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PERSON, PLACE, THING: ANIMALS IN THE VICTORIAN REALIST NOVEL

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This dissertation charts a literary history of animal characters running through the novels of Charles Kingsley, Benjamin Disraeli, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy. It argues that this overlooked history requires rethinking realist character in light of recent debates about nonhuman beings occurring in philosophy, political theory, and the environmental humanities. Animals have long seemed like minor players in Victorian realism, a genre far more interested in the sprawling totality of human social relations. The marginal social position of animals, however, makes them invaluable instruments for exploring those questions of communal belonging central to the Victorian novel. Because they defy easy categorization as subjects or objects, persons or things, characters or mere scenery, animals shuffle between literary and philosophical categories with surprising ease over the course of the nineteenth century. Their movements provide a revealing perspective on the connections that link the literary construct of character to its ethical counterparts of the subject, the person, and above all, the human. As animals develop from symbols into characters before finally being subsumed into a monolithic understanding of nature as a nonhuman thing, they track the evolution of character itself as a mode of imagining personhood: its origins as a mark of sociopolitical distinction, its

expansion into a much more flexible form of moral recognition, and its final contraction, by the turn of the twentieth century, into one more means of validating the individual human consciousness.

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INTRODUCTION.**Human Relations**

Really, universally, relations stop nowhere . . .

—Henry James, Preface to *Roderick Hudson*

This project unearths a forgotten history of nonhuman characterization at the heart of the Victorian realist novel. By paying close attention to the ways that authors and works central to standard literary histories of the novel extend their imagined communities beyond the species barrier, it shows how an exclusive focus on the human has come to define and circumscribe scholarly accounts of the novel's politics and ethics. This untold history of nonhuman characters reveals how the ethical commitments of the Victorian realist novel led its practitioners on a surprising detour away from the individualistic, humanistic trajectory of the novel and toward a proto-ecological recognition of the web of relations connecting human and nonhuman beings. This alternative vision of community remained unrealized, I argue, because novelists worried that its consideration towards other creatures would diminish human ethical priority at a time when that priority seemed largely unenforced and often imperiled. The turn away from this wider vision of relations was later institutionalized in scholarly definitions of character which, by equating character with the individual human being, effectively erased animals from literary history and obscured the complex negotiations over the idea of the human that preoccupied the novel for most of the nineteenth century.

The ethical commitments of the tradition that George Levine calls “Victorian moral realism” find their most eloquent and self-conscious formulation in the writings of George Eliot.¹ In the essay traditionally read as her realist manifesto, “The Natural

History of German Life” (1856), Eliot famously argues that “[t]he greatest benefit we owe to the artist . . . is the extension of our sympathies,” an extension best accomplished through “that attention to what is apart from ourselves, which may be called the raw material of moral sentiment.”² Accurate observation and representation of others represents a valuable contribution to “the Natural History of social bodies,” as it simultaneously describes the current organization of society and generates a new ethical interest in persons whose importance had been overlooked.³ This interest has the potential to expand communal feeling and, with it, the perceived boundaries of society itself, “obliterating the vulgarity of exclusiveness.”⁴

In his influential history of the Victorian novel, Raymond Williams articulates the connections commonly understood to link social change, cultural crisis, and the formal development of the novel in the Victorian period. He emphasizes the fact that the realists’ project responds to a broader “crisis of the knowable community” taking place in nineteenth-century Britain.⁵ In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the rise of industrial capitalism resulted in the “increasing size and scale and complexity of communities . . . [the] increasing division and complexity of labor . . . [along with] altered and critical relations between and within social classes.”⁶ The new scale and order of society rendered it difficult for people living and working in this rapidly transforming society to perceive the nature and extent of social relations—to determine what persons belong to a community and how they are related to each other. Victorian realism, Williams explains, responds to and compensates for this social confusion. It concerns itself with tracing the material relationships that connect people into webs of interpersonal dependence and mutual ethical obligation. The realist novelist “clears the

air so that people can see and acknowledge each other, overcoming that contraction of sympathy which is against nature.”⁷ In its development, nineteenth-century realism shows a “continuity of moral analysis” that constantly revises its prior understandings of community in “recognition of other kinds of people, other kinds of country, [and] other kinds of action on which a moral emphasis must be brought to bear.”⁸ Recent reconsiderations of realist form by scholars such as Caroline Levine and Gage McWeeny continue to recognize the Victorian novel as a form of capacious narrative ideally suited to tracing and recording previously illegible social networks.⁹

As several prominent novelists admitted in their own writing, this project of tracing social relations could theoretically extend forever. One of the difficulties these novelists faced was knowing where, exactly, to stop, when and how to cut the ties that bind beings to each other and impose an outer boundary to their expansive social project. “Really, universally,” Henry James reflects in his preface to the New York Edition of *Roderick Hudson* (1907), “relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily *appear* to do so.”¹⁰ Eliot confesses to a similar difficulty in *Middlemarch* (1871-1872), where she acknowledges how easy it is to get distracted from her task of “unraveling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven.”¹¹ She must, however, stop somewhere, focusing her attention on “this particular web” of social relationships and ignoring “that tempting range of relevancies called the universe.”¹²

Oddly, critical histories of the novel have far less difficulty defining the nature and limits of social relations than the novels themselves do. Studies of Victorian realism acknowledge its moral imperative to explore and expand contemporary conceptions of

who counts in society, but scholarly approaches to otherness appear at once more confident and more limited when compared to the explorations of the novels themselves. Critics restrict their inquiry to questions of class, gender, and race among human beings, while Victorian explorations of alterity are both more expansive and more uneven; if they represent marginalized human beings in unsatisfactory ways, they also extend their interest in overlooked others well beyond the species barrier.¹³

The discrepancy between critical accounts of the novel's ethical inclusiveness and the expansive unevenness of the novels themselves comes down to a question of character. As the basic unit of social membership in the realist novel, character structures the novel's conception of ethics and interpersonal relationships. Although the study of character was, in Alex Woloch's words, once "imperiled within literary theory . . . the bête noire of narratology," a resurgence of interest in literary character has helped to ensure that this fundamental category remains an important site of scholarly attention.¹⁴ Recent studies have thoughtfully probed historical and conceptual questions of how narrative techniques suggest characterological traits and interiority; they have traced the tendency of narratives to productively blur character as a literary category and character as a name for ontological or ethical essence; and they have explored how character helps to construct cognitive models of other minds.¹⁵ Woloch's study—the most relevant to this project—advances convincing claims regarding not what character is but how it works, demonstrating the competitive interpersonal dynamics that structure characterological interaction in the novel.

For all their strengths, however, these works have done little to clarify, finally, what literary character actually *is*. These otherwise diverse studies tend to assume, like

Woloch, that character names “the literary representation of imagined human beings.”¹⁶ No wonder, then, that the handful of critical works that examine the place of animals in the imagined communities of the Victorian novel dwell on the impossibility of including nonhuman beings within these communities. Thus, when George Levine and Ivan Kreilkamp explore Victorian literary animals, they continually return to the ways in which animals fail to conform to those notions of character and interpersonal understanding that underpin the novel’s moral project, falling into the category of potential persons that the novel’s philosophical commitments make it impossible to include.¹⁷

Defining character in terms of biological humanity offers a tidy solution to the question of moral community, drawing a clear boundary between who belongs outside and who belongs inside. It is not, however, a boundary respected by the realist novel itself. Victorian novelists do not accept the equation of character and humanity as commonsensical. Instead, over the course of the century they repeatedly wrestle with the possible relationships between humanity, character, and moral standing. Indeed, as I hope to demonstrate in this dissertation, the task of articulating how these terms relate to each other comprises a significant portion of the political and ethical work of their novels.

This study is a history of the struggles to understand and define the relationship between humanity, character, and moral standing that takes place over the course of the novel’s development. It follows the contours of traditional histories of the Victorian novel, but only to emphasize how reading with close attention to humanity and its others radically reorients accounts of sympathy and community that have grounded influential analyses of the novel for over half a century. The arc described by this project

demonstrates that the relationship between realist character and the individual human being only stabilizes at the end of the nineteenth century, notably in the pessimistic vision of nonhuman nature propounded in the works of Thomas Hardy. The slow evolution of characterological humanity means that appreciating the developing ethics and aesthetics of the realist novel requires suspending any simple division of the material realm into humans and nonhumans, society and nature, or subjects and objects in order to explore a far murkier and far more interesting world in which questions of representation and inclusion have not been resolved by biological fiat.

Naturally, working on novelistic practices of inclusion and exclusion makes one especially sensitive to the texts, ideas, and authors who are missing from this project despite their contributions to understandings of humanity and moral community in the Victorian era. Charles Darwin is just one of many central figures making only a brief appearance here. The British imperial project, which administered the traffic of humans and other animals across countries, continents and oceans, remains a marginal presence at best. Some prominent nineteenth-century texts that clearly engage with issues of humanity, morality, and character—such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818)—make no appearance whatsoever. And although they were technically Victorian novelists who often included animals in their works, the Brontës receive little attention in the pages that follow.

None of these exclusions were easy. But the goal of this project is to show how the aesthetics of Victorian *realism* enabled novelists to reconfigure understandings of the moral community without deferring to normative standards of humanity. This concentration on the ethics of a very specific literary practice requires stinting projects

such as *Frankenstein*, which thinks through questions of humanity and personhood using Gothic and epistolary conventions—forms that differ in significant ways from the sprawling novels of the Victorian era, with their omniscient narrators and their commitment to the tracing the nuances of social relationships. It is that form and its sociopolitical engagements with ideas of humanity that concern me here. Similarly, the Brontës—heirs, in a very real sense, to Shelley and to Gothic romanticism, with its interest in psychology and the supernatural—do not, for aesthetic reasons, belong in the main lines of the tradition I am trying to redescribe.

If some novels have been excluded because they exist at the margins of the Victorian realist tradition I am working to understand, contemporary cultural contexts have been excluded out of the same commitment to aesthetics and literary history. In an attempt to reconsider how novels work, I have tended to downplay the sociopolitical structures in which they are implicated and involved. By and large, my argument only departs from literary texts at length when evidence internal to the works points to an undeniable need for broader historical context, or when such context will help clarify what I take to be a common critical misunderstanding. So, for example, the third and fourth chapters of this work hinge on a shift in George Eliot's portrayal of animals between 1859 and 1860. But I resist the temptation to engage in an extended analysis of Eliot's readings in Darwin and natural history because I find that biographical and textual details convincingly suggest a different and far more literary explanation for this shift in Eliot's writing.

Among other relevant nineteenth-century historical developments, the extraordinary growth of animal welfarism, of the antivivisection movement, and of zoos

and menageries receive only cursory treatment in this account. Impressive histories of these phenomena already exist, and their relationship to the central concerns of Victorian moral realism remains, to my mind, still uncertain.¹⁸

Following novels as they think through notions of the nonhuman leads in some surprising directions that do not reflect more current conceptual and theoretical preoccupations, such as the role of Darwin, or the rise of the zoos and petkeeping.¹⁹ So, while this project begins its investigation of nonhuman beings with the industrial novels and their interest in dehumanized laborers, it ends with Thomas Hardy's landscapes. At several points along the way, it departs from the novel to engage in what might look like digressions into historical performance theory and the changing understandings of the concept of legal personality. In each case, however, I take these apparent detours because they seem, to me, like the most direct route to understanding how novels think through questions of humanity and social inclusion. The brief abstract that follows should provide a sense of how I see questions of humanity entering into realist aesthetics, where those questions lead, and how that trajectory helps determine the contours of the ethical imagination in the twentieth-century and beyond.

Chapter One, "The Humanity of the Industrial Novelists," argues that the definition of the human becomes a major concern for Victorian novelists because of a long philosophic tradition of using "human" as a marker to distinguish members of a moral community from those "brutes" who fall outside the protections and strictures of society. This usage begins with Aristotle's *Politics* and passes into medieval penal codes, influencing the early modern philosophy of John Locke and culminating in the writings of French and American revolutionaries that continue to inform rights discourse today.

Thus when early Victorian realists take previously marginalized people—handloom weavers, factory workers, prostitutes, and others—and make them sympathetic characters in their imagined communities, they justify the moral importance of these new inclusions in terms of their humanity. But defending an essential, inviolable humanity proves surprisingly difficult within the constraints of the realist mode, with its reliance on the empirical description of physical details. Facing opposition from critics who interpret the brutal lives of the lower classes as evidence not of their oppression, but of their subhuman nature, these novelists spend an unusual amount of time worrying over the material and moral differences separating humans from brutes, frequently including animals in their works as aids to thinking through such distinctions. As they use animals to contest the line between humanity and brutality, however, realist authors begin to map a continuum linking brutalized humans and humanized brutes, forcing them to ask whether other animals might also deserve greater social acknowledgment.

Although a number of social-problem novels of the 1840s and '50s show early Victorian realists struggling to prove their characters' humanity and moral worth in empirical terms, Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet* (1850), the fictional autobiography of a working-class radical, proves representative in its reliance on biologically nonhuman animals as a means of thinking through the moral humanity of its lower-class characters. Near the novel's end, a feverish Alton dreams of evolving from the "lowest" kind of life, a colonial coral, through an ascending series of animal forms before reaching the "highest," a human being. This developmental sequence may seem like a dream of interspecies inclusion, but it functions in the novel to pinpoint the break that distinguishes human moral significance from subhuman brutality, providing both

Alton and the reader with certain knowledge of the superiority of mankind. It is, however, only a dream, the product of a longing for an ethical clarity that is unsettled by the knowledge of a biological continuum. Confronting a lack of empirical evidence for human moral distinction, Kingsley's characters turn against empiricism itself, embracing the teachings of Christ as the best basis for a universal human community whose primacy and boundaries remain matters of faith.

Chapter Two, "The Inhumanity of the Industrial Novelists," argues that Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil* (1845) and Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) also use animal figures to understand the relationship between humanity and brutality, but their aesthetics borrow from a less transcendent authority. They rely on the conventions of a long-forgotten theatrical genre, the animal melodrama, to defend human moral significance in distinctly material terms. These melodramas include animal characters whose ability to sniff out moral worth—often literally—enables them to identify wronged heroes and to foil the schemes of villainous oppressors. Modeling their dogs Harold and Merrylegs on these characters, Disraeli and Dickens exploit the canines' heightened senses to suggest that the moral truths uncovered by the animals have a material existence—albeit one too subtle for humans to detect. Thus, in these works, the approval of dogs serves as evidence corroborating the unimpeachable moral standing of their masters, so that animals paradoxically become the guarantors of the humanity of their two-legged companions. Just as problematically, these novels defer uncertainty about the locus of virtue and proof of communal belonging by positing its material existence in a sphere lying just outside the limits of human sense-experience.

Where Dickens and Disraeli turn to animals primarily to corroborate the moral distinction of their human characters, George Eliot's early works elide the moral distinctions between humans and dogs entirely, depicting the animals as full members of the community alongside human beings. **Chapter Three, "Characterizing Animals,"** examines how, in treating dogs as characters, a work like *Adam Bede* becomes a meditation on character in the novel more generally. Adam's dog Gyp demonstrates that realist character is defined not, as critics overwhelmingly assume, by *what* it represents (the human individual, the mind, moral selfhood) but by *how* it represents. As she muses over Gyp's failure to meet anthropomorphic criteria for moral personhood, Eliot shows how characterization confers moral standing through the nature of its textual attention rather than the nature of the object attended to: Gyp emerges as a recognizable character because the novel treats his interactions as ethically significant, a form of respect detachable from any standard of interiority. This recognition of narrative dynamics frees realist character from the baggage of *a priori* philosophical commitments, but it also foregrounds the essentially arbitrary, hierarchical nature of characterization, which assigns priority to certain relationships only at the expense of others. In something of an ironic stroke, characterizing animals only reminds Eliot of the underappreciated humans all around them, compelling the narrator in *Adam Bede* to worry that lovable canines like Gyp rob other characters—particularly women—of the full sympathetic consideration they deserve. The competition between humans and animals leads Eliot to expel animal characters from her later works, consigning their ethical claims to the unrepresentable world that, in her well-known passage on the squirrel's heartbeat, she calls "the roar on the other side of silence."

