

“THE ANIMAL, WHATEVER IT WAS”: DOGS, MULTI-SPECIES SUBJECTIVITY,
AND THE SIGNIFIER GUIDE IN *GO DOWN, MOSES* AND *THE CALL OF THE WILD*

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by
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Abstract

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Whom or what do we write about when we write about dogs? This thesis attempts to answer this question in part by analyzing the ways in which dogs have been reductively represented in literature, particularly in wilderness narratives that tend to mistake nature and culture as separate spaces. The two narratives I focus on to demonstrate this argument are William Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses* (1942), and Jack London’s *The Call of the Wild* (1903). I begin with establishing the opposite poles that various texts seem to gravitate toward when portraying animals. On one end, we often read texts that sentimentalize, mythologize, or anthropomorphize animals. On the opposite end, texts err on the side of stressing scientific observation to the point that the human is detached from nonhuman animals. Faulkner’s text seems to emulate the former and London’s the latter. In both cases, the narratives deny the subjectivity of animals and their lived experience. The consequences of misrepresenting animals in literature are far reaching, extending at times to the way humans end up being treated. In the case of *The Call of the Wild* and *Go Down Moses*, the way dog characters are represented mirrors the representation of the Native American characters. Dogs and

Native Americans seem to textually converge in the figure of the signifier guide, the object-tool through which privileged characters are able to transcend their cultural trappings into a more “natural” existence. This transcendence usually occurs at the expense of the guide’s life or well being. This thesis focuses on problematizing this type of dog story and concludes by offering potential alternatives for more productively writing about dogs in literature.

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Dedication

For Sam.

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Introduction

In October of 2018, *Frontiers in Neuroscience* published a study entitled “Awake fMRI reveals Brain Regions for Novel Word Detection in Dogs”. In this study, researchers from Emory University, New College, and Comprehensive Pet Therapy underwent the process of scanning the brains of dogs during word processing tasks in order to see the degree to which dogs actually recognize the words we use. Many of us know, or are perhaps ourselves, people that truly believe our dogs understand the words that we say in a way similar to our understanding. This study sought, in part, to discern scientifically the degree to which those assumptions might be true. Essentially, they wanted to know how dogs recognize words and what exactly constitutes a word to a dog. The researchers actually found that dog’s brains react in an almost opposite way than human brains when approached with an unknown, made up word, or pseudoword. When observed through an fMRI scanner, Human brains show much more activity in response to known words, whereas dogs show more activity when hearing a pseudoword. While the study gives many possible reasons for this, each of these reasons begin with the assumption that dogs care about associating unknown sounds with known.

From this evidence, we can assume to a degree that dogs seem to care about what the humans they associate with say. Of course, they could care for a number of reasons ranging from the impetus to seek affirmation to the desire for reward. Conversely, most of us also care about understanding our dogs. Studies such as this show that people care enough to spend resources in figuring out the

degree to which verbal communication is possible. One question the study does not answer, however, concerns the way humans and dogs work out the relationship between the signifier and signified. As the introduction to the study points out, connecting the sound of a verb to an action does not mean the same thing as the mental response humans have when thinking of all the images and ideas a word can signify.

In regards to this difference, I wonder if we have considered the degree to which our understanding of what the word “dog” signifies to us has factored into decisions that make these studies possible. Do we see dogs as physically embodied subjects, or do we view them through a lens of ontological categorization? To what degree does the ontological category of *the* animal impact what we see when we see a dog? In William Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses* (1942), the narrator evidences the difficulty in not only representing but understanding non-human animals when take into account their dynamic, at times violent, behaviors. The narrator finds themselves at a lack for words in the sight of Lion, a dog, violently attempting to break free from a trap. A dog the characters have caught transforms from a dog to “the animal, whatever it was” (205). When we are unable to understand an animal, it becomes *the* animal, an abstract concept.

While the desire to understand what our dogs think when they hear us speak could certainly lead to productive outcomes, should they not also come out of benevolent motives? Do we want to know how dogs respond to human language because we want our dogs to know how well meaning our baby-talk,

scolds, and instructions, are, or because we want to build more mutually responsive relationships with our companion animals? The answer to questions like this lie, in part, in the way we figure dogs into the landscape of our own lives and culture.

The word “dog” might signify plenty of concepts in our heads. But the physical presence of a dog should not be confused with the word. Such mistakes lead to a denial of the lived experiences of dogs and replace them with our own egos; they lead to dogs being used as money making opportunities, as targets for misplaced anger, or tools for war and world making. This thesis focuses on the consequences of one setting in which this mistake often takes place: the wilderness. When seen through an ideology that mistakes the world as a product of either nature or culture, dogs become a signifier for humanity, or culture’s connection and separation from nature. As domestic animals, dogs become the vessels through which humanity is guided through the natural. This trope is frequently seen throughout American wilderness narratives.

This thesis is also concerned with the ways that narratives in the American literary tradition seem to force Native Americans into signifier roles similar to the role dogs often play. In the nature/culture binary, the human and artificial often are placed within culture, with everything else, namely non-human living organisms and the non-artificial, inanimate aspects of landscape, lying on the natural side. As one can see from the way these definitions are worded here, the natural side of the binary is often defined through negation: not being involved with humanity. If we ascribe to this definition, we tread dangerous territory when

attempting to define anything that might operate between the binary. Both dogs and Native Americans are often constructed as guide figures, standing between nature and culture for the purpose of bringing humans, typically privileged, white males, closer to the nature side of the binary. This results in both parties having an unstable connection to any concrete side of the dualism; dogs are never depicted as humans nor are they ever quite animals, and thus are excluded from the subjectivity we ascribe to either category. Native Americans are rarely depicted as fully human in the way other characters are and are consequently denied their humanity in a way that often results in dire consequences.

In addition to this, the closer Native Americans are aligned with nature, the greater the potential for both authors and readers to place them lower than other humans in a biological hierarchy. Consequently, attempts to privilege such characters as intermediary figures results in problematic, reductive representations that deny the lived experiences of both canine and Native American characters and deprive them of their subjectivity. By juxtaposing dog and Native American characters in Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* and William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* I examine these reductive representations in an effort to show how they might be exposed, avoided, and replaced by more productive methods of navigating through naturecultures.

The Call of the Wild and *Go Down Moses*, while being unlikely partners in this analysis, meet in multiple ways that make this analysis possible. If we understand the Ike McCaslin trilogy to be a story of a character attempting to sort through his family's dark past and the apparent destruction of the wilderness he

grew up in, *The Call of the Wild* depicts an inversion of that narrative. Buck, as opposed to Ike, leaves the confines of “culture” and goes into the wild, where he inherits the biological traits and attitudes of his more wild ancestors in the setting of an increasingly wild Yukon Territory. Additionally, I find that the two main dogs of the stories, Buck in *The Call of the Wild*, and Lion in *Go Down, Moses*, display inverted life paths in the way that Lion comes out of ferality and into the domestic whereas Buck begins his story as a completely domesticated animal and ends as a feral dog, part of a wolf pack. Through these stories, we are able to see two extremes of dog-story telling. Faulkner seems to rely heavily on the symbolism of the animal signifier whereas London evidences a bias towards the role of the detached scientific observer. Both methods lead towards the denial of animal subjectivity.

These consequences partially find their origin in the impulse to separate nature and culture. Without this ideological separation, there might not need to be a signifying guide. At the very least, their role might be destabilized to the point where they could be seen as physical presences. Towards this end, I will borrow the phrase natureculture because it is more indicative of the actual setting in which humans construct divisions between nature and culture. The idea of a natureculture recognizes the partial connections between what we consider to be products of human influence, or culture, and products of non-human influence, nature. In naturcultures, we see the impacts of the sociocultural interweaving with the ecological. Faulkner’s mythology of the hunt is as much natureculture as London’s cult of the wolf and Donna Haraway’s idea of the Kennel.

I derive my understanding of natureculture from Haraway's *A Companion Species Manifesto* (2003). This text explores the ways in which a more accurate respect for and understanding of dog-human relationships might allow us to construct more healthy, egalitarian, and productive relationships of significant otherness. From this perspective, dogs occupy a unique space in human understandings because we consistently place them in between nature and culture while denying them a space in either; yet we also use them to construct our notions of the very spaces we leave them out of. However, because we see them as a companion species, we cannot deny their materiality and agency; "they are not a projection, nor the realization of an intention, nor the telos of anything. They are dogs, a species in obligatory, constitutive, historical, protean relationship with human beings" (Haraway, "Companion Species Manifesto", 12). Because of our joint histories, we are evolutionarily bound to dogs in a way that requires us to acknowledge and understand their material existence if we also wish to fully acknowledge our own. For a broader extension of these ideas, I will call upon *When Species Meet* (2009) as well. Specifically, this text can help us understand further our injuriously failed past, present and potential successful future with dogs. This text follows strains of curiosity that inquire into how we are obliged to our canine companions and what appropriate responses to them might look like.

Broadening the scope of animal – human relations, Colleen Glenney Boggs's *Animalia Americana: Animal Representations and Biopolitical Subjectivity* (2013) looks into the "cultural and political work of animal representations" (3). By tracing lines of bestial and affective love between

humans and animals, Boggs “read[s] animals as an immanent other that founds and confounds the liberal subject” (5). She examines animal representations in multiple genres to show the degree to which animal representations matter when figuring subjectivity in writing, whether it be in a mystery story or an autobiography. Boggs turns to literary representations because she believes animals cannot be represented politically, a method that “suggests the ability to be recognized by a subject in the political system and to participate in it” (19). In a literary context, however, they can be represented, though the degree to which they participate in that representation is still questionable. Yet, “it is on the grounds of such representations that the terms of animals’ exclusions become legible – that animals achieve representation of their exclusion from representation and that here at minimum a critique and at best an alternative to this exclusion becomes possible” (20).

Through Boggs’s notion of affect as integral in ethical representation of animals, and Haraway’s canine subject matter, I aim to draw out and critique the ways the dogs and Native American characters in *Go Down, Moses* and *The Call of the Wild* are misrepresented as signifier guides. Typically, guides are understood as a role or occupation. A guide dog might help hunters locate game in exchange for reward. A human guide might be compensated monetarily for safely leading travelers through dangerous terrain. The signifier guide, in contrast, works like a map in human or canine skin. It is deprived of its subjectivity and treated as a conduit through which other characters transcend their cultural boundaries and enter the natural. The signified, in this case, is the way to

transcend culture: the wilderness. The misrepresentation of guide characters as object signifiers leads to real consequences, like the deaths of Lion, Sam, and the Yeehats. By understanding these improper representations and their consequences, I aim to construct better models of representing characters within naturecultures, especially dog characters, that enable us to more productively engage with our companion species.

To this end, my first chapter will review the literature concerning both texts. There is virtually no analysis done comparing the two simultaneously. Consequently, the scholarly conversations about each will be dealt with separately. Concerning *Go Down, Moses*, most sources discuss the animals as they pertain to the symbolic world Faulkner creates. Conversely, critics of London hone in on his attempts to objectively represent animals and the harsh territory they reside in. I close the review with a discussion of relevant scholarship pertaining to animal studies.

The second chapter, “Heredity, Hybridity, and Fertility”, focuses on the dogs specifically. Both novels pay particular attention to the dogs’ ancestry and attempt to tie this in multiple ways to their behaviors and roles in the stories setting. By looking further into the ways hybridity plays into Buck’s journey into and Lion’s journey out of ferality, I attempt to show how neither author breaches what they seem to truly regard as “wild.” Even London, as concrete as he tries to be, reverts to the language of myth when narrating Buck’s “retrogression” into the wolf pack. Through an analysis of the dog characters of each text, I show how

both the characters and the texts themselves fail to adequately represent and respond to their companions.

The third chapter, “Blood and Biology: Native Americans and the Natural-Cultural Inheritance of Companion Species”, moves towards pointing out the similarities in the language used to describe the canine and Native American characters. Rather than proposing an ontological connection between the two, I argue that such a connection is an aspect of the text that merits problematizing. Again, we see hybridity operating on multiple levels to create object signifiers out of material bodies. In forcing Native American characters and dog characters into a role of signified guide, the texts display the physical consequences of too heavily relying on either scientific explanations or mythical understandings. London’s idea of detached scientific observation combines with his notions of atavism to display not only an ahistorical Alaskan wilderness, but also a needlessly violent narrative. Faulkner’s reliance on the symbolism of blood detaches oppressor from blame and leaves corpses with no one to answer for them.

The fourth and final chapter, From “Pack to Kennel: Working Towards a Literary ‘Becoming With’”, attempts to look at more productive elements of dog stories. While Faulkner and London both problematically represent dogs and Native Americans, there are pieces of their novels that display positive relationships and responses. I end my analysis of *The Call of the Wild* and *Go Down, Moses* on these moments. Then, after having detailed where dog stories often fail in adequately writing about our companion species, I offer up a few

stories that seem to get it right, at least partially. Focusing on the concepts of understanding, representation, and response, I call up various other works outside of the American literary wilderness narrative that seem to engage more appropriately with dog characters. If we are unable to acknowledge our past mistakes, we cannot fully inherit our histories and futures with our companion species. For this reason, the problematization of dog stories is necessary. Following this, we might find ourselves more prepared to meet the gaze of our companion species and respond.

Chapter 1

The Call of the Wild, Go Down, Moses, and Animal Studies:

A Review of Literature

In our current American culture, companion animals have become much more common than in the past. However, their increase in number does not necessarily positively correlate with their significance. Our understandings, feelings, and attachments to our respective companion animals seem to fluctuate and change on a different scale that cannot be measured by simply understood numerical metrics. Of the accepted companion species, dogs hold a unique place in that they fill many distinct and often separate rolls.

For instance, the support dog you might see in the airport with a vest that says, “pet me”, helping busy travelers de-stress might be seen differently than the canine unit that you saw as you went through TSA security. When you read these words, you might also imagine different looking dogs: different breeds of canines. We make connections between a breed and a role; the pointer is given its name as a result of the role humans have it serve. Often, here, is the assumption that a breed has specific tendencies and temperaments that render it able or unable to exhibit certain behaviors.

Depending on the perspective one holds, such connections might be deemed either problematic or logically appropriate. Proponents of both sides, however, often see clear moral issues in applying a similar logic to humans. The scenario I describe is one in which differences in race or ethnicity is spoken of in terms similar to the way we speak of animal breeds. When put in this way, the

problem at hand becomes much more clear. Yet, such talk is existent in our society today, albeit in potentially more subtle forms. One might say that the difference in dog breeds has a scientific foundation, whereas the supposed difference in race has no biological component. However, science was, at one time, an argument for a hierarchy of races. Through this, we see the potential dangers of categorizing living beings' efficacies in varying roles based on the categories we choose to place them into. This notion relies upon the acknowledgement of freedom of the living subject, human or non-human, and its lived experience.

