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# George Orwell's Imperial Bestiary: Totemism, Animal Agency and Cross-Species Interaction in "Shooting an Elephant", *Burmese Days* and "Marrakech"

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**Abstract:** This essay argues that Orwell's representation of animals as companion species offers a strikingly new, as-yet largely neglected view of animal agency and interiority in his work. In "Shooting an Elephant", *Burmese Days* and "Marrakech", the writer's focus on the social reject is supplemented by a marked sense of community implying human tragedy yet framing it within precariously situated human-animal, colonial or urban-imperial transitions that visualise animals as agents of change and co-shaping species interdependent with the lives of the humans that utilize and domineer them. Animals are required whenever Orwell aspires to shift from isolation to communality, from the self-conscious outsider to the larger realm of ideas framing the world in which his characters strive to overstep the accepted lines of social performance and conformity. Read in and around disciplinary structures of rationalization, Orwell's animals appear to secure themselves, quite paradoxically, a place *within* the normative anthropocentric framework excluding them. They extend beyond anthropomorphising or allegorical modes of description and open up bio-political perspectives within and across regimes of knowledge and empathy. Orwell's writings thus present a challenge to the culturally accredited fantasy of human exceptionalism, collapsing any epistemic space between humans and animals and burying the idea of sustaining radical species distinction.

> *The true struggle is between animals and humans.*
> George Orwell (1968d: 406)

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## Agential Cuts: Situating the Nonhuman Animal

Since French philosopher Jacques Derrida delivered his seminal lecture "The Animal That Therefore I am" in 1997, it has become commonplace to discern two kinds of representing animals in popular idioms, literature and publishing: one linked to individuals "who observe real animals and write about them but never meet their gaze" and another one bound up with the perspective of those "who engage animals only as literary and mythological figures" (Haraway 2008: 21). Persuasive as it may appear at first sight, this differentiation fails to account for contributions that refuse to avoid an intersecting gaze and aspire instead to transcend both modes in an effort to intercept and hold the animal's look. Orwell's representation of animals as companion species is a striking case in point, offering a view of animal agency and interiority that impinges on the ways in which literature forms and transmutes human subjectivity. In fact, Orwell's animals go beyond the above-mentioned dichotomy in offering a strikingly new angle of vision that recognizes in encounters with nonhuman animals a level of material-relational ties rendering them graspable and meaningful in their immediate surroundings, thus opening bio-political perspectives within and across structures of knowledge and empathy. Throughout his literary and journalistic works dealing with the animal world, human and animal lives become entangled through regimes of surveillance, alienation and depersonalization, thus suggesting moral implications about interspecies relations that go beyond or even call into question simple anthropomorphic or (partially) allegorical modes of description. Where several of Orwell's better-known fictions – among them *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936) or *Coming Up for Air* (1939) – present themselves as keen on presenting an isolated and discontented individual breaking from conformist social structures only to be defeated and finally reabsorbed into society, others conceptualize a universe of multiple or queer relationships that shift sympathy to animals without reducing them to human figures, symbols or issues: In *Burmese Days* (1934), "Shooting an Elephant" (1936) and "Marrakech" (1939), to name the most visible ones, the focus on the social misfit or outsider is supplemented by a marked sense of community implying human tragedy but framing it within precariously situated human-animal, colonial or urban-imperial transitions that visualise animals as agents of change and co-shaping species interdependent with the lives of the humans utilizing and domineering them.[1] Read in and around

**1** I decided to exclude from consideration the even more widely known *Animal Farm* because it has been the object of scholarly work elsewhere – see, e.g., Harel (2009) and, more impressive, McHugh (2009b). While McHugh's essay may be regarded as a notable interdisciplinary attempt at deconstructing the allegorical meaning of *Animal Farm* and critical interrogation of its repre-

disciplinary structures of knowledge and technological rationalization, animals – in Orwell's writings – not only assemble in opposition to human rule but also appear to secure themselves, quite paradoxically, a place *within* the normative anthropocentric framework excluding them. They are markers of peculiar operations of agency beyond the human subject, exposing a nonhuman animal subjectivity behind the anthropomorphic projections designed to fix them in their place.

In the following, I shall explore some writings largely neglected in the Orwell canon, carving out their relevance for modes of reading in which critics historically have rendered the animal a non-issue or proclaimed it to be serving metaphoric purposes rather than ways of thinking outside established cultural and literary forms. My reading will give a voice to Orwell's silenced "textual animals" (McHugh 2009a: 488) and their interiority as an epistemically productive force but also stress the fact that Orwell required the presence of animals whenever he aspired to shift from isolation to communality, from the self-conscious outsider to the larger realm of ideas framing the world in which his characters strive to overstep the accepted lines of social performance and conformity. Looked at from this angle, many of his writings present a serious challenge to the culturally accredited fantasy of human exceptionalism, collapsing any epistemic spaces between humans and animals and burying the idea of sustaining radical species distinction.

## Zoo-Ontologies: Orwell's Totemic Animals

According to a widely held notion in recent critical discourses, animals can be said to have great potential for agency, participating in biosocial networks and multiple relationships that develop in entwined and overlapping patterning over time (cf. Braidotti 2009: 527). They continually pass information back and forth, transcending their traditional roles as figures of and for the human and refusing to resolve into well-bounded, permanent species. Readers who study animals seriously today are no longer looking at them like objects or means to an end but regard them 'eye to eye', delving into the constantly developing, mutual knowledges of human-animal interaction and "behavioural semiotics when species meet" (Haraway 2008: 22). A major consequence of this quantum leap in cultural

sentation in all-too-comfortable humanist terms, Harel's essay testifies to a rather plain, if not ingenuous, neo-literal understanding of animal others. Her verbal concretism and awkwardly pedestrian analysis of textual content that views animals as entities framed by codes of their own does not in the least correspond to the critical standards of Literary Animal Studies.

methodology has been that animals quietly accrue the power to interrogate anthropocentric thought along with the humanist poetics it so unceremoniously serves – one coextensive with modes of writing in which zoomorphic agents appear almost exclusively in terms of metaphor or allegory. The challenge to "deterritorialize [and] nomadize" (Braidotti 2009: 526) formerly symmetrical relationships can be felt strongly in different literary genres and media today, subverting received notions of human subjectivity along with the tenacious denial of multispecies histories grounded in powerful exceptionalist institutions.

A remarkable early instance of presenting literary animals as catalysts of agency can be detected in Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant", frequently misread as graphic metaphor for the brutality of British imperial rule in Burma. The narrative essay about a young sub-divisional police officer called in to shoot an elephant gone musth[2] is interesting for its rendering the animal a startlingly powerful agent resisting human desire to kill and deracinate; given this, it is perplexing to find that literary critics so far have failed to account systematically for the various animal aspects of this short text. In the central scene, following his decision to carry out his duty and shoot the elephant, the narrator hits the creature with his first shot; the elephant, however, does not die immediately. Consequently, the officer continues shooting until the animal collapses; the elephant in turn refuses to die for another agonizingly slow hour:

> In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralysed him without knocking him down. [...] An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. [...] The thick blood welled out of him like red velvet, but still he did not die. [...] He was dying, very slowly and in great agony, but in some world remote from me where not even a bullet could damage him further. (Orwell 1968b: 241)

Depth, lucidity and elegance of this scene are unsurpassed. What strikes one immediately is that Orwell depicts the dying animal in a series of rather dignified terms 'worthy of any human' while simultaneously reducing the observant crowd to "evil-spirited little beasts" (Orwell 1968b: 236). The elephant's uniqueness is stressed in the almost Herculean refusal of its dying at the hands of an ordinary