Eliot's famously forgiving humanism thus emerges somewhat belatedly, as the product of a contraction of the more universal sympathies first figured in her representations of animal life. In the end, this contraction only intensifies her commitment to the human community, enabling her to advocate human equality not as a hazy ideal but as an attainable compromise worth fighting for. **Chapter Four, "Humanizing Character,"** explores Eliot's ambivalence as she works toward this compromise position in her second novel, *The Mill on the Floss* (1860). There the protagonist, Maggie Tulliver, is torn between nostalgia for her childhood communion with the natural world and desire for adult membership in an exclusively human society. As the novel struggles to respect the natural world while subordinating it to the concerns of human characters, it leaves the animalized Maggie caught somewhere between human character and nonhuman landscape, building up a tension only resolved in the novel's shocking conclusion: the flood overcomes all practical distinction between character and scenery as the river rises up and drowns Maggie, materially reclaiming her as an element of the landscape she loves.

Chapter Five, "Of Character and Environment," reads Thomas Hardy's pessimism as a reiteration of the divided allegiance that haunts and destroys Maggie Tulliver. Critics often remark that Egdon Heath and other Wessex landscapes are the true protagonists of Hardy's novels. But I take this commonplace quite literally, arguing that the narrator's fascination with landscape in *The Return of the Native* (1878) personifies the aggregate of plants and animals inhabiting the Wessex countryside, giving the scenery an unintended characterological weight that forces Hardy to narrate the relationship between humans and the landscape in ethical terms. Hardy's initial

fascination with the natural world gives way to pessimism, however, when he finds it the claims and behaviors of his characterized landscape at odds with individual human characters and the moral standards of society.

When Hardy measures nature according to human standards and finds it wanting, he participates in the broader psychological turn characteristic of modernism. In what is often read as a fitting culmination of the novel's two-hundred-year investigation of human individualism, the experimental fictions of Henry James, Virginia Woolf, and James Joyce all promote the novel as a tool for representing the tricky vicissitudes of human consciousness. But situated in relation to the Victorian novel's experiments with a more diverse moral community, this turn to the exploration of consciousness appears not as the natural endpoint of the novel's development, but as something more sinister: a narrow ossification of both character and the novel, a retreat from nineteenth-century explorations of ethical alterity into the safety and comfort of the human skull.

This revised literary history thus ends where modern critical accounts begin, with the loose equation of literary character, biological humanity, and moral importance that informs seminal scholarly investigations of the nineteenth-century novel. The process of arriving at that equivalence, however, brings to light the impressive flexibility of the novel's ethical imagination, revealing the historical contingencies that have produced this relationship between aesthetic practices of characterization and ethical norms of humanity.

Making visible the historical contingencies that shape modern divisions of the world into humans and nonhumans is a project with important moral implications that extend beyond questions of accurate literary historiography. More than a century after the

end of Victoria's reign, old and seemingly stable relationships between the human and the nonhuman no longer hold. Humans, science tells us, have become a geologic force, reconfiguring the climate and the chemical composition of the earth with our collective actions and lifestyle choices.²⁰ The simple need to feed human beings is rapidly emptying the oceans; some scientists have predicted that, at current harvest rates, every single commercial fishery will collapse within forty years.²¹ The combined impact of human hunting, agriculture, and the conversion of habitat into resources and consumer goods is driving other species extinct at an estimated rate of almost nine-hundred species per year.²² At the same time, global demand for cheap meat has spurred the growth of industrialized agriculture on an unprecedented scale, as chickens, sheep, pigs, cows, and other creatures are reared, inseminated, and killed under abominable conditions. In the U.S. alone, farms slaughter 9 billion animals every year.²³ These factory farming practices add exponentially to the creation of greenhouse gases, the pollution and sedimentation of waterways, and other disruptions of nutrient cycling that contribute to the massive die-offs characteristic of our era.²⁴

These phenomena are not new. But for the past century, worried observers have described them in terms of the overexploitation of resources or natural objects by human subjects, treating them as objective "environmental" problems effectively external to the interpersonal ethics that structure human society. While this approach has roused the concern of a dedicated minority of environmental activists, it has separated the ethical concerns internal to the sociopolitical community of human beings from the external, material, and scientific concerns of the natural world. Recently, thinkers from a wide variety of fields—sociology, political science, history, and literary criticism, among

others—have argued that this separation is not only ineffective but inaccurate, enforcing an ethical and political division that does not reflect the material realities of interrelationships. They are calling for a radical revaluation of “society” and its relationship to “nature,” supposedly separate spheres that are deeply interconnected in ways that our current epistemological and ethical divisions do not reflect and cannot adequately explain.

From this perspective, things long classified as the natural and apolitical objects of scientific inquiry appear, suddenly, to be materially and even ethically inextricable from human society and its politics. Thus the historian Dipesh Chakrabarty has argued that, in the face of climate change, there is no longer any meaningful distinction between human history and natural history, no obvious way of defining humans as separate from the natural environment, or of knowing where our agency ends.²⁵ Ocean acidity, glacial thaw, and honeybee hive collapse have become fiercely contested sociopolitical problems that cannot be addressed through scientific investigations of “nature” alone. In Jane Bennett’s formulation, we must “[g]ive up the futile attempt to disentangle the human from the nonhuman[, and s]eek instead to engage more civilly, strategically, and subtly with the nonhumans in the assemblages in which [we], too, participate.”²⁶ Any efforts in this direction require us to overlook our old and increasingly irrelevant conceptions of nature and society. In their place, we need to retrace connections, to understand the material relationships that relate unexpected entities together into a single web, a new and more comprehensive picture of our community. Bruno Latour describes the process as the practice of political ecology, one of accounting for ourselves by asking “How many are we?”²⁷

The more-than-coincidental relationship between this new “crisis of the knowable community” and the crises shaping the Victorian novel has been an important motivation for this project. Like modern-day political ecology, the novel sought to retrace social connections at a time when older representations of the social order no longer served to explain the political upheaval experienced by acknowledged members of the community. And like today’s political ecologists, Victorian novelists professed their faith that a clearer investigation of material social relations should engender a new sense of ethical responsibility, one reaching beyond the old boundaries of the moral community. Yet the Victorian novel ended by equating society with the human community, the very equation that political ecologists identify as the origin of our current impasse. Understanding how Victorian novelists arrived at this position might help to explain how we got here, and it may even point the way towards more expansive and more responsible approaches to community for the future.

CHAPTER 1.**The Humanity of the Industrial Novelists**

He who understands baboon would do more towards metaphysics than Locke.

—Charles Darwin²⁸

Define a horse.

The puzzling nature of the task should be self-evident—or so Charles Dickens assumed when he used it in the opening pages of his industrial novel *Hard Times* (1854). There, the utilitarian Thomas Gradgrind demands this definition from his bewildered new student Sissy Jupe. With its odd combination of simplicity and opacity, Gradgrind's request sounds like a riddle. Sissy obviously knows what a horse is: she has just admitted that her father performs in a traveling circus, where he spends the better part of his days engaged in equestrian stunts. Even barring Sissy's circumstances, however, the question must have seemed superfluous in a country that still ran on horsepower. Despite the rise of the railway network, British agriculture and locomotion remained harnessed to horseflesh throughout the Victorian era.²⁹

No wonder, then, that the prompt leaves Sissy speechless. She yields the floor to Gradgrind's perfect pupil, Bitzer, who furnishes what the teacher deems the correct answer. "Quadruped," Bitzer intones. "Gramnivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth."³⁰

Bitzer's answer is obviously absurd. His definition comprises a series of sense data that could, strictly speaking, be used by a clueless observer to identify a horse—at

least a dead or very docile one. This summa of empirical observations, however, makes for a rather unhelpful catalogue of identifying traits. More importantly, it falls far short of conveying any real idea of *horsiness*, and it never comes close to capturing the extraordinary sociopolitical significance of what Gradgrind describes as “one of the commonest of animals.”³¹ The absurdity of Bitzer’s definition, in other words, drives home the inadequacies of Gradgrind’s model of knowledge. A strict adherence to “facts” in the form of accreted empirical data, Dickens suggests, can never adequately grapple with the complex social and ethical dimensions of life—the dimensions that make facts matter in the first place. The episode thereby takes its place among the many contemporary cultural assaults on the meaningless routinization of industrial life.

The difficulty of Gradgrind’s assignment deserves a second look, however, because the significance of this exchange extends beyond a commonplace critique of industrialism. The question of how to define a horse is only one of the more direct examples of an unspoken urgency that lies just under the surface of all the industrial novels. In different ways, all of these works struggle with questions of species definition. They are particularly concerned with defining the humanity of working men and women, and they exhibit an anxiety over the need to differentiate such people from the nonhuman laboring animals who also populated the cities and counties of industrial England.

This difficulty, like Sissy’s, may seem overblown to those who have never attempted to answer it clearly and coherently within the confines of a secular, scientific worldview. But Bitzer’s response, in the course of mocking the shortcomings of such a worldview, inadvertently indicates that the empiricist approach of the realist novel—and of modernity more broadly—may be incapable of furnishing a definition central to its

sense of political and ethical subjectivity: the definition of humanity itself. Instinctively the industrial novelists felt that the humanity of their working-class subjects depended on something more than their status as a certain type of empirically identifiable biological organism. Man was not just a biped; omnivorous; with thirty-two teeth (namely twenty grinders, four eye-teeth, and eight incisive); shedding its coats in the spring; its feet soft, requiring to be shod by a cobbler. Those traits alone could not justify what the industrial novelists felt was an urgent need to take ethical account of the laboring classes as an overlooked portion of English society. But if humanity involved more than met the eye, what, exactly, was it?

Understanding the industrial novelists' attempts to answer such a question requires a consideration of exactly how it arose in the first place. The first section of this chapter will explain how the industrial novelists' inclusion of working-class characters caused them to engage with a longstanding philosophical tradition that freely mixes political, ethical, and biological concepts of the human. The industrial novelists drew on this tradition in order to defend their working-class characters' inherent humanity. This defense grew unexpectedly difficult, however, because of these writers' commitment to a realist aesthetic founded on empirical modes of knowing. In its sensory descriptions of the brutish lives of the working classes, the industrial novel always risked reinforcing—rather than undermining—the belief that the working classes were inhuman. The second section of the chapter charts the origins of this conflict between ethics and empiricism in the context of a longer tradition of English realism. The contradictions between the two become exceptionally clear in Charles Kingsley's novel *Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet* (1850). That novel's notoriously bizarre evolutionary dream sequence serves as the focus

for the third section of the chapter. There, I show how Alton's evolution represents Kingsley's attempt to think through the difference between the human and the animal in order to place the humanity of the working classes on firmer philosophical footing. Ironically, however, the only unassailable definition of humanity that Kingsley can discover is one rooted in the Christian tradition—a marker of the fact that the move from empiricism to ethics is always, in the end, a leap of faith.

1. Brutes Made Human: Working-Class Characters in the Industrial Novels

Critics call them any number of names: social-problem novels, Condition-of-England novels, industrial novels.³² All these terms identify one small and generically similar subset of early Victorian works by novelists like Benjamin Disraeli, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Kingsley, and Charles Dickens, works that sought to represent the consequences of industrialization on nineteenth-century English social life.³³ Among their primary concerns, the industrial novels share a commitment to providing detailed, realistic representations of what they considered an ignored or misunderstood portion of English society: the working classes. These novels also share a bad reputation. Since at least the publication of Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society* in 1958, critics have maligned the industrial novels as well-intentioned, certainly, but shot through with aesthetic flaws and political inadequacies that render them less-than-ideal models of the Victorian novel. As Williams argues, a work like Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) may open with an attitude toward the working-classes characterized by "sympathetic observation and . . . imaginative identification," but it quickly undermines

its promising beginnings by immersing its working-class characters in violent and melodramatic plots.³⁴ The disintegrating realism of the story finally misconstrues the working classes, and it ultimately results in an unsatisfactory “cancelling of the actual difficulties” of social progress, as the escalating sensationalism of the events ends only with the exile or interclass marriage of all the sympathetic working-characters, rather than with an image of plausible political action.³⁵

For all their differences, most major studies of the industrial novel follow in Williams’s footsteps, adopting his focus on the works’ uneven, “flawed” plots. Catherine Gallagher, for example, admits that these works are messy, but argues that their messiness provides a telling glimpse into the ideological conflicts that riddled industrialized England, as “the formal structures and ruptures of these novels starkly reveal a series of paradoxes at the heart of the Condition of England debate.”³⁶ Gallagher is only the best-known example of a more general tendency to read these generically hybrid narratives as ideal sites for investigating the politics of plot—of the sociopolitical content embedded within “just those fictional stories and strategies that have often been understood . . . as deflections from the delineation of social crisis or as evasions of its implications.”³⁷ Analyses of the industrial novels, in other words, overwhelmingly operate on the assumption that the works’ overwrought storytelling makes them as critically valuable as they are aesthetically and politically marginal, because their clumsy resolutions provide “a clear example of how the novel, as a genre, quite nakedly sets out to resolve social conflict and to provide moral lessons.”³⁸

All this focus on plot, however, tends to obscure the fact that the industrial novelists made a substantial contribution to both the history of realism and the political

atmosphere of industrial England by including sympathetic working-class characters in the first place. The importance of these inclusions is implicit in the line of criticism that Williams inaugurated, but only as a fact to acknowledge and move past. When critics skip over the inclusion of artisans and factory hands to moot the meaning of what happens to them, they inadvertently overlook one of the principal political contributions of realist representation: its ability to introduce new entities to the ethical imagination. Measuring novelistic plots against practical political action inevitably makes the artistic productions of these authors look insignificant. Any political action, however, presumes some prior recognition of entities who deserve to be heard, an awareness of certain persons as beings with some claim to consideration within the collective. It is here—at the level of what the political theorist Jacques Rancière calls “the distribution of the sensible”—that the industrial novels make a practical, valuable intervention into both aesthetics and politics with their expanded casts of characters.

Rancière’s “distribution of the sensible” provides a useful designation of the terrain where politics and aesthetics overlap. It describes the perceptual phenomena that structure politics, and the politics inherent to all aesthetic representation. “Politics,” Rancière points out, “revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it.”³⁹ Acts of representation inevitably support, undermine, or otherwise intervene in the general sense of who and what can be seen, heard, or discussed in the public realm. Certain forms and works, however, undertake more direct interventions than others. By arguing for the importance of seeing what was once obscure and voicing what was once unspeakable, the industrial novelists drag previously imperceptible or unmentionable elements of industrial life into the realm of ethical debate. They change what Rancière calls “the

parcelling out of the visible and the invisible,” and so alter the distribution of the sensible in a very direct and self-conscious manner.⁴⁰ This aesthetic act shifts the foundations of politics itself, as “[i]t undoes the sensible fabric—a given order of relations between meanings and the visible—and establishes other networks of the sensible, which can possibly corroborate the action undertaken by political subjects to reconfigure what are given to be facts.”⁴¹

By incorporating working-class individuals into their cast of sympathetic characters, then, the industrial novelists strove to redefine who deserved collective attention. In the process, the industrial novels participate in a reconsideration of the nature and boundaries of the social. Despite their fictional nature, these narratives wield what the sociologist Bruno Latour describes as “the power to take into account”: they urge the reconsideration of people previously excluded from the ethical collective we call society, and they ask anew that most fundamental sociopolitical question: “How many are we?”⁴² The ebb and flow of the industrial novelists’ sympathy towards their working-class characters—what Williams identifies as their upsetting tendency to turn initially likable characters into the perpetrators of increasingly unsettling and violent actions—does not necessarily undermine this process. Instead, it reflects the imaginative effort required at the time to envision such people as serious characters at all. It indexes, in other words, the sudden and confused appearance of the working-class on this imagined sociopolitical stage, their status as only-partially-sensible characters in the novels’ redescriptions of a collective English experience. As Latour notes, the recognition that outsiders—those not commonly considered actors or citizens within the collective—actually affect a society often manifests as a sense that the excluded parties are somehow

damaging an otherwise intact and functional social order: “To put it crudely . . . [new] actors appear first of all as troublemakers.”⁴³ Thus the illogical behavior and outrageous actions of fictionalized urban workers in the 1840s and ‘50s demonstrates not, or at least not only, “the *fear of violence* that was widespread among the upper and middle classes at the time,” as Williams suggests.⁴⁴ It arises from the concerted, but necessarily confused efforts of novelists to read social significance in those people and behaviors that previous observers had understood only as unrepresentable confusion and noise.