Within the tradition of the American wilderness narrative, we find such acknowledgments either denied or granted to many living beings, depending on what category they fall into. This acknowledgement is not to be confused with privileging. Often, animals can be privileged in certain ways, yet denied their subjectivity through this exact act. This happens with other marginalized groups in literature as well. Specifically, within the narratives of Jack London and William Faulkner, we see narratives that simultaneously privilege certain beings as symbolic objects and cast them down as living subjects. Often, these subjects are animals, specifically dogs.

1. Animal Studies and the Non-Human Subject

In order to understand how a specific study of dogs in literature can be beneficial, it is first necessary to mention several significant texts that approach the topic of animal studies from a broader lens. Cary Wolfe's collection, *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal* (2003), offers us a valuable number of essays that are placed somewhere at the midpoint of the quickly growing field of

animal studies. This collection of essays pushes readers towards rethinking subjectivity and how it pertains to both human animals and non-human animals. It urges against anthropocentrism in a way that encourages a less dualistic view of difference among life forms. It is not enough to privilege the non-human animal through writing, nor is it any longer acceptable to merely challenge the idea of human superiority. Instead, the human must be decentered in a way that acknowledges difference without diminishing subjectivity. These assertions are made through multiple essays that examine the question of the animal from various lenses including technological perspectives, psychoanalysis, critical race theory, and sociology. While productive and important in many ways, current movements in animal studies and posthumanist theory consider the ideas within *Zoontologies* to fall-short of appropriately decentering the human perspective. Yet, the text still remains relevant as a milestone for keeping track of the progress of animal studies.

Colleen Glenney Boggs's *Animalia Americana: Animal Representations and Biopolitical Subjectivity* primarily looks into "what is the cultural and political work of animal representations" and then examines "what happens when we include other species in our understanding of subjectivity" (3). To Boggs, the American subject is both constructed and problematized by the way animals have been represented and related to humans in the past and present. Specifically, she traces the development of human subjectivity as it pertains to human's sexual and affective relationships with animals. Melding both fiction, history, and theory into

multiple analyses, Boggs' work gives us a valuable look into how the field of animal studies can be further developed through interdisciplinary approaches.

Amongst many of the theorists that Boggs calls upon, Donna Haraway seems to be the most appropriate for the current review due to her extensive theoretical work concerning companion species, dogs in specific. In "A Companion Species Manifesto" (2003), Haraway explores the ways in which a more accurate respect for and understanding of dog-human relationships might allow us to construct more healthy, egalitarian, and productive relationships of significant otherness. Significant otherness is brought about by the conjunction of disparate subjects and their respective cultures that is accountable to both the separate pasts and tethered futures of each party involved. From this perspective, dogs occupy a unique space in the human perspective because we consistently place them in between nature and culture while denying them a space in either, yet use them to construct our notions of the very spaces we leave them out of. However, because of we see them as a companion species, we cannot deny their materiality and agency; "they are not a projection, nor the realization of an intention, nor the telos of anything. They are dogs, a species in obligatory, constitutive, historical, protean relationship with human beings" (12). Haraway's manifesto presents the unsavory parts of humanities history with dogs and calls us to own and acknowledge them. From here, we might better be able to understand the ways in which species that are culturally linked, though categorically disparate, might exist together in a way that rejects a network of domination and embraces more positive "multi-species futures" (64).

2: London's Canine Protagonists

Drawing primarily from Jack London, Michael Lundblad's "From Animal to Animality Studies" (2009) rethinks how we go about studying animals in literature and artifacts of culture to offer a more effective language with which we can accurately discuss the relationships between animals and humans. Animal studies, Lundblad asserts, in its efforts to promote animal advocacy through explorations of animal representations, "runs the risk of ahistorical, universalist prescriptions about how to treat or interact with non-human animals" (500). Conversely, his idea of animality studies investigates the ways in which animality, its expressions, and manifestations have been understood, affected, and appropriated by humans. While even this method runs the risk of speciesism, Lundblad believes it can open up animal studies to new opportunities, such as an understanding of "alternative constructions of love between human and nonhuman beings that resist the singular and reductive signifier of 'bestiality'" (500). For instance, multiple scholars in the past have interpreted descriptions of emotions between Buck and John Thornton to be purely bestial. However, if one considers the psychoanalytic work done during the time of London's writing and combines that with studies of wolf sexualities, one might see how these moments in *The Call of the Wild* could also reflect an appropriation of animality that draws out a new definition of male homosexuality.

While Lundblad looks at ways that an animality study of London might allow us to break out of reductive bestial readings, Christine Mahady inquires into the degree to which animal studies might help us see London's dogs as signifying

something other than human regression and racial atavism. “Teaching Old Readers New Tricks: Jack London’s Interspecies Ethics” (2012) argues that London’s canine perspectives allow readers to recognize and embrace corporeality as an aspect that is shared by all animals, though often rejected by human animals to their detriment. Through the unlikely comparison between *White Fang* and *Martin Eden*, Mahady locates within London’s stories an assertion that human’s corporeality can be better understood, accepted, and used through an animal-centered approach to surrounding. This acceptance is tied to an ethics of responsibility toward surrounding subjects and objects. With this ethics in mind, we are able to read an animal embodiment in London’s work that escapes past deterministic readings.

Heavily influencing the work of both Mahady and Lunblad, Jonathan Auerbach uses multiple approaches, including animal studies and queer theory, in order to make statements about London’s own biography and early 20th century America that he occupied. Both *Male Call: Becoming Jack London* (1996) and “‘Congested Mails’: Buck and Jack’s ‘Call’” (1995) inquire into the ways London’s wilderness narratives have as much to do with culture as they do nature. While the central thesis of *Male Call* revolves around London the author, Auerbach manages to maintain an appropriate reverence to the integrity of London’s characters as being both separate and connected to the author. By examining London and his works as simultaneously separate and equal, Auerbach is able to come to conclusions that contribute significantly to our interpretations on both London and his body of work.

3: Faulkner's Natureculture and Its Symbolic Objects

While William Faulkner might be located in a literary tradition different from that of London, his work concerning the southern wilderness is similarly entrenched within the struggle to differentiate between definitions of nature and culture. In addition to this, Faulkner's dogs occupy similarly ambiguous spaces within that binary. However, Faulkner's work finds itself concerned with many other tensions such as binaries concerning race and the American South's cultural and social climate. Consequently, Faulkner's dogs and other non-human animals can seem to be less of a central theme and surface less in his texts than those of London's. For this reason, amongst many others, we do not have such a wide reaching foundation of scholarship dealing primarily with animal representations in Faulkner. In addition to this, a majority of what we do have deals more with the symbolic significance of these non-human animals.

For instance, Gerard Hoffman's "Myth, Ideology, Symbol and Faulkner's Modernism/Postmodernism in *Go Down, Moses*" (1997) looks into how Faulkner's constructed myth in "The Bear" depicts a nature/culture binary where the dividing line is not necessarily clear. The model proposed in this myth combines various incongruent ideologies that are drawn out through symbols. The mythical space, in this case, is the hunt. The text seems to create a space that is not only occupied by the binary of hunter and hunted, but also by the reversal of privilege in this binary. The hunter is supposed to triumph over the hunted - the hunters are supposed to kill Old Ben as skillfully as possible -yet is also supposed to be in communion with the natural and the animal. The hunted "passively

waiting the hunter to be the essence of the mythical spirit” (Hoffman 667); to be worthy of spilling worthy blood. Though this text discusses animals at length, its interpretations are limited to the symbolic. Consequently, its benefit towards animal studies concerning Faulkner lies primarily in giving us a symbolic understanding of the animals in *Go Down, Moses* that we can shore up against our own interpretations of animal embodiment.

Instead of focusing on the symbolic, Jay S. Winston, in “Going Native in Yoknapatawpha: Faulkner’s Fragmented America and ‘the Indian’” (2002), sees the hunt narrative as Faulkner’s attempt at working out a way to “overcome the legacy of dispossession” that white Americans have created. Faulkner attempts to point out, and then develop, the ways in which “the white man” has wronged the nation and its non-white inhabitants. According to Winston, in order to gain a truer connection with the land, the inhabitants must gain a better connection to its native inhabitants, or, “the Indian.” Faulkner’s method of transcending the “legacy of dispossession” involves transforming the perception of natives from “antagonist to ancestor.” This transformation takes the form of the character of Sam Fathers. By making Fathers half black, Faulkner makes the connection between the white man’s treatment of both black people and Native Americans. According to Winston, Faulkner is keenly aware of the mythical Indian being separate from natives themselves. Consequently, Winston’s interpretation rejects any readings that emphasize the symbolism within Fathers. Instead, he sees Faulkner attempting to make a literal familial connection between Fathers and Ike. Ike fills the space left by Father’s childlessness. In this, the text attempts to

establish Fathers as a claimable ancestor of Ike, therefore moving Fathers and the idea of the native away from antagonistic connections.

Also highlighting difference, hierarchy, and inequality, Michael Wainwright discusses how we see inequality functioning between humans, animals, and the environment in “The Bear”. “Ecological Issues: Rousseau’s ‘A Stag Hunt’ and Faulkner’s ‘A Bear Hunt’” connects the inequality we see in Faulkner’s reworking of “The Bear” for *Big Woods* to Jean Jacques Rousseau’s “A Stag Hunt”. This theme, Wainwright claims, comes from Rousseau’s theory that man was once primitive and in “a pure state of nature” (Wainwright 293) then evolved into the “savage (or natural) man whose reasoning abilities set him apart from other animals” (Wainwright 293). Rousseau believed that the transition time between these two human states must have been a time of equality, since human’s ability to reason has long been the source of many violent acts towards those seen as lacking this capability. Faulkner’s narrative seems to exist in part somewhere in this intermediary period. Consequently, we are able to establish a basis for examples of both equality and the lack of it within the text.

Matt Low also draws on “A Bear Hunt” from *Big Woods* and contrasts it with “The Bear” in *Go Down, Moses* in “‘The Bear’ in *Go Down, Moses* and ‘*Big Woods*: Faulkner’s (Re)visions for a deeper Ecology” (2009). At odds with arguments that view *Go Down, Moses* as an environmental piece, Low argues that the revisions that Faulkner made to “The Bear,” that he later put in “Big Woods,” could possibly make the chapter one of modernism’s most “environmental” texts. Most consider “The Bear” and much of Faulkner’s other works as not being

specifically “environmental” because they deal with the environment as a thing of secondary concern, with humans being primary. Lowe mentions that it is part 4 that makes most critics see “The Bear” as falling in line with the primary concern of the rest of the book - race, incest, and miscegenation - instead of aligning itself with an ecological focus. Most scholars, Lowe claims, see “The Bear” as a prime example of how nature, in opposition with culture, is paradoxical because it gains its privilege through culture itself. Lowe, instead of situating “The Bear” within *Go Down Moses*, situates it in *Big Woods*, eradicating the dichotomy, of nature vs. culture. In *Big Woods*, Faulkner eliminates part 4, which, in Lowe’s argument, makes it purely a story about the hunt, and not about race.

Christina M. Colvin also finds issues with interpretations of Faulkner’s nature and culture that do not recognize its problematic assumptions. “‘His Guts Are All out of Him’: Faulkner’s Eruptive Animals” (2014) resists the tendency to offer reductive readings of Faulkner’s animals that limit them as symbols, or foils, of mechanisms for bringing out details of the human Characters. Colvin claims that these readings rely upon and support the human animal binary that Faulkner’s work seems to deconstruct. To Colvin, these animals are embodied through their experiences. They live through the same mechanisms that humans live. In spite of this, humans are able to treat animals violently. Faulkner’s work, then, “underscores how the social construction of animals, and particularly the language used to marginalize and thereby harm animals, eludes their diverse, material lives. Colvin argues that, through culturally constructed rules, definitions, and perceptions, the hunters have bound Old Ben in their own human,

civilized reality. This contradicts, then, their own view of the wilderness. Thus, in creating these codes, the hunters have done to the wilderness exactly what they say they are not doing through the acknowledgement of their own code. Colvin argues this irony to be an intentional facet of the text that serves to point out the wrongs done to animals by imposing human culture, or even ideas of ‘the natural’ upon them.

As we can see, the animals and environments discussed in the literature of Faulkner and London have merited a large amount of criticism from many different fields. Both bodies of work incorporate issues of race and animality, Faulkner relying more on the former, London on the latter. However, Faulkner’s dogs share much in common with those of London. In addition to this, both authors’ native characters seem to occupy a liminal space between the nature and culture constructed by each author. By inquiring further into these liminal spaces, and the binaries constructed around them, we might better understand the faults that result as consequences of these constructions. A comparative look at Faulkner and London might also help us in better understanding this issues and how they became part of American Literary history.

Chapter 2

Heredity, Hybridity, and Ferality

At the end of Jack London's "To Build a Fire" (1902), we see the dog character seeking "the other food-providers and fire-providers" (London 639). After the majority of the text suggests the human has been using the dog as a tool, we see that the dog, having survived its companion, was also using the man. This mutual using, suggesting mutual objectification, complicates our view of the dog and man as companions. While we see the relationship both building and breaking companionship bonds, from the way the two take turns following each other to the instant the man attempts to kill the dog for its warmth, we must acknowledge that this is one representation of the co-evolution of dogs and humans, with all of its "brutalities as well as multiform beauties" (Haraway, "The Companion Species Manifesto", 119) included. We see these beauties and brutalities manifesting throughout *The Call of the Wild* and *Go Down, Moses* as well. From the relationships of John Thornton and Buck and Lion and Boon to the training the two dogs undergo, we witness the effects of dog-human co-evolution.

In all three of these stories, we see the stakes of taking advantage of these companions and our co-evolved status: "the relation between what counts as nature and what counts as culture in Western discourse and its cousins, and the correlated issue of who and what counts as an actor" (Haraway, "The Companion Species Manifesto", 118). In London's stories, the dog characters muddle what counts as nature and culture. They also resist clear definitions of subject and object. Like the dog in "To Build a Fire", they are often used as invented or "self-birthered" tools "whereby man makes himself repetitively" (Haraway, "The

Companion Species Manifesto”, 119). The dog becomes the man’s tool for navigating through the frozen river. Yet, they also display how such objectifications deconstruct themselves when they are inverted by the image of “the cringing scavenger mirrored in mere village dogs” (Haraway, “The Companion Species Manifesto”, 117). The dog uses the man for warmth and then searches for other humans once warmth will not be provided by his current companion. This is a world of separation and objectification, a relationship void of affect.