**2** *Musth* or *must* is a periodic condition in bull elephants characterized by aggressive behaviour directed against humans, animals or inanimate objects and supposedly due to a rise in testosterone levels several times higher than in the same animal at other times. In India, domesticated elephants in musth are traditionally tied to a post or tree and denied food and water for several days until the period passes.

human being; falling, it even seems "for a moment to rise", towering "upwards like a huge rock toppling" (Orwell 1968b: 241), momentarily becoming larger-than-life. Though defenceless and without real chance to survive the encounter, it coerces the officer, whose every step is surveyed by an aggressively cheering crowd, to contemplate his next step and to come to terms with spontaneous reactions and decisions, its every unforeseen response sustaining the dynamism of the situation and thus stating its unacknowledged power over the (human) other. Both elephant and narrator are trapped in a liminal space, neither of their choosing, their existence held in temporary abeyance. Although in charge, the officer is powerless to 'fix' the animal, to allot it its proper place of submission and defeat. He cannot bring the elephant back to life, stirred up as he is by the "devilish roar of glee that went from the crowd" (Orwell 1968b: 241), but, quite disturbingly, he is also unable to give the animal death. For the elephant, this means that it is taken along on a voyage of initiation involving the thresholds of "tortured breathing", "great agony" and "dreadful noise" (Orwell 1968b: 241). Crossing these multiple boundary lines, it is transformed into something else, violently pushed over into the sphere of human influence by forces not its own design, and involuntarily connecting to a hunter who, on account of his being at the mercy of a crowd of people driven by insane fear, has become someone else along this road as well, a self no longer fully itself but merely a segment of life temporarily occupying a median region – a "door" or "becoming between two multiplicities" (Deleuze and Guattari 2015: 291), a cyborgic boundary formation of strings and fibres recognizing that its identity is neither perfectly achieved nor permanent and therefore open to further contagions. The shooter's state of being (or becoming) is different now that it is irreparably tied to the elephant he 'chose' to kill, placed together with an animal in a situated history, among conjoined processes of decision-making and graspable, if indistinct shapes of relatedness ("Somehow it always seems worse to kill a *large* animal" [Orwell 1968b: 240]). When he finally leaves the scene wondering "whether any of the others grasped that I had done it solely to avoid looking a fool" (Orwell 1968b: 242), it transpires that it was the elephant's agonizing death more than anything else that triggered this humiliating thought about himself and the influence of the hegemonic regime he represents. Although not to look a dunce may momentarily reassert the narrator's sense of selfhood and completion, it cannot hide the fact that the gesture as such is purely performative – core of a self-fortifying operation occurring *in* and depending on the space of the *other*. The narrator, stuck between unutterable "hatred of the empire" he serves and "rage against the evil-spirited *little beasts* who tried to make [his] job impossible" (Orwell 1968b: 236, my emphasis), seeks refuge in metaphors of animality as if wholly unaware of the fact that his tagging the boundary line between himself and the Burmese in this way

requires another one that binds him even more thoroughly to the animal whose life he just claimed. Knotted beings or *beings-in-encounter* in British colonial Burma, the hunter and his prey, narrator and elephant, are now no longer antagonists but co-opted familiars, partner species no longer entitled to precede the exceptional conditions of their singular, inimitable relating. In fact, they have become available to each other in a vulnerably new environment not defined by unequivocal relations of subservience and privilege but by instabilities and crossings – representative exemplars co-shaping one another in layers of reciprocating materiality and creative formativeness.

The shooting scene as a whole posits a shift of the human-animal relation away from speciesism towards an ethical appreciation of what bodies (human or animal) can do or effect in their immediate surroundings – a view that need not necessarily lead one to jump to conclusions assigning metaphoric or even mythological significance to the animal. The infolding of one (human or animal) body into adjacent formations, so admirably figured in the climactic shooting scene, points to a whole diversity of scenarios in which the "becoming-animal" (Deleuze and Guattari 2015: 279) may challenge economies of relation based on identity and difference rather than affinity and correspondence.[3] In "Shooting an Elephant" in particular, linguistic traces point to a totemic dimension lending the text a forcefulness far surpassing its role as critical commentary on British imperialism. The narrator elevating the suffering animal to a 'great beast' (as opposed to the "little beasts" of the Burmese) clearly demonstrates his anti- or posthumanist affinities, referring his listeners to an ever-expanding set of human-animal differences in transition and continuous recreation. His narrative account produces a "non-man" through the "humanization" of an animal (Agamben 2004: 37) depicted dramatically in its last moments of silent suffering and manufactures the figure of an animal in humanized shape as corollary to the 'animalizing' of a human voice speaking out bluntly and brutally in the tale's hateful presentation of Buddhist monks, Burmese with "yellow faces", and "damn Coringhee coolie[s]" whose lives

**3** Anthropomorphic readings mostly subject the narrative to an expectably transparent anti-imperialist symbolism according to which the shooting passage anticipates the death throes of British rule in the East. While justifiably drafting the world of a struggling and decaying empire, such a reading runs risk of denying the elephant – main agent and victim of circumstances at the same time – the power to break up the East-West divide and to communicate biopolitical knowledge in distinctly imperialist surroundings, ways of knowing and intuiting that surpass as well as destabilize the Manichean relationships of colonizer/colonized, superior/subaltern, etc. Orwell's dying animal is less a vehicle for a polemic against British imperialism than an energetic body – the 'body-as-threshold' – denying the (human) other his claim for self-assertion and self-determination, reversing the social situation of colonialism while also adding a new dimension to it in which species relations play a far more influential role than heretofore thought.

are offered up almost casually and recklessly in exchange for the much more valuable asset of an elephant (Orwell 1968b: 236, 242). Similarly, the image of the Dravidian accidentally trampled to death by the elephant whose "foot had stripped the skin from his back *as neatly as one skins a rabbit*" (Orwell 1968b: 238, my emphasis) puts forward the idea that the biospheres of humans and animals, though apparently uncommunicating and reciprocally exclusive, are yet linked together as if in a shadowy material-semiotic score at the centre of which lie transient and, at the same time, remote forms and becomings (bullets "poured shot after shot" into the elephant's "heart and down his throat" [Orwell 1968b: 241], a human skinned like a "rabbit", a pony the narrator does not "want to go mad with fright" [Orwell 1968b: 238] in view of the much larger and dangerous elephant, etc.).