The literary transformation of the working classes from relative invisibility into socially significant characters essentially transformed them from *what*’s into *who*’s. The revolutionary nature of this metamorphosis is legible in the novels themselves, which persistently worry over the worthiness of their working-class characters. Gaskell, Disraeli, Kingsley, and their fellow practitioners voice their insecurities through the mouths of those characters associated with the industrialists’ cause: mill owners, capitalists, political economists, and other members of a prospering but oblivious British middle class. Workers, these antagonistic figures argue, hardly merit serious attention, much less ethical consideration. They are not even truly human. Instead, to use a memorable description from *Alton Locke*, they consist of little more than “a mixture of cur-dog and baboon.”⁴⁵

The oppositional discourse of the mill-owners and capitalists in the industrial novels continuously gravitates towards questions of humanity and brutality. In a meeting of industrialists in *Mary Barton*, for example, one faceless participant argues that rebellious working men are “cruel brutes . . . more like wild beasts than human beings.”⁴⁶ Sir Matthew Dowling, who employs a factory full of children in Frances Trollope’s

Michael Armstrong, Factory Boy (1840) vents his anger at his young laborers using similar terms. “Brutes and beasts they are,” he fumes, “and like brutes and beasts they should be treated.”⁴⁷ The more understanding mill owner John Thornton in *North and South* (1854-1855) only slightly modifies this claim when he insists that his striking factory hands are men, but “men that make themselves into wild beasts.”⁴⁸ These rants all draw upon the inhuman appearance and behavior of mill workers, using these purportedly observable facts to justify treating these people as subhuman. Thornton’s capacity for redemption shows itself here in his awareness of the inherent humanity of his laborers, but his hard-heartedness consists in the way he holds them responsible for their transformation into something less than human. It was on precisely this question—the question of agency or responsibility behind the apparently subhuman state of many laborers—that the industrial novelists took their stand.

Almost by definition, these novels reject the notion that their laboring characters ought to be treated as anything less than human beings. In a move that may initially seem bewildering, however, the industrial novelists accept the human-brute binary that they associate with anti-labor polemics; they reject only the taxonomic assignment of the working classes to the brute side of the divide. They tend to concede to their internalized opponents that the working classes show some beastly appearance and behavior. They simply refuse to read this brutishness as indicative of any kind of fixed working-class essence. Instead, they argue for the workers’ essential humanity, and insist that that humanity remains independent of any behavior or outward appearance. This humanity—even if it exists only *in potentia*—automatically confers on the workers a certain standard of treatment that their employers regularly violate. It is these violations, the novelists

claim, that produce the brutish conditions under which workers live and labor. These conditions in turn explain the brutish aspects of human beings who might easily act otherwise.

Thus, when an industrialist condemns his employees' animalistic behavior in *Mary Barton*, Gaskell's narrator intervenes to ask, "Well, who might have made them different?"⁴⁹ Philip Warner, the weaver in Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil; Or the Two Nations* (1845), similarly insists with bitter eloquence that his own degenerate, animalistic state results from maltreatment at the hands of capitalists: "The capitalist flourishes, he amasses immense wealth; we sink, lower and lower; lower than the beasts of burthen; for they are fed better than we are, cared for more. And it is just, for according to the present system they are more precious."⁵⁰ Elsewhere in the same novel Walter Gerard, a living symbol of the fallen nobility of the working people, likewise laments the decline of the working classes to an animal state: "There are great bodies of the working classes of this country nearer the condition of brutes, than they have been at any time since the Conquest. Indeed I see nothing to distinguish them from brutes, except that their morals are inferior."⁵¹ Alton Locke, the working-class narrator of Kingsley's novel, takes these confused relations between humans and animals to be the iconic image of an industrial England gone topsy-turvy. The fact that luxurious meat and wool fetch better prices than human labor is typical, he notes, of this disrupted moral order:

I went on, sickened with the contrast between the highly-bred, over-fed, fat, thick-woolled animals, with their troughs of turnips and malt-dust, and their racks of rich-clover hay, and their little pent-house of rock-salt, having nothing to do but to eat and sleep, and eat again, and the little half-starved shivering [human] animals who were their slaves. Man the master of the brutes? Bah! As society is now, the brutes are the masters—the horse, the sheep, the bullock, is the master, and the labourer is their slave.⁵²

Although they argue from opposing sides, then, the terms of the industrial novelists' arguments and those of their internalized opposition are surprisingly similar. They share an interest in the distinction between humanity and brutality; they differ only in their arguments about how to draw that division and who should be held accountable for its current contours. The pro-industrial position observes the brutal living conditions of factory hands, and argues that such conditions provide evidence of an inherent nature (or worse, a choice) that consigns workers to the brute side of the divide. The industrial novelists acknowledge the brutal conditions of the working classes, but see in them evidence of an unconscionable social structure, one that deprives workers of their inherent humanity.

A certain confusion would seem to permeate the very terms of this argument. In a strictly biological sense, the workers in question are human. Somehow, though, the novelists who champion them have become entangled in a debate that opens their humanity to question. The novelists' willingness to enter into such a compromising position only makes sense in the context of a longer modern tradition of using humanity as both a biological and a political category. Because modern understandings of human rights erase this distinction, a brief genealogy of the relationship between these two kinds of humanity is necessary to clarify the nature and stakes of these reformers' position.⁵³

Ever since Aristotle defined man as "by nature a political animal," humanity as an animal and humanity as a form of sociopolitical standing have persisted in close association in Western thought.⁵⁴ Drawing on classical tradition, an influential Enlightenment thinker like John Locke could use "humanity" to name both a biological group and the fact of membership in some kind of ethically regulated community—what

I have been calling society or the social, but what Locke, adapting the Latin term *civitas* for its ability to refer to “any independent community,” calls a commonwealth.⁵⁵ Locke considers it “the law of nature” that “mankind are one community, make up one society, distinct from all other creatures.”⁵⁶ The fact of our species-community helps him explain the naturalness of human equality. It also allows him to argue that violating that equality effectively disrupts the natural order, dehumanizing the oppressed and consigning them to the status of other species: “[S]haring all in one community of nature, there cannot be supposed any such subordination among us that may authorize us to destroy another, as if we were made for one another’s uses, as the inferior ranks of creatures are for ours.”⁵⁷

So far, Locke’s equations of humanity with social standing may sound familiar and unobjectionable. His assertion that humans naturally exist in “a state of perfect freedom . . . [and a] state also of equality,” along with his language defending “life, liberty, and estate,” echo through history, becoming ideological cornerstones of the French and American revolutions.⁵⁸ Furthermore, his description of oppression as an act of criminal dehumanization remains an important way of giving philosophical force to calls for social justice. Locke, then, would seem to endorse a notion of humanity similar or almost identical to the one that still grounds much current political activism. Locke’s link between humanity and sociopolitical belonging, however, contains a corollary that has been forgotten: the possibility of casting off the rule of society and, with it, one’s affiliation with the human community. Within the English philosophical tradition, Locke serves as an authority for the linkage of “society and mankind . . . mankind and society,” but he also insists that to depart from one is tantamount to departing from the other.⁵⁹ In his political theory, dehumanization could be the result of unjust oppression, but it could

also be a just and appropriate form of punishment. A heinous criminal could be rightfully excommunicated from society and, therefore, from humanity itself.

The potential for excommunication from humanity finds legal precedent in many of the early modern traditions derived from ancient Rome, where outlawry meant total exclusion from sociopolitical standing.⁶⁰ Locke only follows other political codes in arguing that this severe form of punishment follows from crimes like homicide, which comprises an abdication from human society and its rule of reason. Such crimes, Locke argues, constitute a declaration of war against humanity, and entitle other humans to treat the criminal as “any other wild beast, or noxious brute, with whom mankind can have neither society nor security.”⁶¹ Writing almost a century later, the jurist William Blackstone also recognizes this kind of outlawry. He, too, equates it with a banishment from humanity, as evidenced in the criminal’s imagined adoption of a *caput lupinum*, or wolf’s head. But he emphasizes the gradual evolution of English law away from such a strict equivalence of social exclusion and exclusion from the species:

[T]hough antiently an outlawed felon was said to have *caput lupinum*, and might be knocked on the head like a wolf, by anyone that should meet him; because, having renounced all law, he was dealt with as in a state of nature, when every one that should find him might flay him: yet now, to avoid such inhumanity, it is holden that no man is intitled to kill him wantonly or willfully . . .⁶²

Germanic law contained the same concept, but inscribed under the head of another animal. To be pronounced *Vogelfrei* in German—literally to be “free as a bird”—meant to go unprotected by the law, to be “free” to be captured or killed as any bird might be. In his early-nineteenth-century investigations into German historical grammar, Jacob Grimm quotes several medieval Germanic penal codes containing language that proclaims outlawed subjects “vögeln frei in den lüften und den tieren in dem wald und

den vischen in dem waßer”—free as birds in the air and the animals in the wood and the fish underwater.⁶³ In each of these cases, civil death—the denial of personal protection under the law of the community—amounts to an apolitical and therefore animal life.

The revolutionary democratic movements of the late eighteenth century continue to associate humanity with social belonging, but the way that they associate the two terms engages in a striking reversal of this previous tradition. Instead of considering humanity equivalent to a sociopolitical status that might, under certain circumstances, be revoked, the French and American revolutionaries employed Lockean language to declare that all sociopolitical standing derived from an irrevocable humanity. Describing the impact of this revolutionary rhetoric, Hannah Arendt writes that “[i]t meant nothing more nor less than that from then on Man, and not God’s command or the customs of history, should be the source of Law.”⁶⁴

Arendt may be overstating the case a bit. After all, the American colonists insisted that their rights were “endowed by their Creator,” and the French National Assembly likewise asserted their declaration “in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being,” indicating some acknowledgment that the idea of “Man” had not entirely dispensed with authority borrowed from “God’s command.”⁶⁵ Still, her fundamental point remains. These democratic declarations evince a belief in *humanity as ethical merit*—a concept of rights as engrained in the very species, rather than as contingent products of sociopolitical belonging—becoming naturalized.

Under such a paradigm, corruption and oppression violate a set of unquestionable rights, rights that possess their own independent existence. Injustice becomes inconceivable, except as the product of a certain perplexing forgetfulness on the part of

the oppressor. Consequently, the revolutionary declarations of the age show a remarkable tendency to adopt the form of reminders—memoranda to oppressive political powers, helpfully notifying them of the prior existence of the rights they are infringing. Thus the revolutionary National Assembly in France declared in 1789:

[C]onsidering ignorance, forgetfulness or contempt of the rights of man to be the only causes of public misfortunes and the corruption of Governments, [we] have resolved to set forth, in a solemn Declaration, the natural, unalienable, and sacred rights of man, to the end that this Declaration, constantly present to all members of the body politic, may remind them unceasingly of their rights and their duties...⁶⁶

The signatories of the American Declaration of Independence imagine it providing a similar service to the British monarchy, reminding King George III and his parliament of certain human rights they seem to have overlooked somehow. Out of “a decent respect to the opinions of mankind,” the framers helpfully inform their monarch of “the causes which impel them to the separation,” setting down in writing their certainty that humans possess a set of “unalienable Rights . . . among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”⁶⁷

This distinctly modern model of the human species as the final source of ethical merit and of legal claims would reach its zenith in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ratified by the United Nations in 1948. Arguing that “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world,” the declaration proclaims that “[a]ll human beings are born free and equal . . . [t]hey are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”⁶⁸ The echoes of the eighteenth century should be apparent. Also apparent is the absence of the source that “endowed” humanity with its privileges, a conspicuous disappearance that helps to

substantiate Arendt's reading of those earlier documents as watershed moments in the turn away from theological tradition and towards an exclusively humanistic philosophy.

The recurring need to affirm human rights suggests a problem at the very core of the concept, however. Ratified three years after the most appalling mass murders in history, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights looks to older national declarations to soothe an international community devastated by the second World War. A sort of political renewal of vows, the declaration reasserts its faith in a causal relationship between biological humanity and sociopolitical standing at the very moment when that relationship had never looked more fragile.

As Arendt argues in her commentary on the U.N. declaration, the proclamation of human rights risks replicating a notion of inviolable humanity that may facilitate the atrocities it tries to curb. Describing the horrors of the Holocaust and the human rights failure that led to the slaughter of millions of stateless persons during the Second World War, Arendt comments:

Not only did loss of national rights in all instances entail the loss of human rights; the restoration of human rights, as the recent example of the State of Israel proves, has been achieved so far only through the restoration or the establishment of national rights. The conception of human rights, based upon the assumed existence of a human being as such, broke down at the very moment when those who professed to believe in it were for the first time confronted with people who had indeed lost all other qualities and specific relationships—except that they were still human. The world found nothing sacred in the abstract nakedness of being human.⁶⁹

Arendt's analysis gets to an apparent paradox at the heart of the idea of human rights—the paradox that would prove such a problem for the industrial novelists. When the industrial novelists argued for the inclusion of workers on the grounds of their inherent humanity, they partook in the relatively recent democratic movement to use humanity as a stand-in for inviolable ethical worth, one capable of justifying the

extension of a collective's protection to any new members who might fit the description of human beings. At the same time, they confronted certain logical and epistemological difficulties inherent in this notion of humanity. The processes of dehumanization that incite proclamations about human rights seem to preclude their existence: how is it possible to deny people a humanity supposed to be essential and inalienable? What and where is this "humanity" that can be both irrefutable and so regularly, glaringly refuted?⁷⁰

As the industrial novelists wrestled with these questions, they found themselves enmeshed in the tangle of ethical, political, and biological claims involved in every modern invocation of humanity and its others. Their attempt to champion the humanity of their marginalized characters had the unintended consequence of calling that humanity into question, because it revealed an incommensurability between their ethical commitments and their epistemological ones. Ethical humanity proved surprisingly difficult to detect according to their chosen mode of investigation, a mode they share with the broader movements of an increasingly secular modernity: empiricism.

2. Empiricism and the Ethical Man

We commonly associate empiricism with the scientific method. On a scientific basis alone, the definition of humanity remained problematic over the course of the Victorian period. The discovery and increased visibility of several of the great ape species in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries raised questions about the exact biological situation of human beings—questions that Charles Darwin would only exacerbate in his books *On the Origin of Species* (1859), *The Descent of Man* (1871), and

The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals (1872).⁷¹ But focusing on the biological constitution of humanity obscures the constitutive importance of humanity as a way of marking sociopolitical, rather than biological, belonging. Empiricism may be able to describe a set of observable traits that could group the global population of human beings under the heading of a single species. The plight of the industrial novelists recalls, however, that no amount of sophistication can perfectly justify the move from species-belonging to moral significance, the very move that structures current notions of the human being.