Conversely, *The Call of the Wild* suggests a world in which dogs and humans acknowledge each other as partially connected parts to a whole. Those who do not, such as Hal and Charles, are doomed to the same fate as the man in “To Build a Fire”. The boundaries still exist, but they are crossable. “Flexibility and opportunism are the name of the game” (Haraway, “The Companion Species Manifesto”, 121) in London’s Alaskan wilderness.

Similarly, the woods of *Go Down, Moses* set up boundaries between nature and culture, human and animal, that are both concrete and permeable. The relationships are dependent on one another. The culture of the hunt cannot exist without the nature in which it is set in. To a degree, nature, at least the natural setting in which they hunt, is upheld and preserved by the tradition carried on by Ike and his peers. We see the stakes of this inter-dependence later on, in “Delta Autumn”, as the disappearance of the wilderness is tied to Roth and his lack of respect for the culture of the hunt.

One method of productively reading these boundaries and their permeability is dependent on acknowledging significant otherness and co-evolution between companion species. While this chapter deals primarily with the dogs of the two main texts I am analyzing, it is necessary to acknowledge these principles and the human component to dog-human relationships in order adequately analyze the dogs as they appear in each text. The concept of heredity cannot be figured outside of relations, which are only tracked by those able to keep records, those embedded within a culture of histories. Hybridity can only be figured in terms of heredity and co-evolution. Ferality requires a culture to “fall from” and a nature to “fall into”. These three categories, heredity, hybridity, and ferality, and their components meet in the characters of Buck and Lion.

The foundation of these categories leads to multiple areas, heredity being the closest to the origin. Heredity is, at times, one of the main mechanisms through which we figure identity and classification, especially concerning animals. For dogs, their heredity can be considered in terms of breed. By naming a dog breed, one signifies purposes, images, representations, and mannerisms simultaneously. This utilitarian method of naming has productive possibilities, but can also lead to serious consequences.

In *The Call of the Wild*, breed figures in heavily when attaching names and categories to who lives and dies. However, in the beginning of the text, on the judge’s farm, breed is merely a familial and visual identifier. When we are given Buck’s familial ancestry, we are given more than just his breed:

His father, Elmo, a huge St. Bernard, had been the Judge's inseparable companion, and Buck bid fair to follow in the way of his father. He was not so large - he weighed only one hundred and forty pounds - for his mother, Shep, had been a Scotch Shepherd dog. Nevertheless, one hundred and forty pounds, to which was added the dignity that comes of good living and universal respect, enabled him to carry himself in a right royal fashion. (London 16)

The text attaches significance not only to his breed but the situation he was brought up in, presenting the two as nearly mutually exclusive. It also suggests some sort of familial model, using words like "father" and "mother" and giving all of them names. As the son of the judge's closest companion, he inherits this relationship to the judge. With this inheritance, Buck gains a lofty space in the hierarchy of animals on the farm. Buck is "royal" and the "inseparable companion" of the judge. Yet, he does not inherit his father's size. One hundred and forty pounds sounds heavy for a dog, until one considers that the typical weight for a St. Bernard is at minimum one hundred and forty pounds. So, we also receive a contextualizing: he is small, for his breed. We also are given his potentiality; with his ancestry, the reader attaches whatever they assume St. Bernards and Scotch Collies to be capable of.

Lion, on the other hand, is depicted as much less privileged than Buck. He is not introduced as the protagonist of the story nor is he able to "carry himself in a right royal fashion". He first is mentioned as someone to be "hated and feared" (Faulkner 198), rather than as a companion. The reader first meets him through

the logs of a trap, “a heavy body crashing with tremendous force against the door” (Faulkner 205). He is just “the animal, whatever it was” (Faulkner 205). However, as he calms down in the enclosure and loses his wildness, the men begin to “see it now- part mastiff, something of Airedale and something of a dozen other strains probably, better than thirty inches at the shoulders and weighing as they guessed almost ninety pounds, with cold yellow eyes and a tremendous chest and over all that strange color like a blued gun-barrel” (Faulkner 206). Unlike Buck, Lion’s ancestry cannot be traced to any specific mother or father figure. For Buck, his breed tells us what he looks like; it determines his appearance. In contrast, Lion’s breed is determined by his appearance. His “blued gun-barrel” color suggests to the other characters that he is part Airedale. His size and shape tell them he may be some part mastiff. In either case, we see the assumption making process inverted. Lion, coming out of the wild, has his breed determined by his appearance. Buck, going into the wild, is described through his breed. In relation to the description itself, we also see Lion fitting into Faulkner’s hunt myth as a creature of “tremendous” proportions. His mysterious heredity, having potentially a dozen other noticeable “strains”, aid in this legendary construction as well.

This is the way that Lion and the other animals have consistently been interpreted: as symbols that fit into the mythic hunt that Faulkner constructs. However, Christina M Colvin, in “His Guts Are All out of Him: Faulkner’s Eruptive Animals” (2014), argues us out of this problematization of *Go Down, Moses* and into a reading that places the blame of this skewed interpretation onto the hunters themselves. In this reading, Faulkner is actually attempting to reveal

the circuitous, marginalizing voices of outdoorsmen. Lion fits into this interpretation by “[challenging the men’s] attempt to turn him into another symbolic animal: that is, from his first intrusion into the narrative amid a trail of gore, Lion’s brute, embodied reality resists conceptual appropriation” (102). Because Lion’s actions, the killing of the colt, are the first to demystify Old Ben and his being the dog that will finally end the myth of Old Ben, he cannot actually fit into their construction because he is destroying it. Consequently, Ike should hate and fear Lion not only because he will bring an end to Old Ben, but also “because he condemns to failure Ike’s romanticization of Old Ben and the Big Woods” (102).

It is interesting to note, here, that the breeds of both Buck and Lion are explicitly stated and discussed in “The Companion Species Manifesto”. While Haraway’s section on breed discusses primarily Great Pyrenees dogs and Australian Shepherds, her larger story that those two fit into is “of two divergent kinds of dogs – livestock guardian dogs (LGDs) and herders” (“The Companion Species Manifesto”, 155). Buck is a hybrid between these two divergent dogs, being both an LGD as a St. Bernard and a herder as a Scotch Shepherd. In this light, Buck’s own heredity gains much more significance as he becomes a hybrid of dogs bred for almost opposite purposes for the same natureculture of tending to livestock. Haraway also spends time discussing “dogs of no fixed breed or kind” (“The Companion Species Manifesto”, 156), a category that Lion fits into quite nicely. In Lion’s case, he might be likened to the “Puerto Rican strays called Satos [that] become members of Massachusetts ‘forever families’ out of histories

of stunning complexity and consequence” (188-189). We might figure in Sam and the hunters as the Massachusetts ‘forever families’ that adopt Lion into their home of the hunt.

Lion is not the deer that Sam hails as chief, nor is he the host of the forest. However, he is regarded with much more respect than the other dogs by all of the hunters and the narrator. He is portrayed as an elusive mystery. Lion is neither god nor mortal; Lion is depicted as a demi-deity, marked by hybridity that enables him to be many things and fill many roles at once. As Sam tells us, his lack of barking, his silence, is a result of “that blue dog in him” (212), the Airedale in him. If we agree with the regular assumptions of breed temperaments concerning mastiffs and Airedales as well, he fits the exact type of dog they seem to need for their task. The mastiff grants him the size he will need to take on Old Ben. In addition to this, the trainability of the mastiff makes it easier for Sam to train him. He is both defensive guardian and offensive hunter. This deified representation attempts to privilege Lion and, to a certain degree, is effective in doing so. However, this privileging seems to fit only within the mythic space the text constructs. Consequently, this representation seems lacking in regard to Lion’s own embodied experience.

In contrast, Buck’s hybridity and its effects are most often described in material detail, without reference to his breed. A contrast between the two might allow us to better envision how Lion’s legendary, symbolic depiction both raises him up but diminishes his status as a living subject. In Buck’s case, his status in the sled team is not determined by what type of dog he is. For instance, when

Perrault first sees Buck, he quickly estimates the dog's value, without reference to his breed, saying "Sacredam Dat one dam bully dog! Eh? How moch" (28). Perrault estimates Buck's worth to the team, finding it easy to give up \$300 of government money on the dog. While the text suggests this is a high price, it also tells us that "Perrault knew dogs, and when he looked at Buck he knew that he was one in a thousand" (29). In this instance, we see a value judgment being placed on Buck based off of currency, not his breed. Due to the lack of any reference to Buck's breed by Perrault, we might assume that Perrault's judgment has more to do with Buck's appearance of suitability for the job, rather than what type of dogs his mother and father were. This stresses the Buck's individualism without focusing on some sort of unrealistic exceptionalism. While the positive traits that Perrault sees in Buck might well be a result of his breed, the man chooses to attribute them to Buck as an individual.

However, we do see his hybrid status coming into play even in the absence of direct references. After Buck is tasked with hauling the sled for the first time, François exclaims, "dat Buck, heem pool lak hell. I tich Heem Quek as anyt'ing" (32). Buck's size, deriving from his St. Bernard half, allows him to move through the snow with enough force to pull the sled hard enough to impress François. Earlier on, the narrator also tells us that Buck "learned easily" and was "wise" (32). While the reference to Buck's strength can be more easily connected to his St. Bernard ancestry, the second half of François' statement might be read as a reference to the intelligence one might assume he gained from his Scotch shepherd mother. Because Buck's strength and intelligence are so often

referenced in unison, the reader can assume that the text has moved away from naming his exact breed and instead chooses to mention qualities of those breeds. The text also avoids explicitly connecting Buck's negative traits to his breed. After his first few days of hauling the sled, we discover that "Buck's feet were not so compact and hard as the feet of the huskies. His had softened during the many generations since the day his last wild ancestor was tamed" (43). At first, we have Buck, the individual, compared to the generalized "huskies". Buck's feet are different, less suited for long snow travel, than husky feet. However, we have an indirect reference to Buck's breed through his "last wild ancestor". Through these references we see the narrator trying to navigate between Buck's individuality and ancestry.

In addition to this, we see Buck's hybridity manifesting beyond his breed and roles and into his potential to traverse across a divide between nature and culture. His body quickly diverges from his tame ancestors' fragile footpads as "his feet grew hard to the trail" (44). As Buck is "suddenly jerked from the heart of civilization and flung into the heart of things primordial" (30), we see him quickly regress into a state of semi-ferality. The narrator tells us "his development (or retrogression) was rapid" (38). This retrogression is specifically referred to as "his decivilization" (37). Buck begins in Judge Miller's civilized domain, amongst primarily humans but also dogs that "did not count" (22). While his full "retrogression" ends with his induction into the wolf pack, his decivilization is complete long before this. While he is still with Perrault and François, his decivilization is "evidenced by his ability to flee from the defence of a moral

consideration and so save his hide” (37). The narrator connects the wilderness to a collapse of morals to make space for self-survival skills. The concept of survival, however, is convoluted at best, seeing as the dogs do not just flee or fight in order to survive. At times, they fight even if their lives are not in danger. This is best seen through the rivalry between Spitz and Buck. This tension seems to be derived from pride or a result of Spitz wariness of Buck’s strength and Buck’s envy of Spitz’s position. However, the narrator seems to suggest that the existence of Buck and Spitz together within the team is a hindrance to the team’s success, the team’s survival. Here, we see a wolf pack oriented hierarchy, where there can only be one “dominant primordial beast” (51). This is further evidenced when neither François nor Perrault mourns the loss of Spitz. Their reaction to his disappearance is purely utilitarian, knowing that one of the two eventually had to go; “No more Spitz, no more trouble” (52). To them, it is a matter of efficiency. To Buck, he has become “the dominant primordial beast who had made his kill and found it good” (51). Buck, through killing Spitz and establishing his own dominance, has claimed his own subjectivity.

Part of the significance within this portion of the text lies in the assumption that only the dominant member of the team can have subjectivity. Only Buck can find his kill as “good”. This is problematic in multiple ways, especially considering that the other dogs are not nearly as verbally privileged as Buck, even though they still clearly make their own decisions. In addition to this, we never see Buck as a full, autonomous subject. After he answers the call and joins the wolf pack, he loses his name. The narrator tells us that, after he begins to

run with the wolves, “here may well end the story of Buck” (100). He disappears into the wild, only to be seen in “splashes of brown on head and muzzle, and with a rift of white centering down the chest” (100) on the later born timber wolves. His full transition from Judge Miller’s culture to the wolves’ nature, his passage from domesticity to ferality, ends in him becoming the “Ghost Dog” (100).

In *Go Down, Moses*, we also are never given a representation of Lion in the wild as a fully autonomous being. Instead, we first see him in his first step into the cultured environment of the hunt. Similar to Buck’s representation after he answers “the call”, we only receive fragmented traces of Lion’s feral existence. Upon finding the tracks near the colt that Lion kills, “General Compson said, ‘Good God, what a wolf’” (203). General Compson notes the size of Lion and his ferocity, likening him to a wolf, similar to the way that Buck is described upon his first meeting with Perrault. He even poses a conundrum to the other dogs in that they cannot pick up or identify his scent. This leads Walter Ewell to suggest that this wolf might have been a ghost, or “a hant” (204). Then, Sam catches Lion, pulling him out of his ferality. From the moment the men see Lion, they begin to figure him in the language of tools and weapons; “They saw an animal almost the color of a gun or pistol barrel” (205). Yet, they cannot fully realize this use of Lion the way he is. Consequently, they must induct him into their culture of the hunt, their natureculture, through some form of training. Sam, who undertakes Lion’s training, makes this clear; he wants Lion trained, not tamed, only to the degree that he understands “the only way he can get out of that crib and stay out of it is to do what Sam or somebody tells him to do” (208). Consequently, we can

understand this to suggest that Sam and the others want the benefits of his feral status, his bravery and independence, while still keeping control of him, keeping him in their game. In this way, he fits into a similar space that Buck exists in while he is a part of the dog team.

Detailing the process of both Lion and Buck's training gives us an important glimpse into the ways they are brought into and fit in their respective naturecultures; their training can be considered an act of enculturation. Drawing from Haraway, I would like to propose ideal versions of dog training based off of "intersubjectivity and mutuality" ("The Companion Species Manifesto", 133). It is important to note here that "intersubjectivity does not mean "equality" . . . but it does mean paying attention to the conjoined dance of face-to-face significant otherness" (133). An ideal of intersubjectivity takes into account potential constructed hierarchies, modes of relating, and the potentialities of subjects while still acknowledging the immanent value of others and how the former three play a role in both supporting and jeopardizing those subjects. Haraway proposes multiple ways we might look at dog training, each of which are both effective yet imperfect. However, these methods attempt to mitigate the consequences of training dogs to serve a certain purpose through sustained efforts to meet the dog's needs. At times, such as in Susan Garrett's *Ruff Love*, the dog's training revolves around control and reward, or "click and treat" ("The Companion Species Manifesto", 135) principles. In contrast, Vicki Hearne's training methods rely on punishment and correction. However, Haraway finds a link between the two: communication and relational respect ("The Companion Species Manifesto",

139-140). Consequently, this section will offer a close reading of the different ways in which Buck and Lion are trained and the degree to which communication and respect, response and “companion species relating under the sign of significant otherness” (140) are found present or lacking.