In view of all this, it is hard to deny the conclusion that Orwell's essay is grounded, primarily, in narrative allegiance with the animal. What the narrator's subtly manipulative voice leads to is not so much a critique of the dehumanizing environment shaped in decades of British imperial rule but a more or less unreserved abandonment of every anthropocentric perspective imaginable concerning the issue at hand. "Shooting an Elephant" does not so much express feelings of ambiguity about colonial repression but shows manifest concern for animals and their treatment at the hands of individuals and social institutions, thus providing a new and provocative way to rethink ethical relationships with animals. Human kinship is sacrificed, one might venture to argue, for the sake of self-chosen animal kinship. The bio-egalitarianism at work in the text extends to critically reviewing the ways in which other species occasionally have become "discursive victims" (Haraway 2008: 311) in volatile contexts (their interior modes and patterns of reciprocity with humans never entirely knowable in denotative terms); attentively elaborating traces of nonhuman behaviour as deconstructing human attempts at self-presentation, it baldly attaches itself to a view of the animal as historically located, active participant in cultural production. Its relational vitality refuses to confine the animal *other* to the manipulative realm of metaphor, reading instead its disturbances as literal inscriptions in the erasure of human tracks. In view of all this, Orwell's essay can hardly be understood as anything other than an animal-loving critic's[4] thoughtful response to a growing

**4** See, e.g., Orwell's essay "Some Thoughts on the Common Toad" the idiom of which surprises on account of its celebrating an animal which "has never had much of a boost from the poets" and its rather observant description of elements of Nature which appear to exist "unofficially [...] in the very heart" of the urban city centres (1968e: 142). Like several others of his lesser known casual writings, the essay is a remarkable instance of a literary mode attentive to the everyday existence and needs of differentially situated species and their co-flourishing in complex ecosystems.

awareness of our western "inheritance of multispecies histories" (Haraway 2008: 3). It reviews the spectrum of agency forms available to other species and redesigns animal subjectivity as an essentially positive force against which the sphere (or, for that matter, ecological *habitat*) of the human is continually probed and problematically asserted – particularly in its failures and systemic shortcomings.

A major instance in this representational mechanism is Orwell's unique way of elevating the elephant to the status of a totemic or ancestral animal. Its ability to bear up against its persecutors, to suffer violence at the hands of a throng of hate-filled Burmese and their British officer and then to be stripped "to the bones" (Orwell 1968b: 242) most ignobly after having been brutally slain points to a marked sense of speciesist allegiance on the part of Orwell's narrator, constituting a means to conjure up a new or alternative lineage for himself. He appears to attribute all major traits of the animal – its energy, stamina and desperate refusal to die – to the strongly felt need to distinguish himself from the "unbreakable tyranny" (Orwell 1968b: 236) he so abhors: a form of totemism (or self-chosen animal kinship) not arising from spiritual or otherwise metaphoric identification but from metonymic correspondence or synchronic alliance with another species. In *Totemism*, Claude Lévi-Strauss argued that "there can be no direct relationship, based on contiguity, between man and totem" (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 19). That relations between humans and animals are always "masked, and thus metaphorical" (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 19) runs counter, however, to the experience that totemic identification is a historically situated mode involving precise natural observation and structural – spatial or temporal, synchronic or diachronic – participation. Under certain conditions, a totem animal may be chosen simply because it happened to be around when a vital experience was made or an incisive event occurred. Several of these figures are thus based on a system of *denotation*, more representative than emblematic, and stressing the mediating character of human-animal relations perceived as a system of contiguities, a field traversed by distinct tensions and stimuli between species 'actors'.

Introducing a segment of nature and animal life into the sociocultural order he is forced to ally with enables Orwell's narrator to recognize and dissolve the disciplinary structures that confine him to the silence "imposed on every Englishman in the East" (Orwell 1968b: 236) and to make short shrift of a world limiting his scope to that of the human subject form.[5] At this point I think it necessary to

**5** "Shooting an Elephant" is not the only fictional essay in which Orwell designs a situation enabling an individual to escape the transient world of western humanist self-sovereignty and hand himself over to a kind of faith or ideal denouncing empirical conformism. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), e.g., it is the regime of Big Brother, represented through inscrutable mastermind O'Brien, Winston wishes to merge with and bow to (for interpretive details see Pordzik 2009: 111–

pause for a moment and consider the problem of nonhuman animals as written into the imagination and metaphysics of western anthropocentric identity and to assess the degree to which the scope of their lives (and sufferings) has gained legitimacy in (post)-humanist discourses. In modern literature, there is reserved more than just marginal space for a non-human environment prompting affinities, correlations and rhizomatic "anomalies" (Deleuze and Guattari 2015: 287) that enable new and unexpected human-animal alliances. "Shooting an Elephant" is not the only instance of a text connecting the material dimensions of interspecies life with the more abstract ones of social or political regimentation; in fact, it proposes to lay bare alienating human structures (and strictures) in an effort to ascertain animal and cross-species agency even in cultural contexts without immediate ties to animals. It thus contributes to a broader understanding of porous species formations and interactions premised not on anthropomorphising traditions but on critical disciplines and practices taking animals seriously. It is to this material-semiotic dimension of the politics of "becomings-animal" (Deleuze and Guattari 2015: 277) that I would like to turn my hand now.

## The Pitfalls of Zoolatry: How Not to Perform the Disappearing Animal Trick

Orwell's postcolonial narrative *Burmese Days* features a host of animals interesting for the different positions they occupy and their role as plot agents signalling (or causing) ruptures to fixed identity forms. Of the veritable zoological compendium running through his work, Orwell frequently puts the spotlight on a few animals that embody either ideal or abject ancestors, familial loyalty or totemic prohibitions, without, however, completely emptying out the animal content implied in their agenda; animals, in his writings, are never simply assimilated or disavowed.[6] In fact, they appear on cue whenever Orwell's philanthropic views or

127). On the problematic co-evolution of humanism, empirism and Enlightenment thought, along with the viral responses and interventions it has sparked off, see Wolfe (2010: xvi–xxii). Taking a more decidedly antipathetic outlook, the issue could even be expanded to ask if the obsession with relationality, co-opting and infolding as exhibited in the terminology of Critical Animal Studies is not just another – in fact, the most recent – merger fantasy justifiably worrying (certain parts of) the scientific fold.

**6** It seems apt to note *en passant* that totemism as a subdivision of anthropological knowledge or mode of thought eludes all effort at absolute definition. Lévi-Strauss, listing some ethnic groups that have totems but no clans, and others – such as the Iroquois – who have clans called after animals which are not totems, etc. argues that totemism "consists, at most, in a contingent

the foundations of his vigorous hold on humanitarian liberalism at large are in doubt; they lay bare and sustain his claim to elaborate the operations of animality at the heart of western subjectivity and his desire to construct mergers out of multiple outsider identities. Birds and race horses, crocodiles and vultures, lap dogs, leopards, green pigeons and other animal agents are rarely separable from human presences in *Burmese Days*, marking animal agency as co-constitutive and revealing the 'cross-species' companion, quite affirmatively, as operating in accordance with a logic different from that of self-serving human psychological intentionality.

A striking case in point is the "strange kinship" (Merleau-Ponty 2003: 171) between protagonist John Flory and his cocker spaniel Flo. The startling similarity between the disfigured timber merchant and his domestic dog is strongly reminiscent of the relation of mutual respect and protection characteristic of totemism (cf. Freud 1955: 104). Both share a house and live at the edge of the jungle, near the municipal border of the village of Kyauktada – a British imperial outpost in Burma – and in unison with the untamed natural world around them. Flo, mostly kept to the side-lines of the plot, eventually dies a violent death at the hands of his master Flory who shoots her – "blowing her skull to fragments" (Orwell 2009: 293) – after his former Burmese mistress breaks into the parish church and humiliates herself in front of the assembly, thus bringing about her lover's public disgrace. Seeing no future for himself in Burma anymore, Flory commits suicide in a dramatic last act teeming with animal presences and impressions:

> Her shattered brain looked like red velvet. Was that what he would look like? The heart then, not the head. […] He hurriedly tore open his coat and pressed the muzzle of the pistol against his shirt. A tiny lizard, translucent like a creature of gelatine, was stalking a white moth along the edge of the table. Flory pulled the trigger with his thumb. (Orwell 2009: 293)