The logical leap necessary to argue from humanity as a biological concept to humanity as a measure of value troubled the very core of the industrial novelists' project. As part of their attempt to reconfigure the social—to make room to include those overlooked entities known as industrial laborers—these writers embraced an aesthetic theory that framed empirical description as a potentially revolutionary act. While Victorian novelists rarely wrote extensive treatises on their practice, the intentions of the industrial novelists manifest themselves in the prefaces and narratorial intrusions within the works themselves. “It was [my] intention,” Frances Trollope writes in the preface to *Michael Armstrong*, “to drag into the light of day, and place before the eyes of Englishmen, the hideous mass of injustice and suffering to which thousands of infant labourers are subjected, who toil in our monster spinning-mills.”⁷² Although Trollope's book is a work of fiction, she describes her project in documentary or journalistic terms, as an exposé that uses fiction to present the facts of working-class life in comprehensible, clarified form. Her preface thereby typifies what one critic describes as “the informative quality” and “sociological function” of the subgenre.⁷³ Equally typical, however, is

Trollope's faith that such descriptions will advance her ethical program. By simply detailing industrial conditions and the laborers who live under them—drawing a “true but most painful picture . . . faithfully and conscientiously”—Trollope “hope[s] to move the sympathy of [her] country” in favor of otherwise obscure child workers like her titular hero Michael Armstrong.⁷⁴ Elizabeth Gaskell's preface to *Mary Barton* similarly yokes its professed truthfulness to a hope of expanding social sympathies. “I have tried to write truthfully,” the author says, with the idea that the resulting “accounts” might move “the sympathy of the happy.”⁷⁵

Often, this extra-textual process of ethical expansion also occurs within the novels as well. A number of the industrial novels end with rehabilitated mill-owners, characters who show their moral growth through their conversion to the novelists' own humanized view of laboring men and women. When John Thornton describes his workers as men who have made themselves into beasts, the text contains its own rejoinder, and its vision of social healing is eventually realized through Thornton's growth. In response to Thornton's complaint, Margaret Hale, the moral compass of the novel, offers the suggestion: “Speak to your workmen as if they were human beings.”⁷⁶ The story registers Thornton's eventual ethical expansion—and his fitness to marry Margaret—by describing his ability to negotiate on human terms with the leader of his factory hands. His transformation, like the imagined transformation in the reader, occurs after more detailed encounters with an individuated worker: “Once brought face to face, man to man, with an individual of the masses around him, and (take notice) out of the character of master and workman . . . they had each begun to recognize that ‘we have all of us one human heart.’”⁷⁷

The admirable but inflexible mill owner Robert Moore undergoes a similar transformation in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849). Moore finally realizes that social conditions are responsible for depriving his factory workers of their humanity, but only after leaving his relatively isolated rural mill and mixing among both high and low classes in his visits to Birmingham and London. In those cities he immerses himself in the truth of industrial society, experiencing the reality outside the counting-house through his own senses. "I saw many originally low," he says, describing his epiphany to a friend, "and to whom lack of education left scarcely anything but animal wants, disappointed in those wants, ahungered, athirst, and desperate as famished animals: I saw what taught my brain a new lesson, and filled my breast with fresh feelings."⁷⁸

In these almost metafictional moments, Brontë and Gaskell describe social healing as a series of individual awakenings to the humanity of others, awakenings prompted by close acquaintance with the details of other people's lives—precisely the sort of acquaintance their novels try to make available. This way of imagining their own social mission displays the industrial novelists' continuity with the English realist tradition, as well as their sense of their own unique contribution to it. When they explain that their work involves making descriptive accounts of realistic sense-experience available to their readership, these writers demonstrate their adherence to the English novel's longstanding commitment to empiricist modes of knowing. Compared with the romances and allegories that preceded them, the early English novels published around the turn of the eighteenth century evinced unparalleled "formal realism," in Ian Watt's well-known phrase.⁷⁹ Their mode of narration, Watt explains, privileged events that felt familiar to real human experience, events that had an unprecedented degree of

chronological specificity with clear causal relationships between actions and their consequences.⁸⁰ Individuals, rather than allegorical types, perpetrated these actions and suffered their consequences, and their experiences occurred in relatively specific, identifiable places.⁸¹ As the early English novelists strove to narrate and describe such newly particularized incidents, they naturally adopted modes of showing and telling capable of depicting this specificity in identifiable terms. They tended, then, towards empiricist modes of knowing, relying heavily on human sense experience in their descriptions of people and events, assuming, with John Locke, “that truth can be discovered by the individual through his senses.”⁸²

The early realists’ commitment to empiricism gave their works a certain sociopolitical edge. As they traced the contours of lived, rather than theorized experience, the eighteenth-century realist novels of Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, and others described and confronted increasingly obvious discrepancies between life in England’s hierarchical society and the received wisdom about the inherent goodness of the social order. The realist novel thus became a privileged mode for writers exploring the clashes between an emerging empiricist epistemology and an eroding status hierarchy; it specialized in what Michael McKeon has dubbed the intersection of “questions of truth” and “questions of virtue.”⁸³ In the process, McKeon explains, “questions of truth and virtue begin to seem not so much distinct problems as versions or transformations of each other, distinct ways of formulating and propounding a fundamental problem of what might be called epistemological, social, and ethical signification.”⁸⁴

In their interest in the traffic between epistemological and ethical inquiry, then, the industrial novels clearly inherit the concerns of an older realist tradition. Their innovation consists in the particular way that they linked epistemology and ethics, popularizing the notion that an empirical redescription of society could produce an expansion in readers' ethical imaginations. Their inclusion of working-class characters thereby constituted one of the first steps in the development often dubbed the "social novel" or what George Levine calls "Victorian moral realism," the form that asserts a causal connection between the realist novel's empirical attention to overlooked subjects and the incorporation of those overlooked others into a more expansive ethical collective.⁸⁵

Broadly speaking, the development of the social novel over the course of the century describes an ever-widening circle of ethical understanding and obligation. As Raymond Williams formulates it, the "continuity of moral analysis" in nineteenth-century realist novels evolves out of "a recognition of other kinds of people, other kinds of country, other kinds of action on which a moral emphasis must be brought to bear."⁸⁶ From the relatively well-off, rural, and cloistered middle-class communities of Jane Austen's fiction in the early decades of the century, the nineteenth-century realist novel expands its social circle to encompass more and more individuals into communities of ever greater size, diversity, and interconnectedness. A realist novelist like Dickens undertakes, in Williams's words, to "[clear] the air so that people can see and acknowledge each other, overcoming that contraction of sympathy which is against nature."⁸⁷

The association between clarity of observation and strength of sympathetic connection makes an early appearance in the aesthetic declarations of the industrial novels, but the linkage becomes increasingly explicit over the course of the century. By the 1850s, when George Eliot wrote her realist manifesto, “The Natural History of German Life,” novelists assumed that to know others more accurately meant to feel more deeply connected to them—they asserted what George Levine describes as “a profound connection between the effort of knowing and the ethic of loving.”⁸⁸ This connection should sound familiar: it remains recognizable today in the many defenses of novel-reading that associate reading with the cultivation of empathy and interpersonal understanding.⁸⁹ But the Victorian realist novel’s calls for sympathy, as Rae Greiner has shown, envision not so much a sentimental blending of affects as a form of thinking along with others, a process that incorporates other people in the ongoing creation of a collective reality.⁹⁰ The industrial novels mark some of the earliest political expansions of this kind of interpersonal imagination.

The particular brand of realism avowed by the industrial novelists thus insisted that an empiricist investigation into the social could and *would* lead to an expanding, inclusive ethics. As their internalization of the debate about humanity and brutality shows, the grounds of those ethics lay in the undeniable humanity of those unjustly excluded from sociopolitical consideration. But for that ethical humanity to be “real” in a way that counted within the empiricist modes of knowing adopted by the realist novel, workers’ inherent humanity needed to be evident empirically, discernible through careful observation of their appearance and behavior. Novelists could, of course, simply depict workers as unflinchingly virtuous, but to do so would detract from the accounts’ sense of

verisimilitude and the moral outrage that could result from an honest depiction of laborers' miserable lives and working conditions.⁹¹ Yet the grounds for such moral outrage relied on assumptions about inherent human dignity, a dignity obscured by workers' treatment and living conditions.

The industrial novelists found themselves in a bind. They wrote their novels to urge the essential moral significance of the poor and the working classes on the reading public—to show that the very idea of who counted in society must be expanded if class tensions were to be resolved and social harmony restored. They used sensuous, compelling empirical narratives to argue this case in what would seem like clear, modern, rational terms. But in the process, they discovered that their ends could not be justified by their means. Empiricism alone could never prove the ethical claims that drove them to write in the first place. Different novelists attempt to resolve this problem in different ways. The results can appear inexplicably odd or even flawed, however, to readers who fail to appreciate the problem in the first place. Indeed, the clearest formulation of “humanity” as a problem—and one of the more elegant attempts to solve it—is a case in point. It occurs in the disconcerting dream sequence that serves as the climactic passage of Kingsley's *Alton Locke*.

3. Altered Locke: Evolving Human Rights in Charles Kingsley

It is a truism to describe industrialization as a dehumanizing process, but only one of the industrial novels tries to render the problem in literal terms. Towards the end of *Alton Locke*, Kingsley's eponymous narrator describes, at length, a dream in which he

transforms into a series of different animals on a journey to regain his humanity. The immediate material reason for the dream is clear. It occurs in a bout of delirium after Alton contracts typhus from the family of a fellow tailor. But its broader import has puzzled critics, who have difficulty understanding the incorporation of such a lengthy dream sequence in a realist novel, and often rely on Kingsley's later embrace of Darwinism in their efforts to explain it. The real significance of the dream, however, derives from Alton's involvement with the struggle for workers' rights under the People's Charter, as well as his confused social status as both a working-class rabble-rouser and a successful, self-educated poet. The dream's complex synthesis of biological and ethical humanity works through Alton's odd situation in allegorical terms. Its symbolism and its subsequent exegesis offer an elegant solution to the problem of discerning ethical value in the lives of supposedly brutish human beings by reframing humanity as a category defined not by empiricism or by ethical absolutes, but by a Christian tradition that seamlessly synthesizes the two.

At its most literal level, Alton's dream enables him to experience the subjectivities of different forms of animal life—something that would be impossible in his waking world, but that allows the novel to imagine what empirical proof of human moral superiority might look like. If only we could experience life as every animal, Kingsley suggests, we could say with finality that humans are both biologically and morally unique. When Alton wakes up, however, the fantasy evaporates, and the difficulties of defining humanity return. In a subsequent discussion, the Christian Socialist Eleanor Staunton—Alton's erotic and spiritual love object—interprets the dream in its allegorical register, which enables Kingsley to dismiss the dream experience

as invalid while admitting the most vital portion of its meaning back into the text.

Eleanor's explication draws upon the critique of human rights—especially the thinking of Edmund Burke—to attack revolutionary attempts to prove human moral importance using incongruous empirical methods. She refuses to compromise on her revolutionary values, however, and her final turn to Christianity positions that tradition as the only power capable of harmonizing the epistemological rigor of empiricism with the ethical urgency of her socialist cause. But a full appreciation of Kingsley's logical legerdemain requires, first, a brief summary of this often overlooked novel.

Alton's fever cuts short a dizzying tour through early Victorian England. Over the course of his childhood and young adulthood, Alton mingles with low-born tailors, self-taught booksellers, high-minded reformists, and Oxford dons. His mixture of education and experience with the working classes lead him, under the tutelage of the Scottish bookman Sandy Mackaye, to compose realistic verse on the lives of London's poor. Thanks to a subsequent entrée provided by his commercially successful cousin, Alton meets the clergyman and naturalist Dean Winnstay, who takes an interest in Alton and finds a publisher willing to take the young radical's manuscript. Unfortunately, Alton's patron also convinces him to censor his works so as not to offend a genteel audience. Although he experiences brief celebrity on account of his poems, the news that Alton censored himself loses him credibility among the working classes, even as the revelation of his continued association with radical newspapers loses him favor among his middle- and upper-class readers. In a bid to prove his loyalty to his origins, Alton joins a group of agitators stirring up support for the Chartists' drive to enfranchise the working man. They dispatch him to a rural estate to enlist the aid of agricultural laborers, but once there he

gives a confused speech that incites his audience to loot and pillage a country house—a crime that lands him in prison. Upon his release, Alton witnesses the failure of the People’s Charter, and runs into an old acquaintance, the piecework tailor Jemmy Downes, in the aftermath. He agrees to see the disturbed Downes home, only to discover upon arrival that Jemmy’s wife and children lie dead in his shack, where the wharf rats gnaw at their naked corpses. A deranged Downes in the final stages of delirium tremens locks Alton inside with them, causing him to contract the typhus that results in his disturbing dream.

In the dream, Alton undergoes a chapter-long oneiric evolution from what he supposes to be the “lowest” form of life, a colony of coral polyps, to the “highest,” a human being. In its narrative of biological development, Alton’s dream resembles the better-known evolutionary transformation of the chimney sweep Tom in Kingsley’s later fairy-tale, *The Water-Babies* (1863). Although they both involve some combination of moral and biological evolution, Tom’s transformation, unlike Alton’s, has received a reasonable amount of scholarly attention. Unable to resist the topical and chronological links between *The Water-Babies* and the *Origin of the Species*, critics inevitably read Tom’s metamorphosis as an attempt to reconcile a theological worldview with the scientific vision of human evolution implied by natural selection. Kingsley, they argue, is guilty of “confusing evolution and moral improvement,” as “[g]overning terms like ‘animal’ and ‘man’ masquerade for what are really religious, rather than biological categories.”⁹² Although *Alton Locke* appeared in print nearly a decade before Darwin’s theory, critics who examine its evolutionary elements still insistently discuss the two together. As Gillian Beer notes, Darwinian theory did not emerge in a vacuum, and

elements of evolutionary narrative—what she calls “Darwinian myths”—existed prior to the *Origin*, and undoubtedly influenced Kingsley’s thought.⁹³ But when critics deign to interpret *Alton Locke* at all, they tend to take the association a step further, describing the dream as another failed attempt to jam together a modern science and an archaic Anglican theology—an effort “propelled by a kind of intensity that can only be described as desperate.”⁹⁴

Alton’s dream certainly incorporates the author’s abiding interest in both natural history and Anglican theology. But its central thrust has little to do with the reconciliation of the two. That reconciliation occurs far more didactically—and without much connection to Alton’s dream imagery—in a later discussion between Alton and the clergyman-scientist Dean Winnstay. Alton’s dream receives its clarifying explication before that, in what one critic has dismissed as “the tediously pious, catechetical exchange” between Alton and Eleanor Staunton.⁹⁵ This conversation makes clear that Alton’s dream has only a tangential relation to contemporary scientific developments. Kingsley does not feebly strive, as some have suggested, to reconcile moribund Christian belief with the scientific observations that erode it. Nor does he confuse biological and moral forms of humanity; on the contrary, he begins from a position that recognizes their problematic separation. The dream sequence works to bring them back together, to bridge the major philosophical gap between information that can be derived from observation and information based on faith. Kingsley spots this hole at the heart of secular human rights discourse, and he elegantly uses Christian tradition to span the divide. *Alton Locke*, in short, does not try to patch up differences between religion and science. It tries to patch

up the differences between humanistic morality and scientific epistemology. Religion simply provides the paste.

Although Alton's dream contains a number of chaotic, surreal elements, the allegorical nature of its central narrative is clear from the first. His vision very explicitly draws parallels between Alton's evolution out of "lower" forms of animal life and the evolution of the working classes into fully realized human beings. Alton begins as "the lowest point of created life: a madreporé rooted to the rock."⁹⁶ His experience as a benthic coral presents a nightmare image of an unindividuated mob mentality. As Alton describes it, "[W]orst of all, my individuality was gone. I was not one thing, but many things—a crowd of innumerable polypi . . . If I could have thought, I should have gone mad at it; but I could only feel."⁹⁷ As if to gloss the class symbolism of the dream, an angelic version of Eleanor hovers over his animalized form and remarks:

He who falls from the golden ladder must climb through ages to its top. He who tears himself in pieces by his lusts, ages only can make him one again. The madreporé shall become a shell, and the shell a fish, and the fish a bird, and the bird a beast; and then he shall become a man again, and see the glory of the latter days.⁹⁸

The logic of retribution in Eleanor's pronouncement identifies Alton's consignment to the lowest order of existence as a *contrapasso* punishment for his choice to give himself over to the passions and demands of the lowest kind of English society. As he evolves upward, the associations between his animal experiences and his engagement in overhasty Chartist agitation become more and more apparent. Wandering the world as a mylodon or edentate—a giant, prehistoric ground sloth that the Victorians believed used its huge claws to pull down trees—the usually sickly Alton experiences both the bodily power of labor and a full sympathy with animal creation.⁹⁹ "I now understood the wild gambols of the dog, and the madness which makes the horse gallop

and strain onwards till he drops and dies,” he writes, glorying in his brute strength.¹⁰⁰

“They fulfil their nature, as I was doing, and in that is always happiness.”¹⁰¹

But Alton, like the Chartists he supported, experiences an unnamable yearning for something better, and his discomfort as an uncanny human-animal hybrid stokes a lusty appetite for destruction. His brutish strength combines dangerously with “the spark of humanity which was slowly rekindling in [him].”¹⁰² He employs his power to pointlessly uproot older and older trees, thoughtlessly overturning the ancient and venerable organic forms around him. “Had I been a few degrees more human,” he speculates, “I might have expected a retribution for my sin. . . . but still I went on, more and more reckless, a slave, like many a so-called man, to the mere sense of power.”¹⁰³ His leveling instincts, however, finally get the better of him. Soon sloth-Alton encounters a massive tree blossoming with the busts of noble women. Some combination of delight in his strength, sexual desire to draw the women to him, and the leveling wish to pull down a nobility he cannot reach—what he describes as “blind hope of bringing nearer to me the magic beauties above”—causes him to bring the tree crashing down on his own back, killing him.¹⁰⁴

Alton’s edentate phase enables him to recognize his violent, leveling desires as the products of a “[s]elfish and sense-bound” existence that places him between fulfilled humanity and perfectly fulfilling animality.¹⁰⁵ His internal division becomes increasingly obvious as his evolution advances. As an orangutan, Alton feels in himself “germs of a new and higher consciousness,” but struggles as “the animal faculties . . . swallow up the intellectual” with his growth to maturity.¹⁰⁶ In his final dream sequence, he lives through the stadial history of mankind. Here the angelic Eleanor again appears, now as a

preacher, repudiating the selfishness of both the oppressive rich and the poor who foment revolution to secure their superiors' property. In her exhortations, she aligns both groups with the subhuman. "By selfishness you fell, and became beasts of prey. . . . [Y]ou fell, and left the likeness of your father for the likeness of the beasts."¹⁰⁷ Just before Alton wakes up, he learns that he has graduated to full humanity by objecting to both sides of the class conflict he witnesses among his tribe: " 'And for you,' [Eleanor] said, looking on me, 'your penance is accomplished. You have learned what it is to be a man. . . . Awake!'"¹⁰⁸