Lion’s training happens rather abruptly, seeing as the moment he is captured it begins. Major de Spain makes the mistake of understanding training as synonymous with taming. However, Sam has a much different idea. His method of training has nothing to do with taming Lion, but everything to do with training him to understand that Sam is his provider, his master. Aside from understanding and respecting this, Lion is free to do as he pleases. Sam says “I don’t want him tame But I almost rather he be tame than scared, of me or any man or any thing. But he wont be neither, of nothing” (205-206). From summer to mid-winter, Sam continues this process of training Lion, starving him then feeding him and repeating that process over and over again. In this way, we see Sam enacting harsh discipline, hitting Lion when he snaps at Sam for attempting to touch him. We only see this process once over, however. The next time Lion appears, he is trained and at Sam’s side. The two seem to communicate, at least to the degree that Lion eventually understands Sam’s message. Additionally, the two seem to gain some amount of mutual respect for one another. Sam understands he has no chance of touching Lion without receiving some sort of injury unless Lion is weakened by starvation. Likewise, Lion eventually understands that Sam has become his food provider, and without granting him the respect that is due that role, he will continue on in the pattern of periodical starvation. While we see both

communication and respect in this situation, there is neither a high degree of mutual respect nor any sort of effort to meet the dog's needs. Additionally, the text gives no mention of how detrimental this process is to Lion, aside from describing the degree to which he is at the mercy of Sam and under his control. The process is never described as the negative, painful process it most likely is for Lion. However, Sam does succeed in bringing Lion under his control while still keeping him "like he is" (208), and throughout the text we rarely see any human character give Lion any sort of actual command. He is allowed to do as he pleases, so long as he stays in the Big Bottom with the hunters and aids in the hunt for Old Ben. Much is sacrificed and gained, but it is difficult to say if Sam and the others are engaging in adequate response to their companion.

Buck's training process, however, differs significantly. First, Buck is trained by both humans and dogs. Second, Buck's training is described actively through him learning as a capable subject, instead of a passive process described through what is done to him. Third, Buck has much more freedom to act during his training, considering he is not in a cage the whole time. The methods used to train Buck are very diverse because he must first be broken, like Lion; then he must learn to pull the sled correctly; and lastly must learn how to properly interact with the dogs on the team. Furthermore, Buck has multiple companions throughout the story and therefore we have many different instances in which we can analyze the methods of response displayed. However, I will focus on Buck's initial training, his induction into "the law of club and fang (30). This law represents Buck's only formal training, if it can be called formal.

It begins with “the man in the red sweater” (26) and his club. After repeatedly attempting to attack the man and repeatedly being beaten back by the club, Buck is told by the man “we’ve had our little ruction, and the best thing we can do is to let it go at that. You’ve learned your place, and I know mine. Be a good dog and all’ll go well and the goose hang high. Be a bad dog, and I’ll whale the stuffin’ outa you. Understand” (28). In this, the text exhibits key component of effective communication. Through giving Buck the opportunity to attack and follow his own will, the man has given Buck a chance to respond and has acknowledged him as a subject. By defending himself in response to the attack, the man has respected Buck’s power while also commanding respect for himself. While Buck does not understand the words like the reader, it is clear he understands the man’s meaning; “he was beaten (he knew that); but he was not broken. He saw, once for all, that he stood no chance against a man with a club” (28). Through the struggle between the two, we see them in “the conjoined dance of face-to-face significant otherness” (Haraway, “The Companion Species Manifesto”, 133). They are not equals, but they are two subjects acknowledging each other in communication and respect. Additionally, we must take notice that it is not the man’s power with the club that is stressed here; it is the club itself. “The club was a revelation. It was [Buck’s] introduction to the reign of primitive law” (28). Had Buck not acknowledged this law, he would have been killed, either by the man in the red sweater or some one who came along later. In this scene, we see the enculturation process of Buck involving successful communication,

mutual respect, and at least a partial consideration for Buck's own needs and well-being.

However, this scene only shows us the law of the club, only half of the "primitive law" London sets up in his narrative. The other half is introduced and administered by the dogs: the law of the fang. The dogs in this story are much less forgiving than the humans. The first example the reader crosses involves the death of Curly. Without so much as a warning, Curly is brutally attacked by another dog for getting too close. Once she is down, the other dogs pounce on her, tearing her to pieces. From this, Buck understands that in this culture, one must be careful who one approaches and how, because there is "no fair play. Once down, that was the end of you" (31). This is not taught so much as it is learned, seeing as Curly never had the chance to learn from her mistake. The law of the fang is not always explicitly communicated with timeliness.

The second instance involves the dogs and François working together to teach Buck how to be an effective member of the sled team. Dave and Spitz both do their best to make sure Buck learns his job quickly, "nipp[ing] Buck's hind quarters whenever he was in error" and growl[ing] sharp reproof . . . or . . . jerk[ing] Buck into the way he should go" (32). The dogs administer immediate, often violent instruction to ensure that Buck makes no mistake of his duties. Their method of communication is utilitarian and swift. While they are harsh teachers, Dave is also "fair and very wise. He never nipped Buck without cause, and he never failed to nip him when he stood in need of it" (35). So, the reader sees that there is some amount of consistency in order to remain fair. All the while,

François directs the team as a whole and trusts the dogs to make sure Buck learns how to obey the commands. Here, we see mutual respect and communication occurring between the three experienced members, allowing Buck to be trained effectively “under the combined tuition of his two mates and François” (32). The three communicate to Buck in a way that he is easily able to understand and respond to. Consequently, we see the effective modes of training operating here through socialization and learned behavior. The dogs offer him examples and François gives Buck cues to connect to those behaviors. We also see the hierarchy that has been constructed, with Buck in between his “commrades”, putting him in a position to be effectively commanded by the two of them. François takes the position of team leader, rather than master commander. Obedience, communication, and response are key in this situation.

When not in the harness, the dogs have a similar way of communicating and associating with one another. Buck’s enculturation process here involves similar nips, bites, and jerks. When he meets Sol-leks, he has an experience similar to Curly, though much more forgiving. After a slash “to the bone for three inches up and down” (33), Buck learns that Sol-leks dislikes being approached on his blind side. Billee communicates less violently, through whines, squirms and wriggles, he “show[s] his good will and intentions” and helps Buck learn how best to sleep while on the trail. So, we can assume that each of the dogs have different communication styles depending on their personality. Furthermore, the dogs give him a practical lesson involving food; if he ate as fast as his mates, he would not get any food stolen. He was not taught this, but understood it after “he

watched and learned” (37). These lessons are vital and the dogs have neither the time and energy nor the full capabilities to teach Buck these lessons in any other way. They assume that if he does not have the ability to adapt, he will not be fit to survive in this environment anyway. Buck must learn all he can in order to avoid a “swift and terrible death” (37). This is the law, the culture, that the other dogs bring Buck into.

Lion, on the other hand, refuses to adopt the culture of the other dogs insofar as he hardly associates with them. He only partakes in the culture of the hunt insofar as the humans require him to. He has more agency than the other dogs in the narrative. For instance, when Sam and Lion approach the others for the first time after he is trained, “the hounds rushed out to meet them and stopped, except the young one which still had but little judgment” (208). The older hounds see Lion and understand not only how powerful he is, but also that they are below him. Consequently, they let him approach them, not the other way around. Lion does not demand respect or assert himself like Buck or Spitz do. The narrator portrays Lion as almost apathetic, until something gets in his way, like the younger dog. Lion leads the pack, not because he commands, but because he does as he pleases in regard to the other dogs (210). In regard to the humans, he does as they please for the most part, but not because there is any sort of punishment awaiting him. The text suggests he merely knows his place and acts accordingly. Yet, the narrator does not imply any sort of romantic or affective relationship between Lion and the other humans. By his separation from the other dogs through his power and status amongst them, and by “[caring] about no man and

no thing” (208-209), he seems to avoid falling under the influence of both the technophilic narcissism of humans and caninophilic narcissism, or, humans tendency to think “that dogs restore human beings’ souls by their unconditional love” (33). While the humans are not able to impose their ideas of dogs as tools or dogs as unconditional lovers onto Lion entirely, they are able to place him somewhere in between these two ideals. The narrator acknowledges that Lion cares about nothing, loves nothing, yet Boon still seems to entertain some form of intimacy with him. In addition to this, the human characters understand that Lion is not entirely tame, but they still manage to get him to hunt Old Ben.

Through understanding the ways that the dogs of *Go Down, Moses* and *The Call of the Wild* are understood and trained and the modes in which they operate with humans and each other, we gain a more full conception of the natureculture built up within these two texts. For London, it is encompassed by the primordial, filled with dogs and men who are “savages, all of them, who [know] no law but the law of club and fang” (31). The hunt is at the center of Faulkner’s natureculture. Revolving around it are the Big Bottom, the land where Ike “was the guest and Sam Fathers’ voice the mouthpiece of the host” (163), Old Ben, the dogs, Lion, and “worthy blood” (157). The dogs in each story are situated in these naturecultures as both tools and companions. However, their representation in each story differs significantly. London’s representations of dog and human characters are very similar, giving the reader detailed, visceral descriptions of the characters’ feelings, actions, and thought processes. In contrast, Faulkner has relatively little consistency in the way that he chooses to

represent his characters. The narrator reveals a great deal of Ike's inner thoughts, and glimpses of Sam's, such as when he first realizes that Lion is the dog they're looking for. However, the reader finds little to no mention of Lion's experiences from his own perspective. While it might seem, then, that London does a better job of representing his canine characters, I find the question of *how* dog's physical experience should be represented is rather elusive. If we take London's route, we risk anthropocentric representations that assume we are much more alike to our interspecies companions than we may actually be. Faulkner's method also risks anthropocentrism, but in a different way; it privileges only on the perspective of the human, leaving the subjectivity, lived experience, and expression of those two of the animal out of the equation.

Consequently, I find the question of how dogs should be represented, in this case, to be less productive than inquiring into how the dogs fit into their respective naturecultures, and then evaluating the degree to which those positions provide the responses to our companion species that we are morally that we are bound to. Both authors mythologize the feral dog, making them a ghost, a thing that does not truly exist. Their conceptions of breed and how it affects dogs, while not as problematic, still lead to a certain degree of reductive taxonomization. London does this through negation, saying what Buck is not, whereas Faulkner states outright what Lion *is*. Consequently, it might be easier to problematize Faulkner. Yet, both are deserving of further speculation. They each, in their own way, make admirable attempts at emulating productive dog-human relationships that acknowledge the importance of intersubjectivity. In *The Call of the Wild*,

London displays dogs and humans working together as unequal parts of a whole to accomplish a mutually desired task. Similarly, Faulkner shows harsh communication tactics between equally stubborn subjects that results in a form of a mutually beneficial working relationship.

However, these representations do not exist in a vacuum, and neither story is just about dogs. To assume this would result in consequences similar to assuming either text is merely about humans. In these naturecultures, neither the humans nor the dogs can be fully understood without the other; we must look further into “what it means to inherit the multispecies, relentlessly complex legacy that crosses evolutionary, personal, and historical time scales of companion species” (Haraway, “The Companion Species Manifesto”, 188). The whole cannot be understood without first understanding its parts. Consequently, the next step in this process is to inquire into how our close readings of the dogs in each novel can help us better examine their human characters.

Chapter 3

Blood and Biology:

Native Americans and the Natural-Cultural Inheritance of Companion Species

Framing: The Native American Naturecultures

Previously, we inquired into the ways in which animals are represented and how they construct their respective text's nature/culture binary by acting as intermediary characters. With this information, we can then look further into how their presence in the text also disrupts the binary in a way that reconstructs it in the form of a more objective natureculture. By locating dog characters within natureculture, as opposed to being in between nature and culture, we are able to prod out inappropriate responses in an effort to discover how we might more adequately respond to our canine companions.

Outside of the texts in question, and in reality, in our own respective naturecultures, we are required to acknowledge our inherited histories, both in unison with and separate from the histories of the species we find ourselves in companionship with. Throughout this acknowledgement, we find a myriad of partial connections, yet rarely do we come upon anything that connects us to our companions entirely. Relating, in this sense, is characterized by fragmentation and recognition of where our boundaries are permeable.

In relating ourselves to our dog companions, especially in light of what we can learn from the texts in question, it seems necessary to acknowledge the partial relatings between racial and animal others. Racism and humanism share discursive ties of othering that link "the colonized, the enslaved, the noncitizen,

and the animal” (Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 18). This is not an equalizing statement nor is it comparative. It is a statement implicit in the understanding of who is excluded from the norm or the “neutral” rational man of western hegemonic culture.

In *The Call of the Wild* and *Go Down, Moses*, we see these links manifesting in multiple ways between the stories’ canine and Native American characters. The Native American and the canine each can be situated in the categories of the colonized, the enslaved, and the noncitizen. However, they diverge from each other in that canines do not bear the weight of the racialized other, nor do Native Americans fall into the label of animal other, at least in the confines of these texts. However, both parties experience some of the same consequences and resultant oppressive structures.

This chapter explores the similarities between canine and Native American characters within naturecultures in an effort to discover what their positions do for the text as a whole, and the problems that arise therein. By problematizing the texts, we can find more productive ways of representing and responding to our companions, both human and non-human animal. The coupling of *Go Down, Moses* and *The Call of the Wild* is ideal for this goal because they represent inverted narratives. One focuses on a movement towards de-wilding, focusing on symbolic inheritance through the symbol of blood, the other towards wilding, honing in on concrete biological inheritance through scientific fact and observation. Though these two seem to be opposites, we find them reaching similar problems: inadequate representations of Native Americans, oppressive

locations and roles of their characters, and inadequate responses to the racialized others of their stories.

Representing

The works of both Faulkner and London supply us with a myriad of instances to study race. While Faulkner's dealings with race seem primarily localized to the southern US, London's narratives represent a number of different nationalities, from natives in the Yukon to the islanders depicted in his *South Sea Tales*. That being said, it suits the purpose of the particular subject matter I am addressing to limit the analysis of race in these stories to their treatment of natives. Specifically, a productive inquiry into the representation of Native Americans in these stories will lead us closer to an understanding of how both *The Call of the Wild* and *Go Down Moses* construct and define their respective wildernesses. Furthermore, it will enable us to locate where these texts fail and succeed in regards to representation and response as it concerns characters within their respective naturecultures.

