birthing, to excreting, to eating excrement, to vomiting, to suicide; neither sex between a human and a pig nor the brutal killing of non-human animals (both real and simulated for the film) is too much to show. This excess of viewing is met with the absence of understanding of what is being viewed, and through the lack of dialogue the film relays its indifference to human understanding. After all, there is no dialogue but there is never silence; the sounds of the farm can always be heard in pig squeals, turkey gobbling, duck quacking, bird songs, rooster crowing, heavy human breathing, human and non-human grunting and sloppy, slurp-y eating. Traditional Belgian music, ominous electronic beeping music, and a bell that the man rings can also be heard in select scenes. I find interesting the absence of viewing acts of bestiality in

Zoo in relation to the excess of viewing in *Wedding Trough*, the latter of which contains scenes so explicit and obscene that I felt the need to cover or close my eyes and from which I found myself physically recoiling from the screen. *Wedding Trough* shows a man screwing a pig from behind in one long scene shot from multiple angles, somehow making it more pronounced, as if announcing “here it is.” This single extended scene showing human/pig sex is somehow more jarring and excessive than multiple scenes of interspecies sex in its starkness, the near-constant suggestion of sex surrounding the explicit scene.

Zoo refuses to show that which it continually discusses, keeping the viewer on the edge waiting and wondering, never being released from the subject matter but never fully viewing it either. *Wedding Trough* never discusses interspecies sexual desires or actions, but continually alludes to them and overwhelms the viewer with the sights and sounds of human/pig sex amongst other disturbing scenes. Together, these films exhibit the impossibility of ever really seeing or understanding that which is most often considered bestiality, whether or not it is explicitly shown; sight is not necessarily insight. *Wedding Trough*’s long scenes of non-human animal faces between explicit scenes of interspecies sex, human madness, human and non-human deaths as well as the sow’s deafening squeals upon seeing her hanging babies’ bodies twirling in the sunlight both denote the limits of human seeing and hearing. There is so much of non-human creature-being that humans can never understand no matter how much is seen or hidden—it is always both too much and never enough.

Closing: Sticky Human, Hopes & Harms

In this conclusion I aim to wrap up this chapter and my thesis as a whole, primarily by discussing the limitations of my concepts of disidentification with the human and/as doing creature hope. In the introduction to my first chapter I asked “Can ‘creature’ offer us a new direction for hoping against the violences suffered by human, less-than human, and non-human beings and hoping apart from defining beings by the very violences they may or may not suffer?” (2) In closing, I want to briefly address the impossibility of thinking beyond the human, even within disidentifications and creature hopes given the stickiness of the human, how these concepts struggle to account for hopes that are in themselves violent, and what kind of work creature hope can and cannot do. Surely there is no beyond or outside of the human, even in this project; the human is abyssal and haunting and these concepts will never be free of it. The endless human means that the human is sticky, unable to be completely shaken off—hence my penchant for the double movement “with/against” the human—and therefore even the hopefulness of creature is contaminated by the human and the violences that accompany it.

This final chapter on interspecies sexual intimacies and/or/as bestiality and zoophilia allows me to write about disidentification and creature hope in a way that I do not think I have fully been able to do until this point in the thesis, because what this chapter really points out is how beings and hopes can clash or just miss one another as beings are ultimately unknowable. I think this chapter in particular highlights both the limitations of the concepts themselves, in that one creature’s hope is potentially another’s

violence, violation, or hopelessness, and why these concepts are so very necessary, meaning that they are capable of a distinct reflexivity—grappling with beings and hopes that cannot be known or forcibly aligned. Disidentification as I have used it in this thesis by borrowing from the work of José Muñoz, is the de- and recoding of dominant culture from the position of minoritarian subjectivity, recoding dominant culture into new forms made impossible within that very culture (*Disidentifications* 31) But what of minoritarian subjectivities in the plural? What of dominant subjectivities meeting minoritarian subjectivities in one being? A zoo, for example, may decode and recode various humanist understandings of the human, recuperating the non-human animal for their own purposes and in accordance with their own desires. As is evident by testimonies in *Zoo*, certain persons' disidentifications with the human and hope/desire for interspecies sex does not absolutely preclude violation or harm utilizing the human, therefore, I believe it is necessary to make a distinction between the hopes of individual creature-beings and the larger concept of creature hope. The hopes of creature-beings may not be innocuous, they may be violent or destructive to another being. One beings' hope and/or pleasure may be another beings' hopelessness and/or pain. Dissimilarly, creature hope as a larger concept can only be practiced without an end to guide it because hope (as I have used it here and as Muñoz uses it in *Cruising Utopia*) is only for that which cannot yet be completely imagined or sought, anticipated or harnessed to reach specific ends but for that which is still fervidly desired. These concepts that I have worked to express in this thesis may struggle to cleanly account for hopes that are in themselves violent and to make a

pathway for clear ethical response, but just as they are capable of dealing with the complexity and contradiction of beings and hopes so too are they capable of reflexively dealing with the contradictions in the concepts themselves. Furthermore, this is a capability not marred by ill comparisons and analogies or strict identifications and categories that enable the myth of the human/animal binary even within posthumanisms. Disidentification and creature hope are also capable of a deep sincerity about the place and functioning of the human, a sincerity that I have rarely encountered in most works, but they cannot shake off the human. Were such a feat not impossible, I am not convinced that would be the point anyway.

I hope to be the kind of scholar and the kind of being that is constantly becoming more knowledgeable, more articulate, more creative, and more accountable. I hope that one day I look back on this thesis and can see the faults in it with new eyes and imagine how I would write it differently, better somehow. I also hope that when I look back on this project that I will be able to say that these concepts and the uncertainty that they require has stayed with me, that these concepts have informed my work since in such a way that I have not left them unchanged, just as they have not left me unchanged in this moment. That is, I hope that at that time I have taken them to new places and allowed them to change. I wrote my thesis on disidentification with the human and/as doing creature hope because I could not imagine writing it on any other topic, and I mean that quite literally. When I began writing I was so disheartened that I did not know how else I would be able to get through the thesis writing process, if not with and for creatures, with

and for creature hope. This project is not about releasing accountability to other creature-beings or letting humans off the hook, so to speak. It is not about justifying the suffering of non-human beings or introducing a non-response. It is not about human love, human compassion, human understanding, or proximity or likeness to the human. It is not about advocating for harmed others, harming them less, harming them differently, or denying harming them at all. It is not about sexed, gendered, and/or racialized analogies of less-than-human and non-human beings, subjections, and violences. This project is not about the continual reliance on suffering at particular theoretical moments when it seems as if there is nowhere else to turn just because suffering seems like an easy, solid base on which to build a posthumanist ethics. It is not about what is conceivable and attainable right now because what is conceivable and attainable right now is always just another regeneration of violences. For me, this project is about exploring the complexity of what it means to be in ethical relationships with other creature-beings, especially those made less-than-human and non-human, instead of compacting and simplifying what an ethics means or what it asks and requires of us. It is about non-human and less-than-human Others always deserving more. For me, the practice of doing creature hope demands more, it is about a constant demand for more and this demand is always in the wake of injury. There is no point which can be arrived at, no point in which no more is demanded, because if Muñoz's work tells us anything, it is that hope is forever on the horizon, just out of reach but full of unforeseeable promise.

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