Alton's need to learn humanity is inextricable from the novel's broader concern with the foundation of human rights. This concern, implicit in the industrial novel as a form, becomes explicit and didactic in the conversations that follow Alton's return to consciousness. There, Kingsley's moral spokeswoman Eleanor adopts a profound skepticism toward the possibility of rights derived from reason alone—human rights as truths, in other words, that might be "self-evident." "Abstract rights?" she asks as she lectures Alton and his fellow Chartist John Crossthwaite. "What ground, what root have they, but the ever-changing opinions of men, born anew and dying anew with each fresh generation?"¹⁰⁹

In its rejoinder to philosophical claims about the rights of man, Eleanor's question shows the lingering influence of Kingsley's conservative childhood: it follows a critique of a priori rights developed by Edmund Burke.¹¹⁰ Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) had attacked the revolution's insistence on the rights of man as "metaphysic sophistry."¹¹¹ Though he was happy to concede that "natural rights . . . may and do exist in total independence of [government]," Burke argued that such rights

should have no straightforward effects on political affairs.¹¹² Instead, he insisted that real-world rights resulted from real-world political history: rights resembled an ancestral inheritance, not a Promethean gift from either God or aprioristic reason. He associated his philosophy of government with a distinctly English tradition, and contrasted it with the destructive idealism he saw as the engine of the French Revolution. The English were wise, Burke wrote, for “claiming their franchises not on abstract principles ‘as the rights of men,’ but as the rights of Englishmen, and as a patrimony derived from their forefathers.”¹¹³

Burke believed that much of the wisdom of this approach lay in its relative security. Building rights on history and practice, as the English did, rather than on philosophy and theory, as the French proposed, protected rights against the rhetorical and philosophical pettifogging of anyone seeking to arrogate such rights to themselves:

[F]or reasons worthy of that practical wisdom which superseded their theoretic science, [the English parliament] preferred this positive, recorded, *hereditary* title to all which can be dear to the man and the citizen, to that vague speculative right, which exposed their sure inheritance to be scrambled for and torn to pieces by every wild litigious spirit.¹¹⁴

Kingsley’s Eleanor, adhering to this division of theoretical and practical rights, prophesies that a politics built on abstract right will end the way Burke predicts, in an anarchic world of self-interested squabbling after power: “Abstract rights? They are sure to end, in practice, only in the tyranny of their father—opinion.”¹¹⁵

Kingsley’s continuing admiration for Burkean thought reflects their shared interest in a program of gradual reform, a program that both associated with an empiricist worldview. When he refused to consider rights “stripped of every relation, in all the nakedness and solitude of metaphysical abstraction,” Burke rendered rights disputable

only insofar as they were already found within, or might conceivably be developed within, an existing political system.¹¹⁶ He described this understanding of government in terms borrowed from empiricism: he considered it a politics extrapolated from a given world, in contrast to baseless speculations about methods for realizing an ideal one: “The science of constructing a commonwealth, or renovating it, or reforming it, is, like every other experimental science, not to be taught *à priori*.”¹¹⁷

Kingsley was, of course, a lifelong advocate of empirical observation. A natural historian himself, today he is mostly remembered—when remembered at all—as one of the few Anglican clergymen to accept and promote the Darwinian theory of natural selection.¹¹⁸ A decade before the *Origin of the Species*, however, Kingsley was saturating his fiction with empiricist ideas. *Alton Locke* claims to originate from observation and experience to a greater extent than even the average realist novel: Kingsley first published it anonymously, as the fictional Alton’s autobiography.¹¹⁹ Within the text, too, Alton’s aesthetic education at the hands of Sandy Mackaye entails forgetting romance and learning to write verses about the urban poor based on his own observation.¹²⁰ He thereby learns a lesson in what he describes as “democratic art—the revelation of the poetry which lies in common things.”¹²¹ His influential patron Dean Winnstay similarly urges him to develop his powers of empirical observation if he wants to excel at his art: “And be sure, if you intend to be a poet for these days (and I really think you have some faculty for it), you must become a scientific man.”¹²²

While Kingsley and Burke both objected to philosophical theories of human rights on what they considered to be empiricist grounds, Kingsley’s novel also rejects the radical relativism lying beneath the surface of Burkean politics. By conceding to rights an

ideal existence utterly separate from political practice, Burke had allowed them to remain elevated in theory even as he all but eliminated them in practice. Dissatisfied with the notion that rights represented nothing more than a fancy way of naming a particular legal system's dispensation of privileges, Kingsley clung to a moral intuition that universal rights *must* exist, however shaky their supposed philosophical foundations. His insistence on the transcendental reality of human rights, however, led him even further down the relativist rabbit hole than Burke cared to go. Unlike Burke, he could not stop his inquiry into rights at the boundary of a historically defined people and the traditions and legal institutions they accumulated. Instead, Kingsley extended his skepticism to the broadest human universals that underlay his realist ethics. He found himself facing the groundlessness not only of human rights, but of any purportedly rational definition of the human itself.

Alton's dream works out these questions of human uniqueness on a symbolic level, as the typhic tailor gains imaginative experience of various animal subjectivities. He gets to live through the empiricist fantasy, in other words, of qualitatively comparing various species' experience of existence, at last learning—in the phrase of the philosopher Thomas Nagel—"what it is like to be a bat."¹²³ The evolution allows Alton to gain firsthand comparative evidence, too, of the uniqueness and elevation of being completely human. It would solve everything—except that technically, Alton's dream does not constitute "real" experience in empirical terms; it arises from the derangement of his mind at a moment when his experience is totally divorced from the external world.

Eleanor Staunton must therefore intervene on the same topic, extending her critique of rights to the question of the human itself. To illustrate the difficulties attendant

on human rights, she turns to one of the most controversial of contemporary political practices: American slavery. Eleanor first broaches the topic of slavery using her preferred Burkean terms, framing its continued existence as a failure of the philosophy of human rights in actual application. “[I]n America, even now, the same ideas of abstract right do not interfere with the tyranny of the white man over the black.”¹²⁴ The logical relation to the later arguments of Arendt, who drew heavily on Burke, are unmistakable. But what appears here as a progressive move against abstract rights and in favor of racial equality quickly turns sour. Eleanor proceeds to argue that the practice of slavery demonstrates the terrifying consequence of allowing empirical facts to get the better of the ethical intentions of theory. She moves, in other words, from a Burkean critique of abstract rights to an anti-Burkean attack on the domineering tendency of empiricism to override ethics. Unfortunately, the “facts” she chooses are not actually derived from scientific observation. They come, instead, from the racist discourses then current in Britain. “The black man,” she claims, “is more like an ape than the white man—he is—the fact is there; and no notions of abstract right will put that down.”¹²⁵

The flagrant racism of Eleanor’s test case makes it hard to stomach. But her example inadvertently underscores Kingsley’s broader concern about the problems with turning to empiricism in search of a foundation for human rights philosophy. As Kingsley has it, there are in fact not one, but two opposing dangers to establishing a relationship between empiricism and ethics. The first has already been described at length, and it crops up whenever the industrial novels feature a mill-owner describing laborers in beastly terms. These comparisons partake of the what David Hume identified as the “is-ought problem,” showcasing the ease with which empirical descriptions of current states

can occlude ethical possibilities for other ways of being. Unable to make claims about possible futures that do not exist, empiricism risks endlessly justifying the status quo. Its descriptions congeal quickly into prescriptive laws explaining how nature is and must be, necessitating John Stuart Mill's reminder that "[c]onformity to nature, has no connection with right and wrong."¹²⁶

Eleanor's racism, however, provides an example of the opposite problem. For Eleanor, there do exist certain observable criteria that might be said to define humanity. We no longer recognize Eleanor's racism as grounded in fact, but we do not need to recognize them as empirical or true in order to follow the drift of her larger argument. Eleanor's case constitutes a thought experiment in the problems that follow if an egalitarian ethics does use verifiable, empirical criteria for identifying humanity. Kingsley's realist commitment to both empiricism and expansive ethics strive for just such an equivalence, a set of criteria for determining, beyond argument, who counts as a member of society and who does not. And yet when Eleanor believes herself to be in possession of "facts" for discerning degrees of humanness, she finds them unsatisfying, and more recent readers find them absolutely horrifying.

The only thing that saves Eleanor from subscribing to a racist or even genocidal "ethics" is her ability to keep her empirical observations about biological humanity separate from her feelings about universal human moral standing. There is a friction between Eleanor's supposed facts and her ample egalitarianism, one that grates on modern ears. But this very issue drives Kingsley's point home with increased force. The mere presence of heterogeneous human groups—the simple existence of any observable differences between the races, cultures, and individuals all included in the idea of

humanity—perpetually threatens to provide new grounds for redefinitions of the human. Eleanor’s generous humanitarianism can partially correct for her deplorable racial attitudes only because she insists on the importance of a standard of humanity that can somehow overcome observable distinctions. She thus illustrates the fact that an ethical humanism that aligns itself with empiricism can provide no permanent foundation for a program of universal emancipation. It is always vulnerable to any party that would use the unobjectionable fact of empirical differences between humans to redraw the boundaries of the biological category of the human, thereby redistributing human sociopolitical privileges to serve selfish inclinations.

Alton’s dream and its explication thus dramatize a fundamental flaw in secularist theories of human rights. Empirical categories cannot provide clear-cut ethical directives, so using biological humanity as a marker of ethical significance violates the terms of empiricism itself. Overlooking this philosophical problem as a technicality, however, is not an option, because simply assuming that biological humanity is “enough” to justify sociopolitical inclusion makes biological humanity itself the target of potentially endless power struggles over the empirical definition of the human as a species. It would seem that the very premise of the Victorian realist novel, its belief in the possibility of combining an inclusive ethics with an empiricist epistemology, is untenable.

Alton Locke solves these problems with a graceful argument that has remained invisible to a critical tradition that fails to see the definition of humanity as a serious political problem. When Kingsley exposes the ease with which understandings of the human may be perverted, he does so in order to offer his own grounds for universal human rights. Throwing strictly speculative and strictly empirical methods by the

wayside, he suggests that humanity is united by “another fact—a mightier, more universal fact.”¹²⁷ This fact is arguably not a fact at all: it is the historical and theological insistence that “Jesus of Nazareth died for the Negro as well as for the white.”¹²⁸ In Kingsley’s telling, only the flaming sword of Christianity can cut the Gordian knot he has described so thoroughly:

Looked at apart from Him, each race, each individual of mankind, stands separate and alone, owing no more brotherhood to each than wolf to wolf, or pike to pike—[man] himself a mightier beast of prey—even as he has proved himself in every age. Looked at as he is, as joined into one family in Christ, his archetype and head, even the most frantic declamation of the French democrat, about the majesty of the people, the divinity of mankind, become rational, reverent, and literal.¹²⁹

Although critics generally disparage Kingsley’s theological leanings, there is an ingenious sense in which the advent of Christ, as he describes it, perfectly unites Enlightenment idealism and Burkean skepticism.¹³⁰ It partakes of the transcendence and potential universalism of revolutionary democratic ideas in explicitly sacral, theological form. But it also grounds that transcendence in a concrete historical occurrence, the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. These historical events, in turn, give rise to an institution or community—like Burke’s British state—but one that is not so limited, one with the potential to instantaneously define and eventually encompass all of humanity. The idea that Jesus died for all of humanity overrides any observable distinctions among various human groups, preventing the insidious divisions that might result from either philosophical or scientific definitions. Jesus died for all of humanity, and humanity is defined through and secured by the historical act of Jesus’s sacrifice.

This almost tautological definition of the human forms a tight seal around the concept, making it difficult to begin instituting new hierarchical divisions of the kind that would trouble the late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western world. It also

maneuvers around the political dangers inherent in most definitions of the human by uniting ontology and action, overriding biology in order to combine the ontologically human with the ethically humane. In theory, Kingsley's humanity is universal—Christ died for all mankind—but admission to full humanity requires the acceptance of this divine salvation and the moral teachings that come with it. Those teachings entail selfless service to the universal ideals defined by Christ: “real union, co-operation, philanthropy, equality, [and] brotherhood, among men.”¹³¹ This definition ensures that no members of the true, rights-bearing human community can treat another being unethically, whether their target is internal to or excluded from the human community. To do so would be to violate the norms of the human community and forfeit their own belonging.

4. The Humanizing Influence of Culture

For all its apparent weirdness, then, Alton Locke's dream and the conversations that follow it provide an unusually clarifying elucidation of the industrial novels' broader difficulty depicting their subjects' inherent humanity. While Kingsley's version of Christian Socialism gained little traction among the major realist novelists who followed him, his ultimate ideological resting place—his ideal of cultivating a “true” humanity that showed readiness for sociopolitical belonging through ethical behavior—remained a popular default position for more prominent advocates of culture later in the century. Indeed, it became a backbone of cultural criticism around the time of the second Reform Act of 1867, when the Chartists' demand for the franchise returned to the forefront of political debate. Yet literary history has looked more kindly on Kingsley's successors

than on Kingsley himself—a historiographic quirk that shows how meanings of the human diverged in the second half of the nineteenth century, making its usage in the works of writers like Thomas Arnold and George Eliot appear far more recognizable and recoverable than it seems in works by Kingsley.

In *Alton Locke*, Alton’s final position follows Eleanor’s recommendation that he forget the old Chartism, which fixated on the franchise and “made a selfish and self-willed idol of it,” resulting in a sacrilegious self-interest that the novel assigns to creatures beneath true humanity.¹³² Instead Alton will focus on the cultivation of his own humanity and that of his fellow laborers, committing himself to “the attainment of social reform . . . waiv[ing] for a time merely political reform.”¹³³ When the Second Reform Act of 1867 extended the franchise to working men, questions of the propriety of these new sociopolitical inclusions came to the fore again in ways remarkably similar to their appearance in Kingsley. Again “humanity” became a catch-all phrase used to designate those traits that could prove the new inclusions worthy of their sudden annexation to the collective. In the flurry of debate surrounding the act, celebrated figures like George Eliot would once again take up and advocate a line of argument that looks a lot like the “Chartism of the Future.”

When Eliot and fellow cultural elites like Matthew Arnold broadcast this position, however, their message arrived after “merely political reform” had occurred. Eliot puts these ideas into the mouth of the protagonist of her belated social-problem novel *Felix Holt, The Radical* (1866). In an independently published “Address to the Working Man” (1868) that followed the passage of the Second Reform Act, the fictional Felix Holt urges self-cultivation before rash political action. And, as before, the measure of one’s

worthiness for social inclusion is a humanity defined by careful consideration and self-restraint. “Let us show,” Felix exhorts an imaginary crowd of working-class men enjoying their acquisition of voting rights, “that we want to have some time and strength...not for brutal indulgence, but for the rational exercise of the faculties which make us men.”¹³⁴

Arnold’s cautionary meditations in *Culture and Anarchy* (1867-9) betray a similar set of sociopolitical orientations. Infamously, Arnold denigrates action and advocates self-perfection, deliberation, and caution to temper the self-interest rampant among the middle and working classes:

But what if rough and coarse action, ill-calculated action, action with insufficient light, is, and has for a long time been, our bane? What if our urgent want now is, not to act at any price, but rather to lay in a stock of light for our difficulties? In that case, to refuse to lend a hand to the rougher and coarser movements going on round us, to make the primary need, both for oneself and others, to consist in enlightening ourselves and qualifying ourselves to act less at random, is surely the best and in real truth the most practical line our endeavours can take.¹³⁵

In what should now be a familiar pattern, his notion of culture involves development away from animality and towards a humanity that proves one’s worthiness for social inclusion through its lack of self-interest: “Religion says: *The kingdom of God is within you*; and culture, in like manner, places human perfection in an *internal* condition, in the growth and predominance of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality.”¹³⁶

These later Victorian instances of cultural figures preaching increased humanity suggest a trajectory of semantic uncoupling, a development in which the sociopolitical humanity advocated in *Alton Locke* splits in two. Alton commits to a cultivation supposed to effect the eventual extension of the franchise to himself and other working men,

provided they have developed to the extent that they do not wish to use it for selfish reasons. But when this extension occurs in 1867, novelists and poets do not interpret it as a product of the humanity urged by their forebears. They cling to a Kingsley-like position, a position that, after the extension of the franchise, appeared far less reactionary. With the laborers of England granted political standing, Eliot and Arnold could wring their hands over the behavioral traits proper to social perfection without looking quite as callous, exclusive, and “dehumanizing” as Charles Kingsley did twenty years earlier. The humanity that Kingsley urged as a yardstick of sociopolitical worth had diverged into social humanity and political humanity. In the wake of political inclusion, social humanity—what Arnold identifies as the “culture” opposed to the chaos of self-interested “anarchy”—could appear clearly divorced from political humanity—participation in the electoral process—a category that would continue to edge closer and closer to unification with humanity as a biological concept. Arnold may still come under fire for a stuffy, old-fashioned understanding of high culture, but his argument about the need for some cultivation to become a good member of society remains recognizable and even laudable to scholars who engage in that study of culture we still call “the humanities.” Kingsley’s alignment of social humanity or culture with political humanity looks far more incriminating through eyes that assume that political humanity should rest on the superficially simple fact of biological belonging. But Kingsley anticipated this argument, and worried over it; in a sense, his writings suggest that he knew better than to adopt the position from which he, himself, would eventually be judged.