Earlier, I wrote of hybridity in dogs. In this hybridity, we find hierarchies, power structures, and mechanisms of representation and identity. Hybridity matters here in that it is how the characters are represented to the reader and understood by the other characters. Blood, breed, nationality: all words and concepts that have the possibility of hybridity. In Faulkner, we see a text factoring group identity in terms of a symbolic idea of blood. Likewise, London sees an importance in one's broader genealogy, only his texts factor it in terms of the concrete: evolution, genetics, atavism. In the texts' racially marginalized

characters, we see a more concrete example of the ways that Faulkner and London figure hybridity as it pertains to race. My goal, here, is not to equate ethnic identity or race to the breed of dogs. The immediate purpose of this chapter works towards displaying how ethnic identity factors into the way we construct and understand cultural conceptions of nature and methods of accessing it. This plays into the larger end of my thesis in the way that depictions of certain ethnic identities, specifically Native Americans, are often located in a similar space as canine characters when it comes to how characters interact within fictional naturecultures; they are in the middle, a concrete example of nature being culturally constructed. By placing such characters in this location and role, they are represented as object tools, rather than human subjects, under the guise of companions. How might we, with this in mind, work towards more adequate and responsible methods of representing and responding towards subjects that become objectified as intermediary, accessory figures through which naturecultures are understood.

This line of inquiry starts with issues of representation. How native characters are represented in the text matters in the way that it determines the degree to which they can be adequately responded to by other characters in the text. For instance, François in *Call of the Wild* is of multiple nationalities, yet that factors very little into the narrator's representation of him. Consequently, both the reader and the other characters do not respond to him as a racial other the way that they might for Sam Fathers in *Go Down, Moses*. Being one of the three key components to the nature equation that Faulkner constructs in *Go Down, Moses*,

the other two being Old Ben and Lion, Fathers factors in heavily to the way the reader understands *The Big Bottom*. Consequently, we must first look into how Fathers is represented to see the full extent to his role in the construction of *Go Down, Moses*' natureculture.

To understand Sam, we ought to go further back and see how the narrator represents natives as a whole. As Duane Gage notes in "William Faulkner's Indians" (1974), "William Faulkner's Indians are not history's Indians" (27). While the text might have bits and pieces of historical facts surrounding natives, Faulkner's representation of native characters usually puts their usefulness to his overall goal of the text over portraying them in a historically accurate light; they are "created from fantasy, lore, and an incidental history to suit the author's needs" (27). As problematic as this immediately sounds, we must remember that most characters in Faulkner's stories are created from a number of resources to suit his needs. The real issue, here, is the appropriation of native culture without any effort towards sensitivity or accuracy. Similar to the earlier discussion of Lion's character, by creating ahistorical native characters that are primarily native in name and potentially appearance, they are reduced to symbols and represented as objects. Consequently, we are left with Annette Trefzer's concept of "the Native American Signifier" that she details in *Disturbing Indians: The Archaeology of Southern Fiction* (2007). We see this first manifest in *Go Down, Moses* in the way that the Native Americans of "The Old People" transcend their physical embodiment through death; lived experience, here, does not seem to be important. The dead natives seem to find a form of embodiment after death where

they “actually [walk] in breath and air and casting an actual shadow on the earth they had not quitted” (163). As Sam talks to Isaac about the Old People, they cease to be dead and “cease to be old times and would become a part of the boy’s present” (162). In becoming part of the boys present, the narrator conveys that they overpower the boys own existence and make his family’s hold upon the land “trivial and without reality” (163). This evidences the power of the memory of the old people, but also the clear privileging the narrator has of the mythical and symbolic over the concrete and physical.

When we look further into evidence of the narrator’s dissociation of physical reality from the past and spiritual present, we see clear misrepresentation compounded on the objectifying representation of symbolism. The narrator seems to suggest the natives have merely disappeared, as opposed to being killed off. He presents the natives as “those dead and vanished men of another race” (162). He avoids describing how those men died, suggesting that they merely “vanished”. They did not vanish, however. In the same way that the narrator ignores the theft of the native land by the white men, they ignore the systematic extermination of the natives from the stolen land. So, while the text recognizes the joint futures of Sam and the McCaslin family, it does not necessarily acknowledge all that leads up to this future. Instead, we see the text attempting to privilege natives through some sort of metaphysical or spiritual existence.

When it comes to representation of Sam, the man, however, we see things become slightly more concrete. To gain an understanding of Sam Fathers’ concrete embodiment, one must first understand the physical space he is placed in

by the narrator. Sam occupies a strange, ambiguous space within the text for many reasons, the chief of which being his bloodline and race. Not only is he part black, white, and Chickasaw, but also each portion of his blood seems to contain a specific significance that complicates the matter further. He is not just “black man”, “white man”, and “red man;” he is part Chickasaw chief, part black slave, and part white master. Blood, here, attaches one to specific social roles. As the narrator duly notes, the complexity of Sam’s bloodline makes him “himself his own battleground, the scene of his own vanquishment, and the mausoleum of his defeat” (160).

Sam amounts to a strange mix of blood that seems to portray him as almost white in social status, but not quite. The distinction here is not in the color of his skin but in the dignity and respect that he is granted by the white men. Because he is the son of a chief, he is dignified in the eyes of the other characters. Yet, his black slave ancestry prohibits him from being fully respected and acknowledged and enables the white characters in the story to maintain an appropriate distance from him. This is seen through McCaslin’s explanation of the “something else which you did not notice about [his] eyes, which you noticed because it was not always there” (Faulkner 158).

He was the direct son not only of a warrior but of a chief. Then he grew up and began to learn things, and all of a sudden one day he found out that he had been betrayed, the blood of the warriors and chiefs had been betrayed. He probably never held it against old Doom for selling him and his mother into slavery, because he probably believed the damage was already done before then and it was

the same warriors' and chiefs' blood in him and Doom both that was betrayed through the black blood which his mother gave him. (159)

First, we see the focus being put on Sam's father being both a warrior and a chief: his status in their social sphere. It is the blood of chiefs, not the Chickasaw blood, that gives Sam whatever social leg he might have up on other natives in the text such as Jobaker. Then, this blood, not Sam, was betrayed. In this way, McCaslin diverts the fault away from the actors, the enslavers, and towards blood: towards something that only bears the significance that others ascribe to it: something that no one can actually take the blame for. He has mistaken Sam's situation as a consequence of his blood, rather than understanding the significance of Sam's blood as a consequence of white oppression. This issue evidences the way that the text uses symbols, in this case blood, to divert attention away from placing proper blame on subjects or actual physical consequences. It seems, then, that the text's representation of Sam leans more towards symbolic representation and avoids representing him as an actual subject with agency. Ultimately, this aligns Sam with Lion in the way that their bloodlines, or better said the other characters' interpretations of their bloodlines, make them the perfect tools for Ike and the rest of the privileged characters to accomplish their goals. Like Lion, whose breed and status allow him to be considered higher in status to the other dogs without endangering the power of Cas, Ike, and the other more experienced hunters, the cultural interpretations and consequent power dynamic forced upon Sam render him to guide and lead the other characters in the

way of the hunt without damaging or threatening the authority and status that they hold so closely.

The text disguises this exploitation, however, in part by its championing of primitivism, a concept we will see London also encouraging. Kenneth LaBudde, in “Cultural Primitivism in William Faulkner’s ‘The Bear’” (1950), points out the strong influence of primitive notions of nature, child rearing, and culture in “The Bear” specifically. Considering the time that LaBudde was writing, it is no surprise that he finds Faulkner’s use of the primitive to evidence his ability to balance attitudes towards nature and humanity without injuring either. Regardless of the strength of his argument, its reliance on nature and culture being separate make it divergent from my own thesis. However, the main issues he points out, that Faulkner’s text promotes primitive values within what the natural world it constructs and that a primitive upbringing is the main factor that allows Ike to have what enlightenment he does, evidence a link between culture, namely primitive culture, and non-human subjects. With this, we can surmise that the text seems to unintentionally set up a natureculture in which primitive characters reign as the knowledge bringers.

Locating

Similarly, London finds cultural primitivism to be the most effective method of interacting with the non-human world. While *The Call of the Wild* does not have a native character presence as strong as Sam Fathers in *Go Down, Moses*, it does contain both native characters and conceptions and idealizations of primitivism. The quantity of these examples at the reader’s disposal to analyze is

fairly low compared to those in *Go Down, Moses*, but they yield a similar quality of result. The characters that I plan to discuss are first, the “Hairy Man” that Buck sees throughout the text, and second the Yeehats that appear towards the end of the text. The narrator does not name the Hairy Man as a Native American, nor should we take ethnicity into question since none is suggested. Instead, I find him to be linked to the Yeehats that appear later in the text through the notion of primitivism. We can trace this connection beginning with John Thornton in the way that he hunts, travels, and eats “like the Indian” (71). We might assume, then, that the text asserts this as the way that the Yeehats, the only visible “indians” in the text, also live: primitively. Consequently, we have the Hairy Man being a distant, imagined relative of both the characters mentioned, whether it be by ancestry or mode of life.

When Buck first encounters this man from “another world” (42), we receive the narrator’s perception of the way primitive humans live: “in perpetual fear of things seen and unseen” (41). The Hairy Man comes from Buck’s ancestor’s past, a time where safety was not as easily accessible and, according to the narrator, required strength of both mind and body to survive. Once Buck experiences the freedom that John Thornton grants him later on in the novel, he begins to see this man even more. This man becomes so real that Buck “wandered around with him in that other world which [Buck] remembered” (73). This bears a striking similarity to the Old People that, to Ike, manifest physically, so much so that they seem to cast shadows. Additionally, the Hairy Man is not Buck’s ancestor, similar to how the Old People are not Ike’s. They are the

ancestors of their primitive guides, their primitive leaders. In this instance, we see Buck being drawn into the wilderness that the text has constructed, similar to Ike's transformation as he leaves behind his cultural artifacts in hopes of seeing Old Ben. In both instances, the character is drawn in by a human that symbolizes some sort of primitive mindset or time period. This evidences another aspect to the guide figures in naturecultures. Not only are they usually represented as being in between nature and culture, as we see with Lion and Buck. They are also represented as culturally primitive, yet cultured nonetheless.

Now, if these guide or intermediary figures are located by their respective narrators in between nature and culture, where do we find them when the model changes to combine, rather than divide, nature and culture? Can we see the Hairy Man being Buck's constituent as a companion species? No, not as he is in the story, not to Buck. In simple terms, because he does not exist physically, he cannot fit into what we might understand as species. However, in a more complicated sense, he is in the world of companion species. He is a visual manifestation of Buck's inherited history brought about by his retrogression into the primitive. He gives the reader a chance to acknowledge a harsh, violent past in seeing that human-dog relationships have not always been about love or happiness, or peaceful relating. In this instance, it is surrounded by fear as the main survival instinct and driven by the threat of violence and predation.

However, this visual representation becomes more concrete and physical when Buck confronts the Yeehats. As Buck sits by the fire with the Hairy Man, he sees "many gleaming coals, two by two, always two by two, which he knew to be

the eyes of great beasts of prey” (42). Yet, these beasts of prey never come, neither for the Hairy Man nor for John Thornton and company. Instead, humans are the ones who pose the actual threat to Buck’s companions. Buck loses himself at the sight of the camp having been attacked by the Yeehats, running “in their very midst, tearing, rending, destroying” (82). In a graphically violent upheaval, Buck goes against his bond with the human species because of his bond to an individual human. While this isn’t necessarily a contradiction, it displays the contrary and often violent behaviors we might witness when species meet. In “On Primitivism in ‘The Call of the Wild’” (1987), Richard Fusco explains this inconsistency as Buck no longer feeling any obligation towards humanity: “His only remaining link with civilization lies in his love for Thornton. Consequently, Thornton’s death at the hands of the Yeehats releases the dog from all obligations” (78). The book tells us why Buck “allowed passion to usurp cunning” (82), and Fusco’s argument tells us why Buck is able to leave human civilization as a whole after the event with the Yeehats. However, neither explain why Buck, as a character, has to kill the natives in such a violent display. It also does not explain why London has Native Americans, a made up tribe no less, being the instruments of Buck’s release from human bonds. The reader does not receive a reason for the Yeehat’s slaughter of Thornton, his crew, or the other dogs.

It might be assumed that Thornton and company were on Yeehat land, so it’s only natural that they kill them, especially with Thornton traveling and killing valuable game as he does. Other readers might assume that this characterizes the

Yeehats as “savage”, killing without reason. However, we are given little information to back either of these assumptions up. Instead of answering why, it seems more productive to inquire into what their deaths at the hands of the Yeehats do for the story and for Buck. This event first, as Fusco notes, leaves Buck with no present human bond. However, what follows bears much greater significance. It gives Buck a chance to assert himself as the dominant *primordial* beast. The Yeehats, in this instance, act as a gateway for Buck from culture into nature. We see this as Buck “contemplate[s] the carcasses of the Yeehats” (83). He had killed man, the noblest game of all, and he had killed in the face of the law of club and fang. He sniffed the bodies curiously. They had died so easily. It was harder to kill a husky dog than them. They were no match at all, were it not for their arrows and spears and clubs. Thenceforward he would be unafraid of them except when they bore in their hands their arrows, spears, and clubs. (83)

This is presented as the pinnacle of Buck’s success as a hunter. He first kills the rabbit, then the moose, then the Yeehats. The natives are his final hurdle in heeding the call of the wild. While his passion, derived from companionate affect, enabled him to kill “in the face of the law of club and fang”, his revelation enables him to no longer allow “passion to usurp cunning”, and consequently surpass the methods of the modern and the primitive commit to the primordial. He also acknowledges that technology or cultural artifacts are the only mechanisms by which humans become strong. Consequently, he resolves to shun humans and their methods of power. Buck has now fully gained his autonomy and began a new life. This is evidenced by the canine becoming “alive to a stirring of the new

life in the forest other than that which the Yeehats had made” (83). The new life the Yeehats had made, in this case, refers to Buck's newfound agency. Part of the significance one must note lies in Buck's new birth being granted by native characters. In one sense, they are set up as the last bastion of human culture: primitivism. In another sense, however, the narrator attempts to privilege them as being generative, even in death. This can be problematic in the way that it seems to ignore the lived experience of marginalized characters. Yes, their death may result in some positive change. But, is death the only possible catalyst for these changes?