Why does the final act, which involves a great deal of emotional suffering on the part of the protagonist and his companion animal anyway ("looking timorously up at him […] suddenly stricken with terror" [Orwell 2009: 292]), require the killing of a dog not involved in the goings-on at all? And why does the spectacle of blood and cerebral matter move Flory to point the barrel at his own heart instead of his head? Obviously, the text at this point wishes to suggest a continuity between the two species that reflects their particular alliance in terms of mentality or perception – an alliance the narrative has implied all along but never clearly spelled out. Dying together, Flo and Flory are confirmed as actively situated participants co-

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arrangement of nonspecific elements. It is a combination of particulars […] not an organic synthesis, an object in social nature" (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 5).

shaping the embodied or "incorporated meanings" (Merleau-Ponty 2003: 166) of their shared existence, involving love, rejection, downfall and annihilation. The canine companion, always at his side, shares all of his master's luxuries and privations, miserable and sublime moments – two sorts of mavericks in parallel structures hunting for pleasures and distraction in a foreign environment. It is crucial to note that this alliance or intimate bonding includes formal resemblances as well – apparent in their having been endowed with similar names that emphasize their kinship. Their very special linkage is reminiscent of an ancient class of totemic phenomena expressing the needs of individuals or groups to distinguish themselves from one another by the use of names (cf. Freud 1955: 110). In this case, the constitutive role of nomenclature and writing is impossible to ignore: The dog's name forms the word stem – a root or form to which affixes can be attached – and his master's French-sounding suffix *-ry* suggests a minimizing or supplementary function pointing to a rather delicate or even effeminate personality.[7] With its floral and botanic associations, the name may also connote a deeper devotion to the vegetative world of the jungle, thus including another actor network within the already complex relationship. Undeniably, then, Flory and his domestic dog are more than just companions; in fact, they are representatives of the 'same' species, descended from the same or a similar class, with the timber merchant finally being re-assimilated to or, rather, re-entering into the animal when he shoots it. A very special mode of affinity distinguishes their co-existence: A shared resource or pedigree brought their two forms together at the beginning ('head' *and* 'heart'), the death of one of them ultimately severs the connection. However, as the whole concept and logic of totemism is based on correspondences and the possibility of a projection outside of the idea of kinship with animals, their agential role in the process needs to be appreciated and weighed more carefully. What emerges rather clearly in this respect is that animals and animality are employed to express concern with otherness and difference, situating "animal pedagogy" (Oliver 2009: 21) to negotiate human exceptionalism and undermine the subject's sense of himself or herself as autonomous and sovereign. Orwell, it turns out, needs the support of literary animals in order to picturize the humility and agony his protagonist goes through in the final moments of his life, needs their agency to constitute as well as un-seat a complex self struggling to adapt to

**7** In some totemic institutions, a human being is known to others by the name of the animal, plant or object which is of importance to it. Supplementing the name of one's companion dog inescapably amounts to one's expressing the idea of intense kinship, if not to say metonymic identification, with its body – not to mention other totemic ordinances and affordances. See also Lévi-Strauss (1963: 27).

an abominable and hostile environment. The humanization of the animal coincides with the partial animalization of his haltingly premiering character.

When Flory kills his veteran companion, his "blue birthmark" (Orwell 2009: 64) – permanent symptom of his guilty conscience and morally bankrupt lifestyle – suddenly disappears. The magical touch this adds to an otherwise satirical and realist tale written during the waning days of British colonialism is remarkable. Not unlike the famous portrait of Dorian Gray that withered in place of its dissolute and vicious owner, Flory's birthmark appears to have undergone a spectral transformation – as if the killing of Flo was necessary to cure the protagonist from all his faults and weaknesses. Like a reprobate's soul, Flory's abstract sense of guilt appears to have assumed a more substantial shape and transmigrated to the animal who, during the preceding scenes, had "crouched down and whined for forgiveness" (Orwell 2009: 293) for no visible reason, as if only ephemerally aware of her being implicated in her master's abjectness and humiliation. This may easily be interpreted in anthropomorphising terms, assigning the dog a demonic, if not even semi-divine status: the distinction of a creature endowed with supernatural powers, result of a sentimental confusion of the human subject and its hieroglyph. More profitable, however, would be a reading according to which the dog is distinguished as material contaminant – agent of an epistemic system or order casting into doubt the precepts of human behaviour. Its vulnerability, passivity and – particularly – its *transitivity* could be interpreted in a manner suggesting its power to overcome the hiatus between human and non-human animals through making more permeable the imaginary boundary line that separates them. Located in a transitional zone of shared finitude, anguish and proximity, and forcibly connected to her master through a lethal bullet, Flo establishes some kind of continuity or relation of equivalence between weak and discontented Flory and the miserable creature eventually called in to pay for the accumulated social debt. Its larger effect is not that of a variable symbol but of an immediate presence or haecceity, an interruption or attachment point (*point de capiton*) in the signifying chain, a break within the nomadic flow of everyday modes of existence. This unsuspected metonymic twist (or detour) raises the dog to the status of a specific agent, an 'enworlded' being inhabiting a transit space or passage where it may inspire in readers an awareness of their own precariousness as human subjects through picking up affects shared with animals. In thus locating signs of interiority or "reflexive abilities" (Westling 2010: 170) in animals, Orwell does not project human qualities on them but rather recognizes in them attributes and behaviours they have in common *with* humans.

Animals permeate large portions of the language Orwell employs to punctuate his unflattering and sarcastic image of colonial Burma. In some cases their enlisting helps spelling out our moral responsibilities towards natural life, ar-

guing the unspeakableness of violence perpetrated against animals in practices like hunting or slaughtering;[8] in others it unsettles, in a frequently provocative manner, the foundations of what we define as 'human'. Considering the status of animals in Orwell's writings, it is particular noteworthy that his negative anthropology is tied to a structure of representation involving speciesist differentiation in strikingly variable terms. Animals are either used to conceptualize agency as constitutively different from that of humans, thus testing multiple boundaries in zones of cross-species intimacy, or they serve, in a restricted number of cases, the less complimentary aim of animalizing human characters of a suspect or questionable nature. The most conspicuous example in this respect is the rendering of U Po Kyin, the wily magistrate of Kyauktada who destroys Flory in a successful attempt to rise in the hierarchy of colonial Burma. The rigorous combination of species and racial discourses in Orwell's writings comes to the fore quite forcefully in his merciless portrait of this corrupt government official, "parasite upon" (Orwell 2009: 2) the British, "cunning" (Orwell 2009: 4) and "barbaric" (Orwell 2009: 4), with a "face that recalled a coffee blancmange" (Orwell 2009: 5) and, most conspicuously, "swollen with the bodies of his enemies" (Orwell 2009: 11) – a character trait pointing to his being a reckless political animal, keen on crushing and devouring his civic opponents. As if to make unmistakeably clear that a standardized humanist vocabulary no longer suffices to depict the misdemeanour of this character, the cannibalistic metaphor adds a final touch to Orwell's perplexing use of the animal other as racial marking or – put differently – his unabashed conceptualizing of ethnic difference in terms of species. Bestial and miscegenous fears, continuously present throughout the narrative, converge to form an animal-racial mask that reveals the instability of a perceptual frame in which man has always looked "the result of a simultaneous division and articulation of the animal and the human" (Agamben 2004: 92), a field of dialectical tensions artificially separating animality from the humanity taking bodily form in it. The example of U Po Kyin demonstrates that the mere idea of visualizing race