The slow convergence of humanity as a political category and humanity as a biological one has caused the historical difficulties of defining humanity to appear

increasingly stodgy, archaic, and obscure. Reasoning seamlessly from biology to politics, we forget the transcendent grounds used to forge such connections in the first place—and their potential dangers.¹³⁷ For the industrial novelists, however, grounding arguments for progressive sociopolitical inclusions in empirically verifiable terms remained a pressing problem. Kingsley solved it by conceptualizing a universal Christian community that could unite material, historical reality—the world that concerned empiricism—with transcendent moral truths. He thus left the essential equivalence of humanity and collective inclusion untouched. Kingsley's interest in the human-brute divide only affirms the longstanding tradition of assigning humanity to those groups who merit social inclusion, and keeping animals on the outside. His vision of humanity is theoretically all-inclusive, provided that all humans accept Christian theology as proof and guarantee of their human status. His vision of animality, however, remains an idea of society's "outside"; the animal still names what must be expunged to achieve social harmony.

Kingsley thus partakes in the long tradition of using "the animal" as a monolithic category to include anything rejected or transcended by humanity. This strategy, as Jacques Derrida has pointed out, erases the specific existence of actual animals.¹³⁸ It contributes not to the developing relationship between actual humans and other animals, but rather to the need to constantly define "the human" as distinct from "the animal," a conceptual obsession that Giorgio Agamben calls "the anthropological machine."¹³⁹ Other industrial novelists would take a radically different tack. Instead of arguing on their own for the humanity of the new characters they included in their ethical imaginations, they incorporated other characters who could solve the problem of identifying moral merit and save them the trouble of justifying it. They saved themselves the trouble on one

count, however, by complicating the idea of character in different ways. For the sages they turned to in order to resolve their philosophical difficulties were dogs.

CHAPTER 2.**The Inhumanity of the Industrial Novelists**

ANIMALS. "If only dumb animals could speak! So often more intelligent than men."

—Gustav Flaubert, *Dictionary of Received Ideas*¹⁴⁰

Some of the characters in the industrial novels really are no better than brutes.

While Elizabeth Gaskell, Frances Trollope, Charles Kingsley and others were defending their working-class characters as human beings unjustly affiliated with the “lower” animals, Benjamin Disraeli and Charles Dickens were taking the opposite approach. They defend their working-class characters by associating them with nonhuman animals, using the affection and loyalty of dogs as evidence for the innate worth of their lowborn human companions. In *Sybil; or The Two Nations* (1847), Disraeli introduces Harold, a bloodhound with an eerie ability to detect danger and protect the novel’s heroes against a variety of unsuspected opponents. Harold foils the plots of Disraeli’s detested pro-labor agitators not once, but twice, while his subtler reactions to assorted characters in the text provide clues to the otherwise inscrutable intentions of the story’s malefactors. Never one to be outdone, Dickens includes not just one extraordinary animal but an entire circus in *Hard Times* (1854). There, the coordinated efforts of a dancing horse, a learned dog, and a trick pony enable the emigration of the persecuted Tom Gradgrind. Meanwhile, the loyalty of the performing dog Merrylegs vouches for the goodness of even the most brutal circus folk, allowing Dickens to conclude the novel with a tidy moral message.

It is tempting to dismiss these animals as mere quirks, the brief imaginative freaks of socially committed authors trying to add interest to their narratives. No doubt Harold and Merrylegs serve this function. But they also reveal how the philosophical

commitments of early Victorian realism lead novelists to think through communal belonging in ways that trouble any easy equation of biological humanity, moral goodness, and social inclusion. Indeed, *Sybil* and *Hard Times* seem to turn the conventional understanding of humanity and brutality on its head, as brutes provide unimpeachable evidence for the moral merit of their human associates. In the process, they introduce the problem of animal character to the Victorian realist novel. They thus constitute an important chapter in the history of literary character, a vital example of its development as a tool for reimagining the nature and limits of social belonging.

Although they represent a new direction for realist characterization, Harold and Merrylegs are not innovative characters at all. They are, in fact, stock characters from the melodramatic stage. Dickens and Disraeli borrow their basic features from a wildly popular but long neglected theatrical form known, in the nineteenth-century, as quadruped drama. Although they are now almost entirely unstudied, quadruped dramas—theatrical productions that mixed humans and live animals onstage—rose to popularity in the early years of the nineteenth century, after the patent theaters at Covent Garden and Drury Lane added animal attractions to their playbills to increase ticket sales. Most histories of the form never look past this moment, dismissing the explosion of quadruped dramas that followed as increasingly sensational spectacles that sacrificed aesthetic merit and cultural relevance to the heathen gods of profit. A closer examination of these works, however, reveals that the standard history is misleading. Between 1803 and the 1850s, playwrights refined the quadruped drama in a number of important ways. They created increasingly extended, sophisticated parts for animal actors that adopted and adapted melodramatic conventions, developing a distinct subgenre—the animal melodrama—that

had lasting consequences for the representation of animals, onstage and off.¹⁴¹ Among those effects is the introduction of Harold, Merrylegs, and other highly stylized animal figures into the realist tradition.

Understanding the moral importance of nonhuman beings in Dickens' and Disraeli's industrial novels thus requires a detour through the mostly uncharted territory of nineteenth-century quadruped drama. That detour shows how animals developed from insubstantial, spectacular annexes of illegitimate theater into highly stylized characters with innovative parts to play in the moral economy of melodrama. Animal melodramas rely on the captivating bodily presence of live animals to add an uncanny reality effect to their performances, lending material heft and empirical plausibility to the otherwise notorious moral excesses of melodrama. In the process, they create a potential site of exchange between melodrama and moral realism, two forms that struggle, in their own ways, to span the gap between intuitions of ethical order and the chaotic muddle of everyday experience. When Disraeli and Dickens import melodrama's canine characters into their respective realist works, they signal the difficulty of finding materialist explanations for moral significance; falling back on the mute testimony of animals to explain ethical intuitions that no empirical observations could ever fully justify.

1. When Drama Went to the Dogs

In 1803, London playgoers raved over a new actor named Carlo. His performances drew record crowds to the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, filling the cavernous space and rescuing its manager, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, from financial ruin. But

while playgoers cheered Carlo's performance in Frederic Reynolds's *The Caravan* (1803), the conservative segment of the press jeered. Carlo, they insisted, was obviously unfit for the stage: he was not an actor at all, but a Newfoundland dog.

The combination of public frenzy and critical fury over Carlo created a perfect storm of publicity, and rival theaters and playwrights raced to create new dramas capitalizing on the untapped appeal of onstage animals. A new category of theater, the quadruped drama, was born.¹⁴² Almost simultaneously, however, Carlo's heightened visibility turned him into a flashpoint for debates about dramatic legitimacy. Angry critics dismissed Carlo and the quadruped dramas he helped spawn as fundamentally incoherent productions, mixtures of human theater and animal antics that constituted a *reductio ad absurdum* of the hybrid forms characteristic of all illegitimate drama. In less than a decade, Carlo's role as a symbol of dramatic degradation had become a cultural commonplace. "In the drama," one writer complained in 1813,

our love of childish and unmeaning spectacle, has been too clearly evinced in the triumph of equestrian and elephantine exhibitions over truth and nature. That people cannot surely pretend to the epithet of thinking, who prefer the antics of a brute to the wit of Congreve or the sublimity of Shakspeare, and desert the representation of the legitimate drama to witness the dying agonies of expiring quadrupeds. When Drury-Lane was saved from bankruptcy by the intervention of a dog, the circumstance was lamented as indicating, on the part of the English people, the depravation of that correct and manly taste for which they had been distinguished even among their enemies.¹⁴³

Where quadruped drama is concerned, surprisingly little has changed since 1813. For centuries, Carlo has served as a synecdoche for quadruped drama, which has, in turn, served high-minded critics as incontrovertible evidence of the decline of nineteenth-century English drama. The scholarly rehabilitation of melodrama has done almost nothing to reverse this trend, as critics continue to ignore or downplay animal

performances as a curious but finally insignificant development in nineteenth-century theater history.

Yet the complex historical relationship between quadruped drama, melodrama, and the realist novel only begins with Carlo; it does not end there. Situating Carlo in relation to the subsequent history of interspecies theatricals helps clarify both the rising fortunes of quadruped drama among the English public and its disastrous fall in the annals of cultural criticism. And it shows how a single, unrepresentative example of quadruped drama has caused critics to overlook the increasingly sophisticated, popular, and influential forms of animal performance that arose during the Romantic and Victorian periods.

From the very beginning, the cultural symbolism of quadruped drama overshadowed the productions themselves. When critics first attacked Carlo's appearance at Drury Lane, they denounced it as a new and convenient indicator of the artistic and social mixing they had long reviled.¹⁴⁴ At the time, Drury Lane and its rival, Covent Garden, shared the distinction of being patent theaters, venues licensed to produce "spoken drama." Although other venues advertised theatrical entertainments, only the patent theaters could stage high or "legitimate" drama, those works by Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, and other beloved authors that had already achieved canonical status. Defenders of the English dramatic tradition insisted that this royal license served as a badge of honor. In reality, both Covent Garden and Drury Lane had notorious difficulty covering their own expenses; the traditional programming that won critical approval failed to generate enough revenue to cover production costs. The same licensing that restricted spoken drama to the patent houses, however, spawned an alternative,

exciting world of illegitimate theater. Unlicensed theatrical venues dodged restrictions on spoken drama by staging a mixture of music, prose, poetry, pantomime, and tableau. This illegitimate theater thrived, cannibalizing the audiences of the patent houses. As a result, the managers of Drury Lane and Covent Garden increasingly relied on illegitimate theater to fill seats and generate revenue—much to the chagrin of critics.¹⁴⁵

In most respects, *The Caravan* resembles many another illegitimate drama that Drury Lane might have produced to draw a crowd.¹⁴⁶ It features a stainless hero, the Marquis de Calatrava, fighting to free himself from wrongful imprisonment at the hands of the lusty and powerful Don Gomez. Don Gomez has his eyes on Calatrava's wife, whose beauty is matched only by her virtue. Over the course of the play, Calatrava escapes and defeats Don Gomez with the help of the clownish Blabbo and his dog, Carlo. Although Carlo lent *The Caravan* its peculiar commercial and cultural edge, his time onstage is surprisingly brief and unscripted until the climax. There, Carlo plunges from a cliff into the Mediterranean—realized onstage using an actual pool of water—to grab Calatrava's drowning son and swim him to safety. Carlo's role thus enacted, in real-time, a sequence of events that was becoming a common trope in the dog narratives that exploded in popularity around the turn of the nineteenth century: the story of a dog leaping into water to save a drowning child.¹⁴⁷ Carlo's jump only increased the popularity of the motif, which is reiterated several times in Eliza Fenwick's fictional biography of the canine star, *Life of the Famous Dog Carlo* (1804).¹⁴⁸

Brief as it was, Carlo's role marked a turning point in the history of animal performance. English audiences had a lengthy history of enjoying animal entertainments, but those entertainments had only a sporadic, tangential relation to proper drama. Animal

spectacles like bull-baiting had been around since the middle ages, while less violent performances by dancing dogs, sapient pigs, singing mice, and trained bullfinches remained staples of traveling fairs and of street entertainments well into the Victorian era.¹⁴⁹ Exhibitions of horsemanship and exotic animals formed a major attraction of the circuses that sprang up in England and France in the 1760s, but the circus's emphasis on brief exhibitions of physical skill and its nebulous relationship to the licensing laws kept it relatively distinct from the theater through the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁵⁰ On occasion, live animals had even appeared in English drama before; Crab, the dog in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* ([1589-92?]), provided a well-known example of an onstage animal. But fans and critics alike recognized Carlo's performance as something new. He was the main attraction of a play at one of London's patent houses. As such, he seemed to push illegitimate drama's mixture of high and low to its breaking point: no longer content to mix performance forms that ought to remain separate, playwrights and managers now disturbed the very order of nature, mingling humans and beasts in a desperate bid for novelty. Laments over the precipitous decline of English theater found a neat visual confirmation in the dog's performance onstage, which literally involved plunging over a precipice.

Cartoons mocking Carlo were legion, but a well-known image from the *Satirist* captures his special prominence as a symbol of the mongrelization of theatrical forms. Commonly called "The Monster Melodrama" (1807), the image figures melodrama as a gigantic, destructive chimera resembling Cerberus, the dog who dwells at the gates of hell.¹⁵¹ The monstrous canid wears the checkered shirt of a harlequin, a gesture at the patchwork productions of illegitimate drama, which often included harlequinades. The

heads of this hellhound, however, are human, a sign that interspecies mixing was an integral element of drama's infernal trajectory. The heads include Sheridan, John Kemble (the manager of Covent Garden), and the clown Joseph Grimaldi. Pinned beneath the animal's front paws lies a scroll of "Regular dramas." The monster's back feet trample "Shakespear's Works," while her furred body shelters a new generation of illegitimate playwrights, many of whom suckle at her teats. Carlo and *The Caravan* are not only behind this conception of melodrama as a bitch-goddess, they are beneath it: there, huddled under her bulk, stands Carlo, bearing Frederic Reynolds on his back and *The Caravan* between his feet.

Critics were right to fear Carlo as a herald of further dramatic hybridization. His scandalous success helped release a veritable menagerie of animals onto the English stage, with live dogs, horses, elephants, camels, stags, zebras, and other creatures becoming increasingly common elements of dramas at both patent and minor theaters after 1803.¹⁵² The majority of these animals served as mere set-pieces or additions to the increasingly spectacular nineteenth-century stage. Camels might add to the dazzling procession of an Oriental menagerie, for example, while a full stable of horses enabled climactic battle-scenes between mounted actors—a feature so popular, and so common, that equestrian spectacles earned their own subcategory of critical opprobrium, hippodrama.¹⁵³ Commercial and artistic traffic between London stages, traveling circuses, and animal trainers soon blurred any definitive line between them. Venues established as circuses gradually reinvented themselves as minor theaters, and Astley's circus produced melodramas even as patent theaters rented animal performers from Astley's for their quadruped productions.¹⁵⁴ These quadruped dramas continued to polarize admirers of the

theater. When Covent Garden leased horses from Astley's for its hippodrama *Timour the Tartar* (1811), for example, playgoers split into unabashed fans of the equestrian climax and outraged defenders of tradition. Angry attendees flung pamphlets decrying the triumph of horses at patent theaters, while enthusiasts applauded the animals even louder.¹⁵⁵

Playwrights jumped into the fray as well. George Colman the Younger quickly penned a satire, *The Quadrupeds of Quedlinburgh* (1811), featuring characters whose names—Master Centaur Bathos, Miss Hylonome Bathos—mocked these new combinations of humans, animals, and excessive emotion.¹⁵⁶ But laughter and derision failed to suppress the quadruped drama's popular appeal. In fact, while critics blasted a stereotyped image of incongruous human-animal performances, playwrights were outbidding each other to produce larger and more complex parts for animal actors, drawing on pre-existing tricks and inventing new ones that fit ever more seamlessly into existing theatrical conventions.