The notions of Native Americans being generative in death as well as a type of border or gatekeeper can also be found in *Go Down, Moses*. We saw earlier how the text suggests that natives of America, through their attachment to the land, were somehow able to have an amount of re-generative claim over it, in that they exist in it, almost materially, after death. However, we also see Sam's death generating life to a certain degree. Consequently, I also take issue with the symbolic deaths of its native and dog characters. It is in their deaths that I find a strong link between London's and Faulkner's characters. This begins, however, with their initial similarities, especially in the spaces that they occupy within the natureculture of The Big Bottom. Lion seems to be to Sam what Sam is to Walter, Major de Spain, Cas and the white men of the novel. They both lie in ambiguous spaces that inhibit the white men's ability to label them, but do not render the white men incapable of oppressing them. This fact gains significance when one recalls that it is Sam that trains, or, in a way breaks Lion. Sam understands the

place that Lion occupies in a way that Major de Spain and the other white men cannot. Major de Spain tells Sam, “you’ll never tame him. How do you ever expect to make an animal like that afraid of you” (205). Sam, however, wants Lion to have the same relationship with himself as he has with the white men. Sam is neither tamed by nor afraid of his masters. But, as we see throughout the text, from his asking permission to leave to his request, “let me out, master” (232), he knows he is still subservient to them to a varying degree; this is the state he wants Lion to be in. Boon, after watching Sam, realizes that Sam “want[s] [Lion] to find out that at last the only way he can get out of that crib and stay out of it is to do what Sam or somebody tells him to do” (208). Lion, in order to have as much freedom as his new masters will allow, must acknowledge their position in his life. So, while Sam and Lion do not share the exact same position, they are located between similar relationships in their respective hierarchies.

We might better understand this position through the lens of Jay S. Winston’s “Going Native in Yoknapatawpha: Faulkner’s Fragmented America and ‘the Indian’” (2002). Sam is characterized by fragmentation and division, similar to Winston’s discussion of the translation of “Yoknapatawpha”, reflecting “a landscape that is fragmented, divided against itself, compounded on the elements of Indian-ness and the destruction of the Indian”. So, Sam’s description mirrors the description of the land, the land the narrator says is so inextricably linked to the people that were torn from it in order to construct the current society that mourns the loss they brought about. Faulkner attempts to point out, and then develop, the ways in which “the white man” has wronged the nation and its non-

white inhabitants. According to Winston, in order to gain a truer connection with the land, the inhabitants must gain a better connection to its native inhabitants, or, the figure of “the Indian”. Faulkner’s method of transcending the “legacy of dispossession” involves transforming the perception of natives from “antagonist to ancestor”. While Sam is the primary mode through which the text evidences this assertion, it can also be found throughout the text. One could extend Winston’s argument to say that, in order to accomplish this task, Sam and the other native characters must die. In life, one cannot form any sort of blood relation spontaneously. This is why Ike and Cas seem to have so much trouble connecting with and understanding Sam and end up speaking for him. Sam can take the role of Ike’s father, but he cannot become a true blood relation within the schema of the dominant culture surrounding the natureculture of the Big Bottom. Consequently, Sam must become something slightly more abstract: an ancestor, something that requires death. The transformation from relative to ancestor requires death. So, Sam Fathers, the living man, cannot accomplish the role the text sets for him in its entirety as he lives.

The consequences of locating Sam, and the figure of Native Americans, in this position, as dead ancestor, are problematic at best and dangerously dire as we get closer to the worst. While Faulkner’s intentions are no doubt good in attempting to bridge the gap between races and the American South’s violent histories and inheritance, this cannot be done at the cost of objectifying and silencing a human with a body into the realm of symbol. This end only dehumanizes via different means, rather than promoting the mutual understanding

and respect across ethnicities through recognizing, owning and repairing a damaged past. Without respect and co-acknowledgement of each other's agencies, no two parties can begin to respond. Inadequate response, here seems to be both a cause and a result of both texts methods of approaching differences between species, generations, and race. Faulkner is shut out of appropriately responding by his symbolic view of blood and ancestry, whereas London seems held back by the atavistic memories and primal hierarchies he places upon his characters.

Responding

In Haraway's discussion of Jacques Derrida's "And Say the Animal Responded" in *When Species Meet*, she acknowledges how productive and important considering this question is, but asks us to consider to what degree we ourselves are actually responding, and if our response is appropriate to our companions. In analyzing the way that Sam Fathers, the Hairy Man, and the Yeehats are responded to, it is helpful to notice what Haraway says Derrida seems to get right, for lack of a better term, and where he seems to fall short. First, he productively moves away from considering whether or not the animal can speak, and instead tries to differentiate between a response from his cat and a reaction. Yet, he does not take this further and consider how one might meet the gaze of a non-human animal. Second, he does not step onto the slippery slope of "claiming to see from the point of view of the other", (20) but in doing so fails to see animals "as beings who look back and who's look [his] own intersects" (21). I find each of the texts in question here to make both mistakes, but to varying degrees. *The Call of the Wild* seems to write about and observe its racial others in

a way that merely describes them instead of responding to or meeting their gaze. *Go Down, Moses*, on the other hand seems to engage Native Americans, like its animals, “only as literary and mythological figures” (21). The text affords the characters neither the ability nor the chance to look back.

As mentioned earlier, Cass and the other older hunters seem to ignore Sam Father’s state within their society. Cass especially attempts to speak for Sam on multiple occasions, as mentioned earlier. Sam Father is continuously represented on other characters’ terms, spoken for by other characters who share neither his perspective nor his background, and pushed into roles by the text that seem uninvolved with his desires as a subject. In Ike’s discussion with Cass about Sam and the look in his eyes, Cass speaks for Sam, telling Ike and the reader that Sam “was born in a cage and had been in it all his life; he knows nothing else. That’s what makes his eyes look like that” (159). Whether this is true or not, the text gives no indication that this has ever come from Sam’s mouth. Cass fails to respect Sam in that he does not meet his gaze. Instead, Cass tries to interpret his gaze, or see what he sees. He surmises that “his cage aint us” (160), which isn’t incorrect, but seems to ignore the point of what he has ultimately discovered: Sam is not free. He may be treated well by the hunters; he may be given free rein to do as he pleases while in their company, but this cage exists beyond The Big Bottom. In essence, whatever freedom or agency he has is not something he can own entirely. Cass’ response to Sam’s gaze, then, can be characterized by mythologizing and symbolizing.

Conversely, Ike's response is characterized by shame. After Sam's death, Ike comes to his terrible realization of his family's past and ancestry. He can only respond to this information with shame that causes him to retreat and ignore his own legal claim over the land. While Ike's shame deals with former slaves and non-natives and their relationship to the McCaslin family's hold on the land, I still find a connection, here, with Sam Fathers. Now that Sam has become part of "the blood hot and strong for living, pleasuring, that has soaked back into [the land]" (177), he becomes a part of Ike's inherited history that he cannot accept. To a certain degree, Ike productively realizes that people cannot claim the land as the generations before him had imagined they could. However, his revelation stops there. It stops short at shame, an unproductive, selfish response. Additionally, in his response towards his inherited history, rejecting his claim upon the land also rejects his inheritance as a whole, which implies Ike attempting to wash his hands of the family guilt. Alternatively, Ike could have considered his inheritance, both the violence and the joy, and responded in a way that met the gaze that he reacted to in shame. In order to do this, however, Ike would have to reject the perspective that enabled him to come to this conclusion in the first place: the mythologizing of the land. Breaking with this tradition seems too much for Ike.

Similarly, Buck has trouble responding correctly because of his attachments. In the case of his attack on the Yeehats, Buck reacts. He does not respond. Additionally, Buck seems to merely react to the Hairy Man, following him with little to no explanation. They do not interact on the intimate, though violent, level that Buck and the Yeehats do. Furthermore, it is difficult to fully

analyze Buck's response to the native characters in the text because of his shared space with them in the natureculture of London's Klondike wilderness.

Consequently, it seems more productive to examine how the text itself responds to the existence and gaze of the native characters it includes. Instead of shame, the text's response to its biological and racial others is characterized by fear and violence.

As mentioned earlier, the representations of both the Hairy Man and the Yeehats limits itself to appearance, whether that be the matted hair and primitive mannerisms of the Hairy Man or the "savage" dancing and chanting of the Yeehats. In this way, I find the text's response to its primitive characters to be lacking in the way that it takes the role of the observer, denying the observed subjectivity through a refusal to meet its gaze. Similar to the way that Cass attempts to figure out what Sam is looking at, that look in his eye, the narrator of *The Call of the Wild* focuses on what the Hairy Man is looking at, assuming their self, the narrator, to be outside of the field of vision. In this case, the narrator might find a more productive method of response were they to put themselves under the same pretense the other characters are in; the narrator could allow themselves to also be observed. Instead, the narrator decides to take a more traditionally scientific approach, engaging with the primitive man "as [an] object of their vision, not as beings who look back and whose look their own intersects" (Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 21). All the reader can understand from the representation of the Hairy Man, then, is fear. In science's terms, or at least the science of London's day, early humans knew only fear for the sake of survival.

This reason for this fear later manifests in the ambush of the Yeehats. Not having been given a reason for the Yeehat's attack, when looking into the way they are represented, leads us to the conclusion that they are savages, typical of early representations of Native Americans. When analyzing this lack of evidence from the perspective of the texts response to their existence, however, we can interpret this as the text refusing to meet their gaze. The narrator does not even attempt to see from the point of view of the Yeehats, as they do with the Hairy Man. They simply observe. The response that arises from this observation manifests through Buck's violent attack. Violence, like shame, "is not an adequate response to our inheritance of multispecies histories, even at their most brutal" (Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 23). We might overlook Buck's violence due to the nature of his character and his desire to avenge Thornton, but presentation of this response must give the reader pause as to the consequences of refusing to meet the gaze of another during violent points of contact.

As we have seen throughout these analyses, neither London nor Faulkner probably intended to display such problematic representations of any of their characters. From Winston, we saw that Faulkner's intentions were most likely well meaning. In London's case, we have a dog-story set in the Klondike that already could not help but be violent due to the time and place it is set in. In many cases, I have pointed out issues and problems within each text in order to bring to light what we should avoid when representing subjects that we find to be central to any natureculture. In these cases, I find no defense for either text or author. For example, the way that *Go Down, Moses* seems to ignore the lived experience of

Lion and Sam for the sake of holding them up as mythical characters cannot be excused. However, there are other instances in which the purpose of the analysis primarily serves to illustrate consequences that the text seems to purposely evidence. Earlier, we looked at Cass and Ike's response to the injustices brought upon Sam. While Cass is not entirely in the right, he does overcome obstacles that halt Ike for the remainder of the novel. Specifically, he acknowledges shame as an inadequate response in saying that "there is only one thing worse than not being alive, and that's shame" (177). In looking ahead towards Ike's later decisions in the novel, we could assume that the text is also asserting that Ike has made an inadequate response.

As with their treatment of their dog characters, *The Call of the Wild* and *Go Down, Moses* pose significant problems, consequences and solutions. What seem at first to be nature stories are actually acutely developed, ingrained, examples of naturecultures that can often be mistaken for dualistic battles between the natural and the artificial. These naturecultures rely upon many different kinds of relating. One such relating involves the partial connections between dog and Native American characters. The ethical implications surrounding these characters are deeply involved with the concept of inheritance, whether it be Faulkner's symbolic bloodline inheritance, or London's concrete biological inheritance. Yet, neither seem overtly concerned with inheriting the multispecies history, in all of its work, play, joy, and brutality. Approaching these characters within the realm of myth and symbolism, or science and fact, whether

in the processes of construction or analysis, results in inadequate representations, oppressive locations, and inadequate responses.

Chapter 4

From Pack to Kennel:

Working Towards a Literary “Becoming With”

In “Writing the Wolf: Canine Tales and North American Environmental-Literary Tradition” (2011), Karen Jones details the cultural changes in opinions and understandings of the wolf in North American Environmental literature and history. Specifically, Jones argues that storytellers’ representations of animals and ecological concerns matter significantly more than we usually assume when we compare them to the impacts of scientific observation. For instance, she cites Thomas Dunlap’s *Saving America’s Wildlife* (1988) in explaining how some “situated the redemption of the ‘big bad wolf’ in the professionalization of the wildlife community and emerging debates about biotic health and integrity” (203). In this case, scientific observation allowed the popular image of the wolf to shift from societal antagonist to ecological regulator. In this story, the wolf moves away from being a literary figure of folklore and towards a being within a biodiverse environment. However, Jones takes issue with this argument primarily on the grounds that it is void of affect, and therefore lacking the “rhetorical guides to action in framing our (positive) engagements with other species.

Within this argument, a tension between science and sentiment surfaces. While one might find the root a subjective/objective binary, it seems that writers on either end are looking for more accurate depictions of wolves; they are both after some sort of objectivity. Both the scientist and the novelist are, for the most part, attempting to present animals “as they really are” (204). In their quest for the

objective narrative, the writer draws their credibility from some sort of detachment from either the subject, in the scientists case, and the object, in the case of the poet. However, Jones accurately acknowledges that “authorial claims of detachment always [fall] short, whether written up as a biological report or short story” (204). Perhaps, the question of accurate representation can be found in affect and interaction with, not detachment from.

Jones’ assertion that we need contributions from both the scientific and literary communities in order to construct productive cross-species relationships and representations finds itself ideologically in line with Harraway’s argument in *When Species Meet* (2008); both writers acknowledge the need to break away from the roles of both the scientific observer and the literary mythologizer. Jones seems to believe that this has at least in part been done when it comes to the representation of the wolf and the wolf pack. She sees the results of this change in the 1995 reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone. What might have been seen as a scientific break away from the negative mythology of the wolf can actually be interpreted as “the emergence of a new story about *Canis Lupus*” (203), a result partially of, rather than a response against, literary representations of wolves. My intention in bringing up Jones, here, is to show how literary representations matter, not just when speaking of wolves, but also when writing about their more domesticated siblings: dogs.

Do we see the same change in the kennel as we do in the pack? To a degree, we cannot. This is primarily because dogs and wolves are figured in different terms, whether they be negative or positive. On the negative side, the

wolf is seen as an assailant of property or dangerous beast. For dogs, reductive representations could span anywhere from representation of pitbulls as violent dogs to the infantilization we see many dog owners placing upon their canine companions. The contrast, here, lies in the breadth of the consequences. Jones gives us a valuable look into the consequences of misrepresenting wolves, but the same task would prove much more difficult were the subject domesticated dogs. This, in part, is because we tend to have a different set of assumptions for each breed of dog. The task might also prove difficult because the consequences of misrepresentation often come in less easily noticed forms. For this reason, I have treated both *Go Down, Moses* and *The Call of the Wild* as sort of case studies in looking further into how we misrepresent dogs and what happens when we do. When misrepresentation leads to inadequate response, we not only risk a failure in relating on an inter-species level, but also we compromise the well beings of our companions. So, it is not enough to just point out where things go wrong. To that end, I find it beneficial to call attention to pieces that seem to display more productive representations of dogs and ways of interacting with companion species.