**8** One of the most remarkable moments occurs during a scene in which Flory, after having hunted down a leopard together with Elizabeth, offers her the animal's hide as gift to win her affection. The death of the feline is rendered a pointless, nauseating act solely undertaken to appease the resentment of a conceited, husband-hunting Englishwoman and therefore appropriately depicted in terms not unlike those used to characterize the shooting of the elephant: "The leopard [...] was thrashing about in the undergrowth like a great wounded snake, and crying out with a snarling, sobbing noise, savage and pitiful. [...] The leopard was writhing along on his belly, sobbing as he went" (Orwell 2009: 177–178). In the end, the animal gains the moral high ground: the drawing of a connection between its agony and Elizabeth's cruelty and stupidity ("'Oh, a leopard! How lovely if we could shoot it!'" [Orwell 2009: 166]) clearly makes the female appear the lesser being, devoid of any traces of mercy or true empathy.

in terms of species difference situates transcendent 'man' – the white colonizer or Westerner, that is – historically as product of an 'animal' world the origins of which are deliberately obscured or kept at bay. It negates ethnic differences while simultaneously reproducing them on another level of verbal representation; stratifying a world of repressive conditions and xenophobia along biological and even epidermal lines, it problematically recasts racial identities as 'speciesed' and thus extends the colonial imaginary into a trans- or multispecies cultural environment.[9]

Orwell's elaboration of a Burmese official's 'reptilian' existence is corroborated by his unique positioning of human-animal intimacy as a means of exhibiting liminality in a sexually repressive heterosexual culture. His valorisation of the role of animals in the portrayal of interpersonal relations testifies to an ambiguous perception of them as either hostile or benign that reveals in itself a notable structure of empathy splitting on the author's part. Whereas U Po Kyin is depicted in the most disparaging and malicious terms imaginable[10] – a "crocodile in human shape", with the "cunning of [...] its cruelty, its bestiality" (Orwell 2009: 44) – other characters serve as reference points for cultural knowledge implying species relations in a more responsive and favourable way. Flory himself is a rather keen observer of the natural world, rarely missing the sublime, gentle and uplifting aspects of its animal inhabitants:

> There was a stirring high up in the peepul tree, and a bubbling noise like pots boiling. A flock of green pigeons were up there, eating the berries. Flory gazed up into the great green dome of the tree, trying to distinguish the birds; they were invisible, they matched the leaves so perfectly, and yet the whole tree was alive with them, shivering, as though ghosts of birds were shaking it. (Orwell 2009: 56–57)

**9** See also the following passage in which the narrator expounds what he calls one of the "formative" periods of his professional career in Burma with the aid of racist clichés: "He had lived in a 'chummery' with four other youths who devoted their entire energy to debauchery. [...] They swilled whiskey which they privately hated, they stood round the piano bawling songs of insane filthiness and silliness, they squandered rupees by the hundred on aged *Jewish* whores with the faces of *crocodiles*" (Orwell 2009: 65, my emphasis).

**10** In fact, U Po Kyin's presentation in terms of a reptile predator is not the only instance of transspecies reflection carrying racist overtones. Flory himself, nicknamed "Monkey-bum" (Orwell 2009: 64) by his schoolmates on account of his disfiguring birthmark, is implied in the racial connection as well, with the monkey occupying the "borders of social limit" in colonial discourse, the bestial part of nature readable as a "map of power" (McClintock 1998: 310). In *Burmese Days*, power structures consistently appear to involve acts of 'improper' behaviour, for there is no mistaking the hint of sexual abuse in above lines. In any "third-rate public school" in England, a boy "does not start his career nicknamed Monkey-bum without learning his lesson" (Orwell 2009: 65).

Affecting their immediate milieu so as to transform its natural appearance – blending the mundane into the spectral – green pigeons are fitted with a particular form of agility and resistance to human encroachment: "When one shoots them, if they are not killed outright, they cling to the branch until they die, and drop long after one has given up waiting and gone away" (Orwell 2009: 57). The intensely speciesed pattern Orwell employs at this point inscribes an unexpected option for animal participation in representational processes. The pigeons do not serve as empty vessels to be filled with mythopoeic meaning but rather transgress human orderings, indicating modes of agency beyond human expectation within the frame of a rigorous critique attuned to the affective resonances of the metamorphoses of species. Like duplicates or revenants of the shot Burmese elephant, the green pigeons refuse to bow before human use of force, defying instead physical laws and replacing them with their own "*logos* of the sensible world" (Oliver 2009: 212) according to which they can metamorphose *ad libitum* and develop a mode of 'avian resilience' unknown to the world of reason and scientific facts. In quite a similar manner, tigers are shown to have a much larger range of movement than humans, roaming freely "hundreds of miles" (Orwell 2009: 166) of jungle if it suits them and never returning to a place once they have come to think of it as perilous. Capable and independent, these animals provide a striking antithesis to the stifling and corrupting world of colonial Burma, serving as energetic and "phantasmatic register" (Baudrillard 1994: 137) for the colonial unconscious.

By the same token, Flory's companion dog Flo radiates views and opinions widely exceeding the cognitive set-up of the average cocker spaniel: "She always barked at strange Orientals, but she liked the smell of a European" (Orwell 2009: 84). A process of unsuspected mimicry brings nature and culture together in its net, by means of ties and correspondences thrown in at the pleasure of the narrator: "Dogs", he – quite appropriately – remarks at one point, "are an inexhaustible subject" (Orwell 2009: 137). What strikes the reader most in this regard is the peculiar manner in which Orwell foregrounds the active role of the canine in exploding the compression of human agency into the concept of a subject as the mirror opposite an ethnic or cultural *other*. As 'dog mentor', Flo complicates established self/other couplings by repeatedly incorporating herself as third agent, as a figure to be included in the broader significance of human and cross-species relationships. She is no longer held captive by her natural milieu – "poor in world" and "closed in the few elements" (Agamben 2004: 51) delimiting the world of the animal – but turns into a buoyant participant-spectator whose imagination is gripped by her surroundings and fellow beings just like everyone else's. Orwell's narrator endows the animal with a – curiously limited – viewpoint usually reserved to humans, thus opening the throttle on the animal/man dichot-

omy in a fashion that takes both down the same perceptual track. Flo's behaviour is itself a form of "interrogation [...] a tacit language" (Merleau-Ponty 2003: 211) or way of responding to an environment shaped by and transformed through human discourse. The ecosublime world of the Burmese forests the dog relates to quite naturally is preserved even in those situations in which the language of racial marking locates an encounter that implies the interlacing of human-animal intimacy and male same-sex bonding. Every evening, Flory and his servant Ko S'la squat on the floor together to "comb Flo's silky coat and felt between her toes, picking out the ticks. [...] She picked up vast numbers of ticks during the day, horrible grey things that were the size of pin-heads when they got onto her, and gorged themselves till they were large as peas" (Orwell 2009: 60). This scene could easily be dismissed as immaterial if it were not so reminiscent of Flory's sexually charged encounter with Elizabeth over the body of the leopard they both hunted down and shot, their shirts drenched with sweat and both "happy with that inordinate happiness that comes of exhaustion and achievement, and with which nothing else in life [...] is even able to be compared" (Orwell 2009: 179). The intimacy hinted at in these passages is precarious not so much because it holds in suspense the possibility of unacknowledged homosocial desire in Flory (whose self-esteem is always under a strain and who falls in love with an overly masculinized Elizabeth) but because it relates potently to animals as intermediaries making easier the "touch across difference" (Haraway 2008: 14) so vital for responsive companionship in a socially as well as sexually repressive climate. Both leopard and cocker spaniel, one could argue, are needed to test the limits of queer culture in *Burmese Days*, pointing to and illustrating how the sexually transgressive or deviant literary character gradually emerges as a distinct 'species' in twentieth-century (post-)colonial writing.[11] Moreover, they indicate the scope to which the structures of heteronormativity extend into the realm of defining nonhuman animal bodies and their agential capacities. Embodying 'sexual trouble' in a climate of increasing national conservatism and jingoism, both dog and big cat irrevocably alter the terms of identity, weaving a mature yet problematic version of the boy-and-his-dog tale that transforms this particular area of cross-species intimacy into a critical instrument for the redefinition of sexual relationships. "There is a humility about *genuine* love that is rather *horrible* in some ways" (Orwell 2009: 271, my emphasis), the narrator admits at one point,