Guilbert de Pixérécourt's runaway success, *The Forest of Bondy; Or, The Dog of Montargis* (1814), shows the increased sophistication of animal characters in the decade following Carlo's debut. Whereas Carlo's part involved only one scripted action sequence—jumping into a pool of water to save Calatrava's child—Dragon, the star of *The Dog of Montargis*, plays a central role in the dramatic action, both onstage and off. In the earliest known English translation of the play, William Barrymore preserves the expanded part of the canine actor. Dragon enters performing a number of crowd-pleasing tricks, as specified in the stage directions: "*The Dog, DRAGON, comes on, + scratches at the door of the Inn—Finding it is not open'd, he tries to get in by putting his paws*

upon the Latch—At last, he jumps up and seizes the handle of the Bell, and keeps pulling and ringing, till DAME GERTRUDE opens the Window.”¹⁵⁷ Offstage revelations complement these onstage performances, as Dame Gertrude and other characters report on Dragon’s agency in digging up the body of his murdered master, Captain Aubri; locating Aubri’s missing pocketbook; serving as a key witness in overturning the false conviction of the mute, Florio; and hounding the true killers in pursuit of justice.

Other quadruped dramas exhibit a similar expansion of animal parts. In *Magdalena and Her Faithful Dog* (1817), the dog Neptune proves invaluable as a courier, delivering letters between otherwise hopelessly isolated characters. At one point, he saves his mistress’s life by carrying scraps of her clothing to would-be rescuers. Standing in front of a dramatic set-piece of “*Rocks & Waterfalls*,” one of the heroes, McDonald, searches for the stranded Magdalena, but his exploration is fruitless until Neptune arrives:

MCDONALD *is ruminating—at which moment CARROL discovers the DOG at a distance and directs MCDONALD’s attention to the Spot—DOG enters[—]lays the Scarf at his Feet—shews anxiety and seems to entreat MCDONALD to follow him. McD examines the Scarf—then commands his ATTENDANTS to accompany him wherever the DOG shall lead—They Exit over the Rocks the DOG came down.*¹⁵⁸

A few decades later, in a production entitled *The Pride of Kildare; Or the Dog of the Quarry* (1843), the canine character repeatedly intercedes in dramatic struggles between humans, “leap[ing] thro’ window[s],” “spring[ing]” at enemies, and taking several bullets, which enable him to demonstrate his fidelity—and his impressive simulation of limping—by “following, lame” behind his mistress.¹⁵⁹

Although Carlo pioneered these animal parts and Dragon expanded them, they were not confined to dogs alone. Probably because they were relatively easy to procure,

train, and replace, dogs predominate, but any teachable animal was fair game for such roles. Horses occasionally rose to the level of actual characters alongside humans, rather than serving only as exciting vehicles beneath them.¹⁶⁰ Exchanges between circuses and theaters combined with Britain's imperial project to produce even more exotic stars. Thus the pantomime *Harlequin and Padmanaba* (1811) at Covent Garden introduced the public to the elephant Chune; he became a famous actor and, later, a favorite of visitors to the Exeter 'Change menagerie until his controversial and gruesome execution in 1826.¹⁶¹ Later roles for elephants show an expansion and sophistication paralleling the transformation of canine characters. By the time Astley's circus staged the melodrama *The Elephants of the Pagoda* with two live elephants, Gheda and Kelly, in 1846, the animals played a role in almost every scene. Among other feats of strength and bravado, they save a slave known to be loyal to the true prince; they pluck fruit to offer the prince; they pull down tree branches to shelter him from a storm; they disarm prison guards; and they preserve the royal treasure that a villain tries to steal before fleeing.¹⁶²

If these expanding roles and stabilizing conventions impressed critics, they are careful not to mention it. The vast majority of critics still mistrusted illegitimate theater and continued to single out quadruped drama for special scorn. Thus, when the directors of the Weimar theater in Germany decided to stage a German version of *The Dog of Montargis*, they met with furious but ineffectual resistance from their managing director—no less a luminary than Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. “Goëthe [*sic*] has resigned the management of the Weimar theatre, which owes its reputation to himself and Schiller,” *Blackwood's* reported in 1817, “because he would not assent to the appearance of a quadruped performer on that stage in the Dog of Montargis.”¹⁶³

By mid-century, as the novelty of quadruped drama wore off, the rancor of its critics flagged, too. But a general, axiomatic contempt for onstage animals persisted. While individual performances might receive favorable reviews in the press, the concept of quadruped drama remained a target of ridicule. Thus, in an 1840 catalogue of “THINGS BAD IN GENERAL,” one theater magazine felt compelled to note that “it is bad to introduce quadrupeds on the stage where none but bipeds ought to ‘strut and fret their hour.’”¹⁶⁴ Animal shows continued to epitomize the “spectacle and other inferior productions” that threatened to destroy the theater while enriching the typical, greedy manager “who, if he could have got fools enough to patronize him, would have preferred a dancing elephant, or a singing dog” to serious art.¹⁶⁵ Gentler critics admitted the value of quadruped drama as an occasional diversion from more serious things, accepting it as part of a pardonable indulgence in “freaks and fancies illegitimate.”¹⁶⁶

Many cultural histories continue to approach quadruped drama with the fixed sneer of centuries past. The rise of animals onstage showed theater managers’ willingness “to pander to a depraved taste,” in the words of one twentieth-century critic.¹⁶⁷ “That was the sort of thing they wanted at the Coburg [Theatre],” another writes with a bewildered shrug of dog dramas.¹⁶⁸ Even A. H. Saxon—who literally wrote the book on hippodrama—maintains a sharp distinction between the form as a historical phenomenon and as literature. His monograph enthusiastically charts the rise and fall of hippodrama, but he remains derisive of the subjects’ aesthetic value: “For obvious reasons the literary merits of the plays in question are rarely discussed,” he explains. “Literally hundreds of these ‘horse spectacles’ were produced, and no one . . . could possibly wish to read or hear about all of them. . . . [T]his unique, hybrid form of drama may quite properly be

regarded as a prodigy or freak.”¹⁶⁹

Yet the apparent freakishness of quadruped drama is less a characteristic of the works than a product of the label employed to describe them. By lumping together any and all productions that mingled humans and animals, the very idea of quadruped drama indiscriminately mixes theatricals that had very little in common with each other beyond the co-presence of different species onstage. So, for example, the comedic circus staple *The Taylor Riding to Brentford* ([1771?]), which involves a horse throwing an acrobat (the “Tailor”) into the dust in increasingly elaborate ways, has almost nothing in common with a Faustian diablerie like *The Mirror of Fate; or the Gnome of the Gold Mine and the Demon and His Dog* (1844); categorizing them together because they both include animals produces the confusing impression of quadruped drama as a miscellany interspersing human theater with animal antics.¹⁷⁰ Reading a wide variety of those texts still in existence, however, reveals pronounced affinities between certain works, as thematic preoccupations and conventions clearly unite certain dramas together and distance them from other spectacles. Indeed, a careful look at the body of quadruped drama shows a distinct subgenre emerging, one in which roles for animals grow not only more elaborate but also more conventional over the course of the century, as dramatists assimilate animal characters into the broader cultural concerns of melodramatic form.

Works like *The Pride of Kildare* and *The Old Toll House* (1845) show this conventionalization resulting in thoroughly predictable animal characters by midcentury. Most acting dogs, for example, were trained to perform a set of standard maneuvers, tricks that often included limping, carrying baskets and other objects, and “taking the seize”—that is, leaping up and latching onto the villain’s throat.¹⁷¹ In order to work these

behaviors into their plays, dramatists had to reconfigure their dramaturgy so as to render these tricks interesting and important plot elements. They had, in other words, to pioneer what Michael Peterson identifies as more or less “the entirety of animal-acting theory: develop a rote behavior for the animal ‘actor,’ then frame or ‘matrix’ that behavior so that it coincides with dramatic narrative.”¹⁷² Because this process involves grafting dramatic narrative onto simple action sequences, some critics continue to blame quadruped drama for a degradation and routinization of all modern dramatic form. Thus Michael Dobson takes quadruped drama as symptomatic of—and even partially responsible for—“the mechanized, post-Enlightenment theatre’s reduction of any dramatic plot to a function of a dog’s repertoire of tricks.”¹⁷³

The usage of set animal behaviors is not, however, fundamentally different from the conventional systems of signification developed in melodrama more generally. As Martin Meisel describes it, the evolution of melodrama resembles the evolution of other arts in the nineteenth century in that it “shows a system for the representation of the passions passing into conventionalized attitude and gesture, into stereotyped character, and finally into ‘legible’ narrative configuration. The mechanical and formulaic aspects are immediately clear; but to stop there would be to miss what was most interesting and vital” in nineteenth-century aesthetics.¹⁷⁴ If anything, the homologies between routinized animal tricks and routinized acting facilitated and encouraged the incorporation of nonhuman animals into melodrama, a form that already worked by reconfiguring a finite set of characters and gestures into novel combinations. By the 1840s, playwrights working at the intersection of melodrama and quadruped drama had effectively invented a new subgenre of illegitimate theater, the animal melodrama. These works popularized a

highly stylized type of animal character, one that used the supposed shortcomings of animal performance to lend an additional aura of reality to the melodramatic stage, suggesting new points of convergence between melodrama and the Victorian realist novel.

2. Animal Characters and the Advantages of Alterity

In the animal melodrama, every dog is a good dog. The same pattern holds for roles enacted by live elephants and horses—all involve animals righting wrongs and catching villains in their respective productions.¹⁷⁵ When they incorporate nonhuman characters as pillars of their moral architecture, animal melodramas undertake a significant revision of melodrama's stereotyped representation of "overt villainy, persecution of the good, and final reward of virtue."¹⁷⁶ They insist that animals have inexplicable, but very real knowledge of the cosmic moral order that melodramatic plots struggle to express. In doing so, animal melodramas take the most common objection to animal performance—the distracting alterity of animal bodies onstage—and turn it to their advantage, using the compelling materiality of animal presence to "realize" and concretize otherwise abstract moral forces. Some animal melodramas go even further. By associating their animal characters' moral knowledge with their superhuman senses of sight, smell, and hearing, they open up the possibility of reconciling moral certainty and empirical epistemology, assigning morality a sensible, material presence—albeit one imperceptible to the comparatively feeble senses of human beings.

These developments have been overlooked because critics have never clearly

examined animal melodramas as formally cohesive works distinct from the broader mass of quadruped drama. On those rare occasions when a critic turns serious attention to an individual animal melodrama, the animals' role is treated as an unusual iteration of some more central thematic preoccupation of nineteenth-century performance, rather than part of a larger and culturally significant theatrical tradition. This tendency to view animal melodramas as minor variations on a more important theme coincides, in fact, with the critical rehabilitation of melodrama itself. In his groundbreaking work *The Melodramatic Imagination* (1976), Peter Brooks adopts *The Dog of Montargis* as a central text in his analysis of the melodramatic mute. Yet he quickly dismisses the dog as relatively unimportant, a mere double or shadow of the more typical and central figure of the human mute: "This dramaturgy of the non-human already suggests the importance of unspoken, non-verbal indicators of plot and meaning in the play . . . But more important than the dog is the mute person."¹⁷⁷

In classifying Dragon as a mute, Brooks implicitly adheres to a prominent philosophical tradition that considers speechlessness the defining trait of animal life.¹⁷⁸ But the difference between the mute and the dog, both in *The Dog of Montargis* and in animal melodrama more broadly, is less one of degree than one of kind.¹⁷⁹ Again and again, animal melodramas emphasize not animal muteness, but the ability of animals to overcome the various "mutilations and deprivations" plaguing their human companions, muteness included.¹⁸⁰ In regularly exceeding the powers of the humans around them, animal characters become proxies for the divine Providence that guides melodramatic plotting, physical assurances that whatever the odds, the forces of good ultimately prevail.

Dragon and the animals that came after him thus occupy a new and unique role in the moral structure of melodrama. As Brooks explains it, melodrama constitutes a theatrical response to a particularly modern moral crisis. The collapse of both royal and ecclesiastical powers during the French Revolution left the traditional seats of moral authority frighteningly vacant, throwing the very existence of morality open to question. “Melodrama,” Brooks argues, “starts from and expresses the anxiety brought by a frightening new world in which the traditional patterns of moral order no longer provide the necessary social glue.”¹⁸¹ Melodramas work to dramatize this crisis and, finally, to resolve it. They open with characters whose virtue is apparent to the audience, providing a satisfying sense of moral clarity in an uncertain world. In the typical melodramatic plot, however, some confusion causes true goodness to go unrecognized, as selfish villains manipulate the institutional power of soldiers, clergy, and magistrates to further their own ends.

Because most melodramas follow a highly predictable pattern, the individual interest of any given production lies primarily in the various machinations used to ensnare virtue, followed by the corresponding plot twists necessary to achieve the final vindication of the heroes. Melodrama thereby begins in moral anxiety, “plays out the force of that anxiety with the apparent triumph of villainy, and it dissipates it with the eventual victory of virtue. It demonstrates over and over again that the signs of ethical forces can be discovered and can be made legible.”¹⁸² The providential plots of melodrama compulsively work to manifest what Brooks calls “the ‘moral occult’: the domain of spiritual forces and imperatives that is not clearly visible within reality, but which [melodramatic authors] believe to be operative there, and which demands to be

uncovered, registered, articulated.”¹⁸³ Ultimately, melodramas ratify “the existence of a moral universe which, though put into question, masked by villainy and perversions of judgment, does exist and can be made to assert its presence and its categorical force among men.”¹⁸⁴

In the years following Brooks’s influential account, a number of critics have complicated his highly structural, generic vision of melodramatic form. So, whereas Brooks builds his analysis on a handful of iconic French examples, Martin Meisel traces the relationships between British melodrama, nineteenth-century painting, and the realist novel to show how their visual and narrative strategies intersect in different attempts to get at “the real.”¹⁸⁵ Elaine Hadley has demonstrated that the moral polarities and ideological preoccupations of melodrama—its fascination with the family as a moral and political unit, its insistence on the restoration of an unjustly unseated authority, and so on—were far more pervasive, and far more politically malleable, than Brooks’s heavy emphasis on the French Revolution would suggest.¹⁸⁶ And Jane Moody has proven that stage melodrama is inseparable from its specific institutional histories and staging practices, whose features and ideological consequences she has examined in depth.¹⁸⁷ Yet Brooks’s analysis remains the clearest description of the way melodramas use character and plotting to resolve moral dilemmas, and it is this generic pattern that animal characters modify and disrupt in important ways.

Animal characters comprise one of many devices melodramas use to effect the restoration of moral order. As Brooks observes in a footnote, “The animal is often . . . the mute witness and indicator of crime and innocence.”¹⁸⁸ Animal witnessing, however, proves far more complicated than simple observation of a crime. Animals do offer mute

testimonies to the innocence of characters, but their knowledge of good and evil generally comes from beyond the realm of eyewitness experience. Even without observing immoral acts, animals somehow know which characters deserve love and trust. Indeed, animal characters often provide a key to the ethical orientation of works that position morality in complex or even inverted relationships to social authority.

Dhu Blanche; or The Highwayman and His Dog (1845) provides a case in point. The dog Dhu Blanche enters the play as a canny thief trained to steal pocketbooks off unsuspecting victims. It soon becomes clear, however, that his master, the highwayman Dick Atkins, is not the shady character he seems. Rather, in the words of Kate, the good-hearted woman who will reform him, Atkins “has been thoughtless, wild, but the victim of villains & [he] will prove himself hereafter worthy of your good opinion.”¹⁸⁹ From the beginning, the dog’s loyalty indexes Dick’s inherent goodness despite superficial appearances to the contrary; even the dog’s name acknowledges the spotty nature of its hero and his moral reversal, combining as it does the Gaelic word for “dark” or “black,” *dhu / dubh*, with the French for “white,” *blanche*. (It may also reference the dog’s coloration, as acting dogs from Carlo onward were often black-and-white Newfoundlands—a breed later known as the Landseer in recognition of Sir Edwin Landseer, the prominent Victorian animal painter.)¹⁹⁰ Much of the plot revolves around Dhu Blanche working to absolve Dick and reunite him with Kate, as the dog appears to recognize that her good influence can rehabilitate his master: “The name of Kate is a magic word, both to him & his master.”¹⁹¹

Conversely, when dubious characters turn out to be as dubious as they seem, their animal companions abandon them. So, when the supernatural melodrama *The Mirror of*

Fate opens, the witty atheist Captain Schwarzwald banters over wine with the drunken student Leopold Von Desterreich, and both seem unrepentantly dissolute.¹⁹² As the plot thickens, however, it becomes clear that Schwarzwald is trying to corrupt the good but misguided Leopold—indeed, Schwarzwald has sold his soul and doubles as the demon Waldenburg, who recruits other souls for the devil in order to stave off his own appointment in hell. Once these revelations begin to unfold, the dog who starts as Schwarzwald’s pet (named—surprise!—Carlo) switches sides to help Leopold and his friend Max. This change goes unexplained in the play, but by the conventions of animal melodrama, it needs no explanation: it serves as a clear signal that, of the initial carousers, only Schwarzwald is beyond all hope of heaven.