Productive Representations and Responses

While I have spent a majority of my analysis of the two texts in problematizing them, I find there are a small amount of instances in which we might find productive examples of inter-species relating. It would not be fair to either text to completely write them off as inadequate. Additionally, the goal, here, is not to come up with an exact method of relating to either canine or Native American

others. This would be counterproductive in that it would privilege a type of objectivity that would belittle, if not completely purge, the role of affect in the task of relating. Instead, I am looking for partial connections that produce positive elements in relationships between companion characters. By compiling these positive elements, we might be able to paint a more full picture of what it means to inherit the multi-species, both the ugly and beautiful, in a way that avoids the tragedies we see in both stories.

The two characters I find the most potential in for this task are Boon Hogganbeck in *Go Down, Moses* and John Thornton in *The Call of the Wild*. While neither display perfect relationships to the canine or Native American characters in their respective texts, both seem to function in ways that diverge from the oppressive or passive tendencies of the other characters in positions of privilege. We see Boon questioning his own motives and ability to relate to Lion while simultaneously disrupting the racial hierarchy of the text. John Thornton's character displays an alternative relationship between human and dog that emulates one positive outcome of responding and communicating appropriately.

In the case of *Go Down, Moses*, the text evidences layers of various hierarchies and power structures. These hierarchies are often implied, though never explicitly stated. Think back to the discussion of Cas and his displacement of blame from concrete oppressive structures to abstract blood in order to explain why Sam's locational ontology. We also see a hierarchy amongst animals, both human and non-human, with the smaller game animals being at the bottom, leading all the way to Old Ben at the top, leaving the hunting dogs somewhere in

the middle, depending on which dog you are. Yet, these structures tend to overlap at times, like when Old Ben comes in contact with Ike, or when the narrator talks about Old Ben, Lion, and Sam together. The hierarchies themselves are disrupted by their boundaries being muddled.

Boon's actions throughout the text highlight the muddling of these boundaries. The presence of his character first affirms the human hierarchy of ethnicities through his treatment of his own blood. We are told Boon has Chickasaw blood in him, but the narrator finds it significant enough to mention that "it was not chief's blood" (161). It seems that Boon also finds this significant. While sober, Boon is known to have "resented with his hard and furious fists the intimation of one single drop of alien blood" (215). Boon understands the importance of purity of blood. He looks white, and is only a quarter Chickasaw, but he must defend against anyone asserting that that quarter of non-white blood reduces his whiteness and his consequent claims to privilege. However, "usually after whisky" (215), Boon also argues "with the same fists and the same fury that his father had been the full-blood Chickasaw and even a chief" (215). So, with the prompting of whisky, Boon's lips loosen enough to assert a lie that will nevertheless allow him to claim his own ancestry. Here, the distinguishing factor is again, like with Sam, that it is chief's blood both Sam and Boon claim. Boon rejects the common Chickasaw blood, but accepts the chief's blood. This affirms Sam's place on the hierarchy and the reason for it: though native blood might put one below white blood, chief's blood is higher up than that of the common native.

Conversely, Boon disrupts the hierarchy through his relationship to Lion and Sam during Lion's training. By aligning himself closer to Lion and doing Sam's work for him, Boon seems to lower himself on the hierarchy. However, if one views this situation between the three characters as separate from the rest of the plantation life, it actually represents a sub-hierarchy between those with native blood. Consequently, it affirms the existence of hierarchies in a different way. Before Lion is introduced into the story, Boon's place in the hunt seems to be as the master of the dogs (156, 170). The dogs are to Boon as Walter's rifle is to Walter: they are their chosen tools. For instance, when Boon comes across the massive buck in "The Old People" he does not ask for his gun, he tells the others to "get the dogs, get the dogs" (170). Haraway mentions how "man makes himself by realizing his intentions in his tools, such as domestic animals (dogs)" ("The Companion Species Manifesto", 33). Consequently, in addition to being pets, dogs have been used as tools for "hauling, hunting, and herding for various peoples" ("The Companion Species Manifesto", 13). Boon uses the dogs to make himself and accomplish what he desires, thus revealing him as under "a neurosis [Haraway] calls humanist technophilic narcissism" ("The Companion Species Manifesto", 33). Until Sam captures Lion, Boon sees animals as tools that help him establish his domain: the dogs are his central means of power. However, Lion disrupts this power by asserting his own strength. Boon realizes quickly that, though Lion has been trained, Lion is not a tool through which Boon can make himself. Boon seems captivated by Lion when he nonchalantly strikes the smaller dog as it approaches him. In seeing Lion's power, Boon forgets his own authority

over the dogs. Instead of asserting himself like he does with the other dogs, he vocally wonders, “will he let me touch him” (208). Boon feels “the bones and muscles, the power” (208) of Lion and is humbled when compared to the dog.

Boon then attaches himself to Lion in a very strange way. He “takes over Lion’s feeding from Sam” (209) and even sleeps with the dog. It might be assumed that this relationship comes up from Boon’s interest in Lion being the dog that will help them hunt Old Ben. However, when one looks at this interaction in regards to the hierarchy of agencies and how this hierarchy relates to race and embodiment, a different reasoning seems to surface. Boon’s power is not only belittled by Lion, but it is also usurped by Sam. If Boon is usually the one who handles the dogs, Sam’s training of Lion undermines Boon’s authority over the dogs. This undermining, combined with Boon’s respect for Lion’s power, seems to be at the root of how Boon’s relationship to Lion and Sam disrupts the hierarchy that places white men at the top. While enclosed in the world that the three of them make up, Boon’s Chickasaw heritage seems to carry more significance. In having his power both belittled and usurped, Boon’s whiteness has, in a way been undermined. The hierarchy remains intact, then, by viewing Boon’s position between Lion and Sam through his Chickasaw blood, not his white blood. The narrator identifies Boon in this situation through “his touch of remote Indian blood”, not through his white blood. In this context, Sam is the chief at the top of the hierarchy, Boon is below him, lacking the blood of chiefs, and Lion is below the two of them.

While each context, Boon with the white characters and Boon with Sam and Lion, seems to display a clear hierarchical structure, the clarity disappears when the situations are looked at as parts to a whole. Boon's existence seems to be the primary factor enabling the breakdown of the hunter's conception of hierarchy and the hunt. Sam, while complicated, can easily be placed into whatever category the hunters wish. As the text evidences earlier, Cas and the others have managed to symbolize Sam's heritage in a way that keeps him where they need him without implicating their role in the oppressive structure. The muddling of racial hierarchies mirrors the way Boon's existence also deconstructs the mythologizing of animals in the hunters' lore. As Christina M. Colvin points out in "‘His Guts are all out of Him’: Faulkner's Eruptive Animals" (2014), Boon's words in reference to Lion, "his guts are all out of him" (229), herald the collapse of "the ontological category 'animal'" (94) in *Go Down, Moses*. He verbalizes the physical existence of animal bodies and forces the other characters to acknowledge that animals are not just figures and signifiers of wilderness myth. Before this, however, the text displays a profound, though subtle, change in Boon that results from observation and introspection. Boon at first seems to lack the ability to recognize Lion as anything other than the dog that will kill Old Ben. He reevaluates his relationship to Lion after the two come in contact with Old Ben. Lion does what Boon expects of him and engaged with the bear. Boon, on the other hand, attempts to shoot and misses five times "with Lion looking right at [him]" (214). After the event, Boon seems to realize he has failed in properly responding to Lion and is consequently not "fit to sleep with him" (214) or be in

any way superior to him. This can also be seen as more than just a matter of physical superiority, seeing as Boon managed to get the better of Lion when fighting “hand-to-hand” (213) on the way back to camp. Boon understands he has broken the agreement, if there ever was one, between himself and the dog and therefore cannot interact in the same way.

We see the full extent of this acknowledgement later on in the text. Boon, having realized the first time around that he would not be able to kill Old Ben with a gun, refrains from shooting. Instead, he attacks Old Ben with a knife in melee combat. He fights with Lion. The three fighting together, not in the detached way of human shooting from a distance, but all three animals, both human and non-human, engaged physically depicts an image that suggests not necessarily equality, but a closeness of engagement the novel has yet to show. Then, after the fight, Lion’s disemboweled body “reveals how the bodies of animals violently disrupt the hunters’ abstractions” (Colvin 103). They must acknowledge the physical existence and lived experience of the animals that make the hunt possible. Boon, seemingly the only hunter concerned with Lion’s state, desperately repeats: “Easy, goddamn it, Can’t you see his guts are all out of him?” (229). While Colvin argues that Boon’s hysteria is a result of Lion’s guts proving he is not an abstraction, I believe one might just as effectively argue that it Boon reacts this way precisely because he has come to this realization without having to see the dog turned inside out. For the other hunters, “Lion’s guts make his role as a symbolic, figural animal unsustainable” (103). But, for Boon, this understanding of Lion faded the moment he decided to no longer make the dog sleep with him. It

is Boon that calls our attention to Lion's material existence, and not another hunter, precisely because he has met the gaze of Lion; he has seen Lion because "[he] missed five times. With Lion looking right at [him]" (214). It is only in the failure of both himself and his belief systems that he is able to attempt to make an appropriate response to the dog.

John Thornton, on the other hand, seems to meet the gaze of Buck without having any sort of traumatic event. While it is difficult to say whether Boon or Thornton respond appropriately, it is evident that they at least make attempts. They both try to meet the needs of their canine companions and respect them as more than things to think or work with. Thornton, especially, seems to take special care for Buck from the moment they meet.

We meet Thornton as Charles, Mercedes, and Hal come to a stop in his camp. Thornton is immensely troubled by the sight of Hal beating Buck. The text suggests Thornton hesitates so as not to mix himself up in anyone else's business, but eventually it becomes too much for him. Springing upon Hal, threatening to kill him, Thornton becomes the first named character in the text to attack another human. While it seems simple, Thornton wishes to ease the pain of the dog he sees being beaten, he also abandons all the other dogs in the team and the three humans do die by drowning in the freezing river. The issue follows as thus: if Thornton does nothing, Buck will be beaten to death and all of the other characters will die. He cannot take all of the dogs, because that will leave the humans to die. Hal obviously will not be deterred from his dangerous path, so Thornton, recognizing the needs of Buck, must make a moral compromise.

Thornton's ability to compromise reflects his adaptability in appropriately engaging with and recognizing the needs of other companion species. For instance, when Buck saves him from drowning in the river, it is not his own injuries that cause him to halt the group's progress. After finding three broken ribs on Buck, Thornton forces the rest of the group to make camp "till Buck's ribs knitted and he was able to travel" (66). Again, the text displays a productive, reciprocal relationship between Buck and Thornton at the end of "For the Love of a Man" at the Eldorado Saloon. Knowing that the dog could not fully understand that Thornton's entire livelihood up to this point depended on Buck's ability to haul the heavily laden sled, Thornton tries to not pressure Buck. As Buck hauls the sled, Thornton follows, not with a whip or anything that a musher might typically use to spur a dog forward, but with "short, cheery words" (70) of encouragement. While, at base, we have humans betting on dogs, an extremely violent and insidious premise in certain settings, we also have companions in mutually beneficial contact. Thornton wins the money, which was most likely not his primary motive, seeing as he rejects the offer to sell Buck to double his profits. Buck, in turn, wins not only the affirmation of Thornton, which he desires, but also the ability to follow Thornton and Co. into the wilderness where he will eventually have some of his most fulfilled days as a domesticated working dog. Unlike Buck's interaction with the man in the red sweater, the relationship between Thornton and Buck revolves around mutual recognition gained through positive affect, not violence and constraint.

The love between Buck and Thornton has often been interpreted as either a bestial love or a metaphor for homoerotic human love, as Michael Lunblad points out in “From Animal to Animality Studies” (2009). While it might be tempting to read London’s animals as “men in furs” (496), seeing them as saying more about humans than the animal bodies they reside in, I find these readings to verge on reductive, anthropocentric readings. Yet, it is difficult to counter such readings, especially when considering how erotic the descriptions of Buck and Thornton’s love get in the text. Lunblad’s idea of an animality studies, in addition to animal studies, seems to give us an opportunity to read Buck as an actual animal while simultaneously recognizing the way the text might be working him into a signifier position. In this way, Buck is a real animal within the text. From without, we can still work under this assumption while also looking further into the ways that his animality relates to other potential assertions about humans the text might attempt to make. This falls in line with my own thesis in the way that it does not separate or ignore connections between human and non-human animals, nor does it reject the historical fact that humans have constructed countless systems of meaning making through both physical animals and the ontological category of “the animal”.

So, without countering the readings that see a problematic bestiality or metaphorical homoerotic tensions between Thornton and Buck, we can also read an affect that affirms the possibility of productive relations between companion species, even within a harsh wilderness setting. The text makes this possible through telling the story from the third person of Buck’s perspective. Writing

from the perspective of an animal is extremely difficult and often problematic, as we have seen from *The Call of the Wild*. However, London's work seems much more well intentioned than its results point out. In his own words, London was attempting to offer his best scientific rendition of an animal's perspective. He repeatedly stresses the motive of instinct, rather than in-depth reasoning, because his own scientific learning indicated that was how animals functioned. London wished to impart a "rubric of evolutionary thought to his readers" (Jones 212). While London's writing was, supposedly, informed by current evolutionary thought, he also wrote from "his empirical (and thus scientific) approach to wolf behavior, having assessed his dogs Rollo and Glen as canine subjects for evidence of reasoned thinking" (212). While we have no way of knowing how in depth London's observations were, it seems that he is attempting to make an effort to avoid being solely the scientific, detached observer. He understood that, if he wishes to adequately portray his dog characters, he must not only observe dogs from the outside, but also live with dogs as part of a community, as companions. This led him to "counter critics Theodore Roosevelt and John Burroughs" (212) in "The Other Animals" with a compelling call to action: "You must not deny your relatives, the other animals. Their history is your history. What you repudiate in them you repudiate in yourself" (Jones quoting London 212). While it may not pan out entirely in his texts, and while his understanding of history may not be entirely accurate, he seems to be on the right track. London seems to acknowledge that our readings of animals should not claim that they say more about humans than they do animals. Even if this were so, our histories do not pre-exist one

another outside of relating; whatever we have to say about one, human or non-human animals, we have to say about the other.