**11** For a more detailed analysis of the subtext of male-male bonding and same-sex desire in *Burmese Days* see Pordzik (2012: 58–63). On the emergence of new sexual orientations in and around end-of-the-century arts and literature and how they became "freighted with epistemological and power relations" (Sedgwick 1990: 9) as well as the troubles of securing or subverting stable definitions of identity see Sedgwick (1990: 8–11 and 83–84).

subtly implying the reader in his knowledge about non-standard modes of intimacy among males – modes of intimacy adverting to male amity, cultural mentorship, subordination and heterosexual rivalry but assuredly excluding females. His projection of male sexual agency is firmly tied to cross-species relationships, parading a canine body locked into symbiosis with its environment and impressively agential in terms of its affording Flory and his servant a closer connection that might be regarded by not a few as bordering on the illegitimate. Assembling under the sign of an associative totemic relationship, they form a "pack" (Deleuze and Guattari 2015: 279) or team, always staying on the perimeter of the social order, as on a line between a productive duo and the gregarious gathering.[12]

This configuration between humans and animals, males and females, should not be fixed in terms of hierarchy but in terms of lateral relationships acknowledging the structural order of totemism and bringing into play beings of "totally different scales and kingdoms" (Deleuze and Guattari 2015: 278) in a series of unexpected imaginative connections. It is indeed curious to note that Orwell refuses to rely on simple acts of identification or similarity when it comes to rendering the animal a critical issue in his fiction. In *Burmese Days*, animals are rarely seen as functional parts in scientific taxonomies, nor are they simply archetypes or metaphors in a given regime of mythological signs; in fact, they are distributed according to differential relations between species, partaking in an "ethology of forces and of speeding metamorphoses" (Braidotti 2009: 530). Roughly the same applies to the novel's human characters who are grouped in and across relations homologous to those between animals commensurate to each other on the basis of shared characteristics. Flory – a *bona fides* character in love with nature, books and a simple life – relates to U Po Kyin like a dog relates to a crocodile, marking out a field of emotional tensions and conflicts between characters determined by more than just mutual distrust. U Po Kyin exhibits distinctly introjective traits and thus reveals a personality constellation diametrically opposed to the timber merchant who is generous and sensitive but also socially insecure, falsely attributing his own interests (in books, e.g., or Burmese folkloric traditions) to Elizabeth and absurdly expecting her to identify with all the different ideas and impulses he ingenuously projects outside. Where U Po

**12** A connection frequently exhibited in Ko S'la's intense devotedness to his master: "He would never let anyone else serve Flory at table, or carry his gun or hold his pony's head while he mounted" (Orwell 2009: 50). More traces of a possibly improper or unseemly relationship are hinted at in the following passage: "Englishmen do often love Indians – native officers, forest rangers, hunters, clerks, servants. […] Even intimacy is allowable, *at the right moments*" (Orwell 2009: 80, my emphasis).

Kyin, the 'crocodile-man', feasts on the gifts of others – "a parasite upon" (Orwell 2009: 2) the British and "swollen with the bodies of his enemies" (Orwell 2009: 11) – Flory's canine companion is the direct opposite, obedient and submissive, parasitized upon wherever she goes yet also aiding humans in creating multifarious bonds that transcend, if only temporarily, social prejudice and conformism.[13] Flory, moreover, forms an imaginary vanishing line with his companion dog, analogous to other characters and stock types in *Burmese Days* whose behaviour is aligned with that of animals in an imaginary series permitting an equivalence of assignable relations. That U Po Kyin shows no figural development at all while Flory gets entangled in a web of intrigues and power struggles propelling him forward at an amazing pace, may have to do with the widely accepted notion that the crocodile is an animal that has "apparently not evolved since the prehistoric age", representing "lower orders or earlier stages in an evolutionary taxonomy" (Leighton and Surridge 2007: 254).[14] In a puzzling combination of species and racial discourses underlying the totemic connection, the insidious magistrate is equated to the "aged Jewish whores with faces like crocodiles" (Leighton and Surridge 2007: 65) ridiculed on a previous occasion, thus calling to mind a popular stereotype widely applied to Jews in the first half of the twentieth century. The disparaging image of the magistrate is clearly based on racial prejudice but presented in terms of a caricature blending scary reptile predators with ageing females. He is associated with excess femininity and promiscuity on account of his "sweating breasts, huge as a woman's with fat" (Leighton and Surridge 2007: 138), but what outweighs this image by far is the quality of greed that puts him on an equal footing with the imputed power of Jews to take advantage of other people, to 'digest' their lives and culture and wipe out their identities through voracious acts of incorporation. What occurs is a division of humans and their behavioural forms (projection/introjection, development/stagnation) between species interwoven in the same or a similar system of symbiotic-totemic thought. Together, they form a nomadic pattern of filiation and becoming, "movement without determination" (Bruns 2007: 704), that runs its own line between the narrative terms in play (plot structure, characterisation, symbolism, etc.) and is nowhere near completion or self-exhaustion. Everywhere

**13** One of the rare moments in which Flory feels at ease with Elizabeth occurs while they are walking the dog in a garden, among waves of "blackcurrant scent" flowing from the "petunias beside the path. [...] A pang of unreasonable happiness had gone through them both" (Orwell 2009: 84).

**14** On the crocodile as a figure of "quintessential otherness" (Leighton and Surridge 2007: 249), representing the monstrous and rapacious, but also the oriental and exotic, in British colonial literature, see Leighton and Surridge (2007: 250–251 and 254–256).

the perceptible reality of animals permits the embodiment of new correspondences and relations, "exclusions and inclusions, compatibilities and incompatibilities" (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 90), not infrequently on account of the fact that they "are good to think" (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 89). More than just disturbing or outrageous, this facet of Orwell's narrative resists both metaphorical incorporation and anthropomorphic projection. The various species reverted to for characterization in *Burmese Days* do not serve as extensions of anyone's self or symbols of any people but as irreducibly challenging figures assembled in opposition to human exceptionism, their differences encompassing different ranges of competences and abilities and even maximizing their potentials under certain conditions. They participate in the lives of characters who distinguish *themselves* as they distinguish *animals* – by engaging, in the manner of totemic relationships, the diversity of species as a conceptual support for social differentiation, including class, gender and sexuality.

In this regard, *Burmese Days* provides a curious case study in how ways of reading animals may relate to exposing their hidden agential function through the interpretation of totemism, transversal connections, correspondences and other relations of non-symmetrical response. Constantly forming and resolving a temporal web of interspecies dependencies, the novel's rich but unacknowledged animal narrative helps understand the extent to which the "becoming-animal of the human being" (Deleuze and Guattari 2015: 283) is locatable in structures of repression and alienation as well as in prolific entanglements across borders and among different cultures. The human-animal-nexus, it shows, is constituted relationally, fertilizing adventitious cultural spheres through processes of displacement and multispecies assemblage and, more importantly, increasing the potential of animal agency in literature as a mode of production that prompts transformation of knowledges. Reading *Burmese Days* outside received humanist or anthropocentric formulae mobilizes broader concerns about what exactly may happen to an unequivocally realist political fable when the patterns and practices of interpreting species begin to change and suggests some vital new lessons for developments in literary and animal studies.

## Travels in Zootopia: Force-feeding the Colonial Animal in "Marrakech"

In a certain manner, these patterns and practices of interpretation are carried to extremes in Orwell's superbly bilious and hyperbolic travel essay "Marrakech", the most captivating of his writings to feature zoomorphic characters as literary

agents mapping permeable species boundaries. Its complexity arises mainly from its exploring a colonized space that does not situate the individual as a full-fledged subject integrating disparate experiences but identifies instead the interdependence of life forms and styles of being below the level of humanist inclusion. In fact, "Marrakech" evokes too complex a response to be dismissed as mere denunciation of imperialism. More distinct and forceful than in Orwell's other writings, the pervasive companionship of humans with other species appears central to narrative subjectivity here, with animals acquiring agency and interiority at the most elemental level. Placed centrally in the estranged cultural space of the former imperial city, they do not appear as supplements to human subject forms but actively take over the scenery as a whole. This transpires already in the opening paragraph:

> As the corpse went past the flies left the restaurant table in a cloud and rushed after it, but they came back a few minutes later. [...] What really appeals to the flies is that the corpses here are never put into coffins. (Orwell 1968c: 387)

The opening sequence plunges the reader into a sinister underworld of poverty and squalor in which animal agency has spiked to such dramatic levels that the impression of the farcical is hard to escape. The hyperbolic notion of human corpses so reduced in physical substance as to no longer attract even the hordes of flies creates a momentary suspension of reason and reality and opens the reader up to radical perspectival insights. This raising of the referent – the plight of the masses suffering under the regime of their French colonial superiors – beyond all probability and sense is a form of rhetorical violence that magnifies and inflates its discursive object and disrupts all normative or biased thought-processes. That Orwell reverts to this kind of experimental logic of his own accord not only demonstrates the almost complete lack on his part of a plain explanatory or analytic idiom suited to dissect the political excesses and obscenities of imperialism;[15] it also shows that novel or experimental story forms need to operate structurally within shifting perceptions of species life if they wish to succeed and grant the *others* their radical cultural alterity. Evidently, to explore spaces of becoming shared across different species and environments in order to radically displace the priority of anthropocentric norms is the measure of presentation in "Marrakech", as a range of examples will suffice to point out quite easily. As actors in and across differently configured relationships, animals are consis-

**15** For more – albeit ideologically biased – information on the social conditions of life in "beastly dull" French Morocco, its environmental plight and the poverty of its people under a government "evidently squeezing the country pretty ruthlessly", see the various letters Orwell wrote during his stay in this country between September 1938 and March 1939 (Orwell 1968c: 360–371).

tently joining their human counterparts in shaping the socio-political continuum alongside a range of other modes of action within reach. The main property assisting them in exceeding the terms of the human subject is their eminent visibility in an imaginary landscape deprived of even the slightest traces of human cultivation. Apart from a burial ground consisting of heaps of "dried-up, lumpy earth" (Orwell 1968c: 390) into which the bodies of the dead are dumped carelessly, the place appears to have nothing to offer or boast about. The strangeness of its inhabitants resides principally in "their invisibility" (Orwell 1968c: 391). "The people have brown faces—besides, there are so many of them! [...] Do they even have names? Or are they merely a kind of undifferentiated brown stuff, about as individual as bees or coral insects?" (Orwell 1968c: 388). The narrative focus of the essay is on textual effects that remove every vestige of human individuality and situate subjectivity as a collective production involving a whole new world of non-human-centred views and practices, a concrescence of milieus or "attachment sites" (Haraway 2008: 41) consisting of landscapes, insects, plants and even the scorching heat that ensures that every living being sinks back into the "nameless mounds of the graveyard" and the mounds themselves "fade back into the soil" (Orwell 1968c: 388) without a trace. Everything segues into each other, every object is only a continuation or extension of a previous one. The clouds of flies are nowhere denied *interiority* or agency as a swarm or distinct set of knotted beings; on the contrary, they seem to decide at their own discretion whether to follow the corpse on its wooden bier or not. Interiority may also be ascribed to the storks depicted as heading northward, wisely leaving an emaciated and dried-out continent already visibly on the brink of a succession of violent wars of independence.[16] A migratory species, they enjoy the annual freedom to leave North Africa and return to their breeding grounds, and as such they are visibly set in contrast with the Senegalese soldiers drearily "marching southward—a long, dusty column, [...] four or five thousand men in all, winding up the road with a clumping of boots and a clatter of iron wheels" (Orwell 1968c: 392). Effectively silenced subalterns, the "Negroes" have not yet reached the elevated state of mind of the messenger birds who, according to ancient Slavic folklore, were believed to carry unborn souls to Earth; everything in their appearance indicates their superiority over the wretched army of conscripted soldiers, itself emphatically equated with "a flock of cattle" (Orwell 1968c: 393) led to their slaughter. Their white plumage, their size and their ability to fly at high altitudes – symbols of the 'soaring spirit' every genuine revolution calls for – affords them a

**16** Orwell augurs the possibility of nationalist rebellions and inter-ethnic warfare in North Africa in one of his letters to insurance agent and socialist writer John Sceats (Orwell 1968c: 361).

kind of strength and dignity the black soldiers apparently lack. Their relation to writing and so once again to the institution of the totem – 'the stork is to cattle what the white colonizer is to the black subaltern or the revolutionary to the passive sufferer…' – is brought out with a final stroke of the brush at the end in the phrase "white birds […] glittering like scraps of paper" (Orwell 1968c: 393).[17]

What this shows, quite patently, is that to read the animals in "Marrakech" only as metaphors for the literary imagination or as exemplars of the fabulous beasts populating other writings in the Orwell canon would mean to severely misjudge the underlying structure of the text and its aim to expose the ideological basis of humanist exceptionalism. The kinds of relations that the estranged cultural space of "Marrakech" admits of entangle a crowd of differentially situated species and launch an imaginary series of suggestive human-animal homologies within an equivalence of coordinates far surpassing the bounds of anthropomorphism. As literary practice, this series or succession is paraded not so much by navigating between the poles of vitalism and mechanism (and therefore by situating common scientific knowledge about animals), but rather through its constant hinting at the *continuity* between human beings and animals, assuming the idea of "lateral kinship" (Oliver 2009: 222) as an essential component of the embodied life both share. The existence of the former can only be made graspable with the help of differentiated, speciesed or totemized images drawn from the varied resources of the animal world; multiply charged signs, these are liable to trouble the terms of humanist thought by exceeding the abilities and functions of individual subjects. Moreover, Orwell's distinctly idiosyncratic manner of exploiting compatibilities and locating "unnatural participations" (Deleuze and Guattari 2015: 280) suggests the continual becoming of a social world shared and co-shaped across different species and environmental spaces. This is carved out in a rather striking episode involving the analogy between a gazelle and two human beings: The gazelle, fed by the narrator in a public garden in Marrakech, butts him repeatedly with its head "lowered" (Orwell 1968c: 380) but does not refuse to eat the bread it is offered. The ensuing passage introduces an Arab navvy who "lowered his heavy hoe" (Orwell 1968c: 388) to join the generous visitor and ask for some crumbs as well: "I tore off a piece and he stowed it gratefully in some secret place" (Orwell 1968c: 389). Interestingly, the whole scene revolves around the gratuitous sharing of food, employing the symbolism of eating and incorporation to shine a light on the ways in which different species share the same or