Regardless of intentions, neither Faulkner nor London get things entirely right or wrong when it comes to their literary representations of animals. However, getting things completely right, or pointing out the entirely wrong, does not need to be our goal. In both representing and analyzing representations, we have a higher chance of coming to productive conclusions if we hone in on partial connections and elements of texts that seem to get things right. For instance, London might not have been entirely correct, but according to the science of his time, he was not far off. Considering how scientific discovery changes our perceptions, we have a very small likelihood of representing dog perceptions adequately. We can only get as close as our resources allow.

Productive Inheriting

One of these resources lies in the past, in our failures. Without acknowledging these failures, we cannot fully embrace our various interconnected histories with our companion species. By looking at animal representations in literature, we can trace where things go wrong and the consequences that those inadequate representations lead to. For Faulkner, we see a mythologized hunt resulting in the marginalization and death of the characters that signify that myth. London's fiction, in contrast, displays how a focus on objectivity and science becomes void of affect and ultimately ignores the subjectivity of living beings. Both Faulkner and London fail on multiple levels in their attempts to understand the animals they depict as separate from the ontological category of the animal. This lack of

understanding contributes to their misrepresentation of the dog characters. This, in turn, leads to an inappropriate response to the companion animals, both from the author and from the characters in the story.

Putting effort into more productively engaging in these three efforts, understanding, representing, and responding, can lead to not only a fiction but a reality that treats dogs as companions, not as “a projection, nor the realization of an intention [but as] a species in obligatory, constitutive, historical, protean relationship with human beings” (Haraway, “The Companion Species Manifesto”, 103). In this reality, dog characters and representations only tell us about humans because dog and human histories and presents are about each other, at least in part, not because dogs can be convenient signifiers for the wilderness, the human condition, or the divide between nature and culture. The latter of these three can be easily mistaken, seeing as dogs do often aid humans in navigating through less artificial settings. The key, here, is distinguishing between literal and symbolic representations.

Neither dogs nor Native Americans are spiritual guides through nature for the “cultured”. The reason they have been spoken of at length in juxtaposition is because the texts themselves speak of them in the same way. As I have stated earlier, whatever similarities we find between dogs and Native Americans are a fault of the text, not an assumption of my own. Partially because of this, I have refrained from including Native Americans in the immediate paragraphs concerning understanding, representation, and response. The way we write and should write differs from the way we have written in the past. Consequently, the

comparison made in the previous two chapters does not carry over to my own conclusions and solutions.

My goal, in all of this, has been to find more productive ways of writing and reading dog stories, both fictional and non fictional. To this end, we might ideally find better ways of responding to actual dogs: our pets, our coworkers, those whom we have grown up with, both as a species and as individuals. Dogs cannot write for themselves, whereas Native Americans can. This seems to be the most obvious reason why I would not think of discussing how we *ought* to represent indigenous people of the American continents; they have the possibility of representing themselves through human language. So, perhaps I could leave it at this; those who tell stories should not tell the stories of others who are capable of doing so themselves. I'm thinking here of Faulkner, showing no reverence for Chickasaw culture, burying Sam in his book in the method typically used by Choctaw natives (Howell 524) and the way that he constructed ahistorical natives to fit his own design. London is no less at fault, making up a non-existent "savage" native group, the Yeehats, giving them no voice or action other than the primal slaughtering of Thornton and his company.

These Native American characters and the dogs both share a common role in their respective texts; they are mechanisms through which the author's display the divide between nature and culture. They are characters that enable the privileged, usually white male humans to interact with a symbolic myth of the past, the unadulterated wilderness. By reconstructing the binary of nature and culture into natureculture, we make the first step towards understanding the guide function as

only a piece of the characters' complexities, not the central point of their significance. What follows is the breakdown of their signifying role and the mythology they signify.

For dog characters, this could start with working towards better understandings, representations, and responses. Now, I would like to offer up a few pieces, both fiction and non-fiction, that I find to make conscientious attempts at engaging with companion species as more than just a moving body in the ontological category of the animal. Some of these pieces need only be looked at briefly and others merit a more in depth response. The point, here, is not to find the pieces that offer the best solutions or representations. While the pieces that I have chosen are not random, the purpose behind the breadth between each example lies in the importance of recognizing how dog representations are extensively embedded within artistic works. Rather than defining or locating a perfect example of a dog story, I am looking at possibilities of productive narratives that involve companion species.

The first I would like to nod towards is *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1966) by Kurt Vonnegut. While this text would rightly be read as the story of Billy Pilgrim, time traveling WWII veteran, the text has much more going on underneath the silly and heart breaking tale. Specifically, if the reader follows Vonnegut's animal characters, we might gather multiple conclusions that fit in with the overarching themes of the text. I include *Slaughterhouse-Five* because of its consistent respect towards living characters, both human and nonhuman. The text acknowledges human propensity to see past an animal and instead look at it as a categorical

symbol, the animal, while also respecting nonhuman animal lives as subjects. The text attempts to acknowledge the lived experience of the animals it represents. Throughout the book, the narrator repeats the phrase “so it goes” (6). This phrase usually follows the occurrence of death or some sort of intense pain or tragedy. However, it is reserved, for the most part, for human tragedies. Yet, as the novel progresses, the phrase accompanies death of things other than human, starting with animals, moving to “body lice and bacteria and fleas” (84), to even “the novel” (205). The text is concerned with death and dying, with who, or what, experiences pain and uncertainty as a result of the fragmentation the book follows so well. Sensitivity is taken into account here. There are differences between tools or machines, like a six-cylinder Chevrolet, and living beings, like the horses the American soldiers misuse to the point of extreme physical abuse (196). *Slaughterhouse Five* shows us some of the consequences of misunderstanding what a life is and when it matters.

This is best seen when Billy and Weary are found by the German soldiers: “The dog, who had sounded so ferocious in the winter distances, was a female German shepherd. She was shivering. Her tail was between her legs. She had been borrowed that morning from a farmer. She had never been to war before. She had no idea what game was being played. Her name was Princess” (52). The acknowledgement of this dog’s, Princess’s, sensitivity and confusion in this situation opens the text up to the implications that carry through the rest of the text. It is not just the soldiers and civilians that are victims in this war. The animals, used as tools, find themselves distraught like Billy does in the sight of all

the chaos. Additionally, the narrator takes time to help the reader understand Princess enough to realize why this scene matters. As a tool and weapon, dogs can be terrifying. One might even use the word uncanny, especially in this scene, because dogs like Princess were never trained for such tasks. By calling the readers attention towards understanding who Princess is and what she might actually be experiencing, the text acknowledges her subjectivity and prompts the reader to understand her as a companion and not a symbol or an object of world or war making. Understanding how Princess fits into the text helps us understand not only the text as a whole, but its other characters, both human and non-human. For *Slaughterhouse Five*, we understand Princess better because of the way she is represented. Princess is first represented as the disembodied audible harbinger of Billy and Weary's demise. Yet, once she is fully seen through the words of a narrator that represents her as more than what she is in that moment, the reader gains an understanding of Princess's existence outside of the text. *Slaughterhouse Five* best serves as an example of productive representation in the way that it depicts both misunderstandings of the dog alongside recognitions of her actual lived experience.

For an example of understanding, I would like to momentarily break from literary dog stories and instead turn to Werner Herzog's documentary *Grizzly Man* (2005). As I have mentioned earlier, understanding a companion animal is not so much about getting into their skin and attempting to see from their eyes as much as it is involved with cohabitation and communication. Understanding comes from living *with*, not from existing around. In order to properly understand,

we must attempt to understand the forms of communication used within a natureculture and recognize ourselves as part of it. Understanding, here, is a part of the process of “becoming with” and becoming worldly” (Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 3). Timothy Treadwell’s attempt to become a communicating member of the natureculture within Katmai National Park and Preserve, as laid out in *Grizzly Man*, gives us a look into what becoming with through understanding could look like, in both its triumphs and consequences. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that the medium of the piece, film, offers a myriad of other questions concerning animal representations. Rather than focus on this, however, I limit my analysis of the documentary to Treadwell’s inter-species interactions and the way they are represented.

While the story involves primarily humans, bears, foxes, and salmon, I find the way the documentary was filmed and then created offers us a valuable example of how productive interactions of animals might work to help us understand them more adequately. What Timothy Treadwell managed to accomplish in Katmai National Park and Preserve was unprecedented and amazing, to be sure. His ability to survive at all, let alone amongst bears, testifies to the magnitude of this feat. However, as Herzog and the people he interviews point out, Treadwell’s stated goals were extremely far from what he was actually doing. Instead of protecting them, his presence endangered them and ended in at least one of them being killed. *Grizzly Man*, however, shows us a prime example of what Haraway talks about concerning observing animals in *When Species Meet*. Treadwell does what many researchers and scientists have failed to do in

the past. He actually lives with these animals rather than beside them. Treadwell's dialogue about the bears is riddled with relational language. Rarely does he make any motion towards claiming he can see from the point of view of the bears. He does not try to get inside the skin of the bear. He lives with them and meets their gaze, instead of observing without ever seeing eye to eye. Treadwell's cohabitation with the animals in Katmai national park seems to resemble, albeit in a slightly disturbing way, the methods used by Barbara Smuts that Haraway details. Treadwell inducts himself into the natureculture of the area by respecting the animals and picking up their social cues. For all his delusions, one would be hard pressed to make a convincing argument that he did not actively try to understand the animals around him.

Herzog's documentary, made from Treadwell's film, gives the viewer a chance to observe the natureculture from a less romanticized perspective. In this sense, objectivity does not lead to the same consequences as they might, were Herzog to bring his own potentially equally extreme views to a documentary that he filmed himself. By juxtaposing Herzog and Treadwell's almost diametrically opposed ideologies, the documentary allowed the viewer to enter into an invitational space of understanding rather than an adversarial dialogue. While Treadwell's story ends in a gruesome tragedy, it also shows us the opportunities that arise for communication when we seek to meet the gazes of other species rather than follow them.

When we meet the gaze of our companion species, we allow ourselves to more appropriately respond. In *Travels with Charley: In Search of America*

(1962), John Steinbeck displays what an appropriate response could look like. He responds to Charley, his dog, in a way that shows the degree to which Steinbeck has made an attempt to understand his companion. In this non-fictional narrative, Steinbeck decides to travel across the continental United States in a camper truck with his poodle, Charley. He takes Charley along, he tells us, as a companion. Realizing he has been years since he has been anywhere without friends or family, Steinbeck realizes his thoughts of danger were actually thoughts of loneliness and helplessness. He brings Charley along because “he is a good friend and traveling companion, and would rather travel about than anything he can imagine” (9). Charley is not just on the trip because Steinbeck needs a figure to cure his occasional loneliness; Charley enjoys movement. In addition to Steinbeck taking into account what he believes his dog to enjoy, his description of his dog also differs significantly from the details we get concerning Buck and Lion’s ancestries: “He was born in Bercy on the outskirts of Paris and trained in France, and while he knows a little poodle-English, he responds quickly only to commands in French. Otherwise he has to translate, and that slows him down” (9). When describing what kind of dog he is, we are simply told he is a poodle. The stress put on Steinbeck’s description of the dog lies in how he was trained, not his ancestry, and how he communicates, rather than how we should see him.

Steinbeck takes speaking with his dog very seriously. He tells the reader that Charley uses the sound, or word, as Steinbeck calls it, “Ftt”, every time Charley “would like to salute a bush or a tree” (24). He uses “Ftt” a few times to tell Steinbeck that he is hungry (28). One evening, Charley wakes Steinbeck “with

a soft apologetic whining” (176). While using the word apologetic might be deemed anthropomorphizing, Steinbeck understands what this whining means: “since he [Charley] is not a whining dog I [Steinbeck] got up immediately” (176). Knowing the ways his dog communicates, he is able to understand that something is not normal. When he is met by an inept, alcoholic veterinarian, Steinbeck gives us a piece of his rationale behind why he interacts with Charley the way that he does:

I yield to no one in my distaste for the self-styled dog-lover, the kind who heaps up his frustrations and makes a dog carry them around Such people, it seems to me, in what they imagine to be kindness, are capable of inflicting long and lasting tortures on an animal, denying it any of its natural desires and fulfillments until a dog of weak character breaks down and becomes the fat, asthmatic, befurred bundle of neuroses. (179)

While this may not always be the end result of treating adult animals like infants, Steinbeck acknowledges one of the most common inappropriate responses many of us see. Charley is an adult dog, so Steinbeck will treat him as such and not as a human, adult or infant. Charley is not about Steinbeck in the same way that “dogs are not about oneself” (Haraway, “The Companion Species Manifesto, 103). He resists the same “dangerous and unethical projections” that Haraway urges her readers to avoid. *Travels with Charley* does not display the typical species hierarchies we regularly see. Instead, it narrates a human who does not figure his relationship to his companion via degrees of subjectivity. Steinbeck tries his best to see eye to eye with Charley and give him the response he is due. We see the joy

that Haraway details *When Species Meet* when Steinbeck considers and answers the questions: “what if work and play, and not just pity, open up when the possibility of mutual response, without names, is taken seriously as an everyday practice” (22). In interacting with Charley, Steinbeck gives readers an example of what a literary representation of “how animals [can] engage *one another’s* gaze *responsively*” (Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 22). The text shows us the positive results of responsible and appropriate response.

These responses, however, are not without their political implications. Engaging with our dogs in this way also implies that we inherit the less savory parts of dog-human history and co-evolution. It implies that we must consider the act of becoming not just about becoming with dogs, but becoming with other animals, both human and non-human. From Steinbeck’s trouble at the US/Canada border because of Charley’s presence, to the man in Beaumont who exclaims “delightedly . . . ‘Hey, it’s a dog! I thought you had a nigger in there’” (251), we see, across the US, how humans and dogs interrelate, both personally and politically, in ways beyond our initial assumptions. Steinbeck can cross the border without any proof of his physical health, while his dog needs confirmation of his vaccinations. Multiple passersby in Louisiana almost accost Steinbeck for associating with a person of color but are immediately disarmed and even delighted when they notice it’s actually a dog.

If positive results of taking dog stories and dog-human relationships seriously are far reaching, the consequences of failing to do so are equally expansive. As we see in Vonnegut, meeting the gaze of dogs and recognizing

their lived experience expands our abilities to empathize and provide others with the care necessary. But, failing to acknowledge the reality other species face leads to the abuse of the horses we see later in the text. As seen in *Go Down Moses* and *The Call of the Wild*, misunderstanding the lives and reality of dog-lives can lead to the perpetuation of reductive systems, such as the natureculture divide, that lead to other terrible consequences, such as the deaths of Sam and the Yeehats. But, this work is not just about consequences. It is about the possibilities that open once we acknowledge those consequences and our past failures and work towards more productive kinds of relating. From work to play, there are countless opportunities for mutual understanding, love, and joy between our dog companions and ourselves.

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