**17** In "Marrakech", Orwell shows animals of all kinds – be they gazelles, donkeys, storks or bees – to be overly present. This may appear odd given that he maintained, in a letter to John Sceats during his stay in Africa, the exact opposite – namely that "in the whole country there are practically no animals, everything edible being eaten by human beings" (1968c: 360).

similar interests across a gulf of diversified biocultural affiliations. The traveller-narrator feeds the belligerent gazelle whose hindquarters he can "hardly look at" without "thinking of mint sauce" (Orwell 1968c: 389), himself being under the gaze of an Arab navvy all the while who is in the possession of a hoe quite as heavy and impressive as the gazelle's antlers. All three are entangled in a manner suggesting a rather delicate menacing scenario if not even the possibility of mutual destruction, with the notion of the white explorer cannibalising on the African and the Moroccan subordinate plotting awful revenge always within reach. The disturbance thus created is difficult to ignore: Throughout the scene, the Arab is likened to the gazelle and vice versa, with the latter 'animal' showing a higher degree of individual responsiveness and agency than the African; the gazelle is not anthropomorphized but rather used instrumentally, emerging as a situated and irreducibly social creature forcing one to rethink the essentials of human empathy. It evokes an immediate, almost irresistible pulse of empathy, whereas the Arab, a somewhat tragical character, only arouses pity or, at best, sorrow. And as though this were not enough already, Orwell carries matters to extremes by depicting Jews as primitive cave-dwellers who barely manage to scrape a modest life in "fly-infested booths" (Orwell 1968c: 389) and by presenting his narrator as "infuriated" beyond all sense by the death of a donkey – "the most willing creature on earth" – badly treated and carelessly tipped into a ditch by its owner: "This kind of thing makes one's blood boil whereas—on the whole—the plight of human beings does not. [...] People with brown skins are next door to invisible" (Orwell 1968c: 392).

It is a sign of Orwell's distinct rhetoric of paradox, rupture and grotesque inversion that the invisibility of humans presupposes the visibility of animals, thus foregrounding the notion of intercorporeity as established fact, as vital nexus attaching human life to patterns of animality as revealed in the *Umwelt* or biocultural sphere. Animals, by his account, take on the epistemological function of tracing back all human attempts at self-representation (or the negation of those) to their origin in the non-human world, to an environment instilling fear and respect in human beings and thus effecting practices of ritual, sacrifice or totemization that enable them to differentiate themselves from their environment and other species. Animals are thus assigned agency and power beyond the limits of metaphor and anthropocentric substitution. At the same time, it cannot be denied that Orwell runs danger of reterritorializing the space he so efficiently decentres through establishing startlingly new classes of relations between species. A strategy of empowerment that transforms a swarm of literary flies into self-adjusting, energetic entities bearing on the occurrences around human death and burial is doomed to failure if it remains circumscribed by the disciplinary structures of human-centred views and preoccupations. Images of sore-eyed children

clustering in narrow side-streets "like clouds of flies" among "rivers of urine" or Jews desperate on maintaining their "fly-infested" (Orwell 1968c: 389) houses easily may serve to reterritorialize the metamorphosis announced in the vigorous image of 'becoming-animal', propping up human self-projections and ethical aspirations and perpetuating the conventional role of animal bodies as keepers of the gates between species. Denied interiority or a sovereign subjectivity of their own, they remain fixed in their role as flexile "zooproletariat" (Braidotti 2009: 528) sustaining the delusional imago of ideal man – a mere property of the human subject form providing living material for transcendent views without power of alliance beyond anthropocentric stereotyping.

Orwell's representation of animals is firmly embedded in a diversity of story-telling processes. While his image of the average human being – frequently conveyed through a spurious anthropocentric filter – is predicated on animal forms of agency and interiority, his accounts of shared lives and human-animal intertwining are based on the performative language of prose and narrative genres such as report, travelogue and anecdote.[18] His style of engaging with narrative and textuality configures people and animals as co-existing in a mode of becoming that "lacks a subject distinct from itself" (Deleuze and Guattari 2015: 278) and is therefore open to a diversity of lateral relationships and figurations. As a rule, Orwell's writings are rarely organized around dichotomy or clearly defined lines of articulation; in fact, they regularly explode the binary structuration of realist narrative and therefore of the human-animal nexus, the sovereignty of sameness and identification that mask a falsely universalistic mode posited through language. Read in context, it is thus difficult to judge whether "Marrakech" employs the rhetoric of hyperbole and animal coding to sustain a flimsy humanist ethos or whether its actual interest resides in disengaging from anthropocentric thought to push deterritorialization even further, beyond the areas of imitation, mimicry and resemblance. Orwell's animals are *rhizomorphic* others,

**18** Orwell's essay "A Hanging" about a routine execution in Burma carried out by bored police officials contains a further vivid representation of animals as carriers of human feeling. At one point in the narrative, the prisoner is effusively greeted by a dog whose sure feeling for the condemned man's inherent humanity far surpasses that of the policemen conducting the execution: "A dreadful thing had happened—a dog, come goodness knows whence, had [...] made a dash for the prisoner, and jumping up tried to lick his face". That everyone "stood aghast, too taken aback to grab at the dog" (Orwell 1968a: 45), can only be explained by the fact that the animal's spontaneous response forced the officials to confront their own involvement in the hanging. The dog's positivity in turn may be said to have caused a deferral or even erasure of difference between the categories of the human/inhuman, the innocent/guilty, etc., justifying the concept of execution. In the context of the essay, the animal is potent enough a figure to exceed the limited valence of an exclusively literary symbol.

establishing connections between different or opposing series and across surfaces of definition (realist or other) and biocultural or scientific coding. They appear as companion bodies with a broad range of possibilities, as agents of transformation and termination, co-constructing webs of meaning and articulation that situate imaginary resemblances between different terms and orders of being. Framing and undoing identities within precarious human-animal transitions and across rationalist models of species and social life, they enact spectacles of becoming, counter-narratives set adrift in flows of interrelated potentials. What Orwell may have lost in the domain of late-Victorian realism and political journalism, where he established himself quite early as a writer of "homespun empiricist outlook" and "straightforward common sense" (Norris 1984: 242), he now gains for a new logic of becoming rooted in his firm understanding that every viable concept of humanity proceeds from a displacement of other creatures and bodies, reptilian or avian, canine or insect, and that to map out their deeply unsettling histories may enable significant epistemological shifts within received perception of animals and successfully confront a literary and cultural structure geared to a system of unchanging views about human nature. In all its matters and phenomena, Orwell's fictional writing is grounded in narrative allegiance with his various companion species; setting out to trace patterns of animals and humans mixing their potentials in narratives, he breaks the moulds of the Cartesian subject-object-split and paves the way for literary forms that migrate across genre boundaries and even relocate trans- and interspecies relations beyond established dialectical opposites (*bios*/*zōē*, intellect/animality, metaphorical *totem*/metonymy, etc.). Foremost among modern British realists, Orwell is also the one whose narratives prompt most conspicuously the necessary metamorphoses of knowledges needed to defy the norms and regimes that benefit from the premature separation of our lives into human and animal.

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