In clarifying where true virtue lies and aiding it in the struggle against wickedness, animals like Carlo and Dhu Blanche become living embodiments of a Providence that exceeds human understanding. The close association of animals with providential forces emerges in both the plotting and the dialogue of animal melodramas. When virtuous human beings have been utterly subdued, animals repeatedly intercede on their behalf, a trope that shrouds these creatures in superhuman glory borrowed from that divinity that never appears onstage. Indeed, these animal intercessions often occur after a prayer to God or Providence: a desperate character who implores God for help receives the help of an animal instead. This substitution appears as early as *The Dog of Montargis*. In Barrymore’s English translation, the maiden Lucille begs heaven for the exoneration of her mute lover Florio, who stands to be executed for a murder he did not commit. Falling on her knees, Lucille cries, “Oh, [T]hou, who know’st his innocence, save, oh save this unfortunate youth! Enlighten the mind of his Judge, that he may see thro’ the

false appearances, which deceive him! Let him not suffer for a crime, that his nature is incapable of committing! Let not the innocent be punish'd for the guilty.”¹⁹³ No God appears to answer Lucille’s prayers, but Dragon works in His stead. The dog’s demonstrations of affection for Florio and of hatred for the true murderer, Macaire, convince the local magistrate to stay the execution and reopen the case.

When thanking their animal saviors, human characters also demonstrate some confusion about where, exactly, to direct their gratitude. So in *Wonga of the Branded Hand* (1844) Wonga, a mute American Indian, falls into the clutches of his Shawnee enemies. Tied up and despairing, Wonga is surprised to find his dog approaching him. “One of his DOGS enters and instantly seizes the rope which he begins to gnaw,” the stage directions read: “WONGA regains his spirits[,] and inspired by hope of liberty encourages the DOG, who quickly gnaws the rope through—WONGA starts up overjoyed and kneeling returns thanks for his freedom.”¹⁹⁴ Though speechless and apparently unconverted, Wonga expresses his gratitude using a religious gesture of submission—a gesture whose addressee remains confusingly open-ended. Nor is this ambiguity simply a product of Wonga’s supposed savagery. In W. T. Moncrieff’s *Mount St. Bernard* ([1834?]), the heroes find themselves snowbound and freezing in an Alpine pass. As hypothermia sets in, they realize that the famous dogs of St. Bernard are their only hope. At first, some of them lose faith: “Has it come to this?—are our lives indeed dependant on the uncertain sagacity of brutes[?]”¹⁹⁵ But when Uberto the St. Bernard arrives with a cloak and a flask, one of the heroines thanks God, using a confusing series of apostrophes that look like appositives: “The Convent Dog—Father of mercies, hear my heartfelt thanks. Faithful, noble creature, he should bear aid.”¹⁹⁶ “The Convent Dog”

is not the “Father of mercies,” and the “Father of mercies” is not the “Faithful, noble creature,” but the sandwich of terms creates a telling ambiguity. Another traveler echoes her confused belief in both the divine and the canine: “Aye, aye, my life upon the brute—I will follow first to prove my faith.”¹⁹⁷

Occasionally, this implicit equation of divine and animal agency becomes explicit. The exotic displacement of *The Elephants of the Pagoda*, for example, seems to facilitate some self-consciousness about the conventions of animal melodrama itself, permitting the play to acknowledge and even to question the theological underpinnings of its moral vision. The storyline revolves around the restoration of the orphaned Prince Djelini after a cadre of power-hungry Brahmin murder his father, the Rajah of Nagpore, and take control of the region. In this imperial setting, the unspoken melodramatic assumption that animal characters are privilege to a transcendent moral order is represented as an article of the local religion, which acknowledges animal sagacity as an officially sanctioned method of identifying moral authority. As the holy man Hissen explains to the widow of the dead ruler: “By the letter of our holy law it is written that in default of direct heirs, the sacred Elephant of the Pagoda shall by his marvelous intelligence point out to the people of Nagpore their rightful Sovereign.”¹⁹⁸ This custom presumes that the creatures’ intelligence is otherworldly in origin: “It is the will of Brama [*sic*] that a portion of his mighty wisdom should descend upon the adored Animal—Towards Holkar the murderer he manifested constant aversion, to your son the orphan the utmost solicitude.”¹⁹⁹

By spelling out animal melodrama’s otherwise unvoiced conventions and assigning them to a distant, orientalized people, *The Elephants of the Pagoda* invites

contemplation on animal melodrama as a generic form. It also creates a space for skepticism towards the basic conceit of animal melodrama. Throughout the production, only Hindu characters express the belief that the elephants might have access to divine wisdom. Even among Hindu believers, the play appears to leave room for doubt in moments when the usurpers cynically suggest that elephant worship provides a means of controlling the gullible masses. At one point Bassara, the scheming chief Brahmin, discovers that one of the elephants has misplaced a scepter supposed to be given to the true king. He concludes that the elephant is unreliable as a source of divine guidance. “[S]urely the sacred elephant is no longer to be trusted,” he tells his co-conspirator Missouri. “I shall announce the fact to the populace.” But Missouri quickly cuts him off: “No, the credulity of the populace is our safeguard. . . . [W]e must not open the eyes of our fanatics.”²⁰⁰ Such incidents lead one circus historian to characterize *The Elephants of the Pagoda* as a heavy-handed imperialist text, one that validated “contemporary, particularly Christian, preconceptions about Hindu indulgence in idolatry, superstition, and heathen ritual, which was said to hamper British missionary activity.”²⁰¹ Yet the plot of the play ultimately affirms the very idolatry it appears to critique, because that idolatry coincides with the credulity of animal melodrama itself. In its most metatheatrical moments, *The Elephants of the Pagoda* nods in acknowledgment of its own outrageous excess, the dubiousness of a pair of elephants working in harmony to effect political restoration. But after entertaining such doubts, the drama utterly destroys them.

Although every character, good and evil, claims the authority of Brahma, at each juncture the play affirms the notion that the elephants truly are agents of supernatural intervention. So, early on, Bassara explains that he has killed the lead elephant of the

pagoda and trained a replacement to hand the royal scepter to anyone who stands to his right. Hoping to install Missouri as the new king, Bassara stages a coronation with Missouri in the proper position. But as the scene reveals, mere training cannot override the pachyderm's sense of right and wrong:

ELEPHANT opens coffer[,] takes out sceptre, walks past the CHIEF[,] stops for a moment before MISSOURI, then raises the sceptre above the heads of the assemblage—MISSOURI advances[,] ELEPHANT strikes him on the head with sceptre[.]

MISSOURI. Ah! I cannot think how these creatures can be called intelligent.

*ELEPHANT clears a passage for himself and exits followed by the people.*²⁰²

The pattern of elephant autonomy that begins with this amusing defiance of Bassara's orders expands into a number of increasingly spectacular heroic and comedic feats, all of which serve the final purpose of installing Prince Djelini, the divinely ordained ruler of Nagpore, on the throne. The subtle, comedic clues about the moral wisdom of the elephants gradually evolve and escalate into shows of superhuman strength that register divine force through physical majesty. In a show of sublime bodily power, the elephants use their trunks to pull the prince from a raging torrent; they knock down trees to build bridges across the rapids; they pull apart prisons; and they trample one of the villains to death. In each case, the elephants intervene—generally with little or no prompting from other characters onstage—to protect virtue, punish vice, and restore the pre-ordained moral order. The supernatural moral imperative of the elephants becomes indivisible from their superhuman strength, skill, and bulk as they come to dominate the stage, crushing their opposition in a form of dramatic overkill that betrays the flimsiness of the villains and even the theatrical scenery in the face of the awesome power of their bodily reality.

It is a stunning display of animal physicality onstage. But the elephants in

Astley's production only exemplify, in hyperbolic form, the performance theory underlying all animal melodrama. Animal melodrama uses the bodily presence of animal actors to overwhelm audiences with a theatrical version of the reality effect, adding an uncanny materiality to the otherwise implausible vision of moral order that underpins the typical melodramatic plot. In the process, these works turn what critics commonly consider a theoretical weakness of animal theatricals into an aesthetic and ideological strength.

Dramatic theorists from the Victorian era to the present day have frequently observed that animal actors do not "act" in the same sense that human beings do. Humans, unlike animals, willingly participate in an elaborate fiction for public display. As a result, these critics insist, animals distract and detract from the illusion of the stage, constantly reminding viewers of that more urgent reality that traditional theatricals work to suspend, deny, and obscure.

As early as 1840, Edward Mayhew opined that the presence of living animals onstage comprised an unmanageable threat to the illusion on which drama is founded. At first his concern appears to center around the unpredictability of animals, the potential for misbehavior that accompanies the introduction of an animal actor. Because they do not perfectly follow instruction, Mayhew suggests, animals occupy murky aesthetic territory, falling somewhere between stage properties (props) and real actors. "Properties should always be quiescent," Mayhew insists. "It argues a want of perception to make them actors, or to entrust them with action."²⁰³ A horse onstage, he worries, "will snort when the prince is talking, will make the canvass trees give way to his curvetings, and though a whole army may be perishing in a desert, he will look sleek and comfortable, and persist

with his hoofs that the ground is made of wood.”²⁰⁴

Nineteenth-century audiences had plenty of experience with the shattered stage illusions Mayhew describes. Indeed, audiences appear to have anticipated such possibilities with a certain delight. One historian discussing *The Caravan* suggests that “Carlo’s unpredictable behaviour was in fact one of the prime attractions of the play . . . not two performances were identical.”²⁰⁵ Anecdotes of other misbehaving animals confirm the idea that spontaneity was a major draw of quadruped drama. In an equestrian version of *Rob Roy* at Astley’s, for example, a tenor singing “My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose” found himself upstaged by his horse. As he led the horse and sang, the animal pulled a carrot-filled handkerchief from his pocket and waved it ecstatically behind the actor. “[A] universal burst of laughter and applause followed,” a later writer recalled: “The tenor mistaking the uproar for approbation, sang the verse through with increased energy.”²⁰⁶ In an American performance of a work called *The Grecian Captive*, an elephant bearing an actor on his back suddenly flooded the stage and orchestra with urine—or, in the euphemism of one actor present, the animal performed “an unexpected hydraulic experiment . . . to the great astonishment and discomfiture of the musicians, [which] closed the performance amid the shouts of the audience.”²⁰⁷

But interruptions are not the only, or even the primary, target of Mayhew’s concern. Even well-behaved animals cause insurmountable theoretical and aesthetic difficulties for drama, he insists. A good animal actor always surprises the audience into pleasure at the animal’s ability to act at all. It thereby distracts from the drama, “claiming applause separate from the real interest of the scene.”²⁰⁸ Indeed, animals cause problems because they persistently remind the audience that “the real interest of the scene” is not

“real” at all. The physical presence of an animal surprises audiences into an awareness of the comparative flimsiness of the fictions surrounding it. By existing in a liminal space partially inside and partially outside the conventions of the drama, animal actors draw attention to drama as a fiction that pales in comparison with the reality it imitates. “[L]iving animals,” Mayhew explains, “have too strong a sense of reality to blend in with the scene.”²⁰⁹

The “sense of reality” that disturbs Mayhew is more complex than it appears. It occurs when humans, confronted by the alterity of animal bodies, begin to contemplate the less accessible alterity of animal minds. Faced with an animal actor on stage, humans cannot help being struck by how sharply the fact or truth of the animal’s bodily presence contrasts against the artifice of stagecraft and of drama itself. This observation leads to speculation on the cognitive dissonance between human and animal actors, as human actors give themselves over to imitations of the very reality that the animal, however well trained, still perceives and occupies. Animal actors thereby transcend and even shame the cramped conventional fictions that surround them, gesturing at a world both vaster and more real than that occupied by the more accomplished thespians with whom they share the stage. In their very inability to act, animals achieve a kind of greatness that trumps the hollow illusions of art:

The actor’s art consists chiefly in forgetting his personality, and assuming a character and feeling foreign to his real one,—a delusion these simple creatures are incapable of abetting him in. The player may take on, but the horse is an honest, bona fide horse, without any love for hypocrisy . . . All the vanity and frivolity of the stage is made apparent by the test of reality.²¹⁰

Whenever a live animal enters from the wings, its co-presence in the theater disturbs the communal illusion, inviting spectators to ponder the animal’s alternative understanding

of what is happening in the illusory space of the performance.

Although they appear mostly unfamiliar with his writings, subsequent theorists of animal performance follow Mayhew's argument with surprising consistency. A *fin-de-siècle* writer for the *Westminster Review* repeats his objection, attributing it to Joseph Addison: "[A]nimals on the stage, from sheer reality and spontaneity of action, completely upset the *optique du theater*."²¹¹ Modern academic performance theory reframes the case in semiotic and phenomenological terms. Thus Bert O. States considers animals a prime example of "things that resist being either signs or images" and thereby jeopardize the illusion of the theater.²¹² "There is always the fact that [the animal] doesn't know it is in a play," States writes.²¹³ No matter how excellent the canine actor, when we laugh at a dog in a play, we laugh both at its performance and its existence in a reality that transcends the performance, so that our laughter emerges from "our conscious awareness that the dog is a real dog reacting to what, for it, is simply another event in its dog's life."²¹⁴ Onstage animals are not exactly actors, then, but "nodes of reality extruding from the illusion" of drama.²¹⁵ When we enjoy these performances, what we are enjoying is "a real dog on an artificial street. . . The theater has, so to speak, met its match: the dog is blissfully above, or beneath, the business of playing, and we find ourselves cheering its performance precisely because it isn't one."²¹⁶

When States confesses to "cheering" animals for their inability to perform, he demonstrates an influential shift in theatrical values between the nineteenth century and the twentieth. Following Brecht's famous endorsement of epic and dialectical theater, States derives extra appreciation from performances that constantly remind spectators that they are watching a stage illusion.²¹⁷ If anything, Michael Peterson has recently

argued, twenty-first-century performance theorists may be too eager to embrace the disruptive presence of animals. “In the case of nonhuman animal performers,” he writes, “it is easy to romanticize this resistance [to signification]. It is tempting, for example, to see the animal’s own gaze as an onstage force that ultimately utterly refuses to partake in semiosis.”²¹⁸ This new support for “recalcitrance in animal performance” identifies and names the phenomenon that troubled Mayhew; it simply sees animals’ subversions of stage illusion as positive, rather than negative performance elements.²¹⁹

There is a sense, however, in which animal melodramas upstage these recent theorists, as they display their own canny awareness of the onstage effects of animal alterity. Recognizing that the bodily reality of animal presence disrupts theatrical illusions by drawing attention to a world that transcends them, they incorporate such disruptions as crucial elements of their dramaturgy. Animal characters not only serve the providential order that structures these plays; they effectively *perform* it. The undeniable reality of animal bodies mimics and compensates for the invisible Providence that guides melodramatic plots without ever appearing in them. The animal actor’s physical presence transcends the superficial and ephemeral illusions of the stage to gesture at a more profound reality, even as the animal’s actions represent that Providence that transcends the superficial and ephemeral illusions of everyday life, gesturing at the more profound reality of a morally ordered universe. Melodrama’s logic is embodied and its Word made flesh, albeit in a rather backwards fashion: here, God is Dog.

The animal melodrama’s strategy of vesting supernatural power in the otherness of the animal body shows itself in the many scenes animals’ nonhuman bodies enable them to serve a superhuman moral order. *The Elephants of the Pagoda* provides an

obvious example, but similar plot twists exist in all these works. Because his animality exempts him from the legal strictures of human society, for example, Dhu Blanche manages to convey messages to and from his imprisoned master; the dog's movements into, out of, and around the jail are never criminally suspect. The preternaturally sharp canines of Wonga's dog enable him to escape in *Wonga of the Branded Hand*. Carlo can carry a key up a rotted staircase no human could climb in *The Mirror of Fate*, which allows him to free Leopold from demonic imprisonment.

A number of animal melodramas take this interest in animal alterity into the mind itself. They show a fascination with animal interiority, highlighting the ways bodily differences generate discrepancies between human and nonhuman phenomenologies. These distinct ways of perceiving reality become crucial elements of the plot, as they enable animals to guide their companions past otherwise insurmountable obstacles. The importance of animals' superhuman sensory abilities is a trope in some of the foundational texts of animal melodrama. In *The Dog of Montargis*, Dragon smells Aubri's missing pocketbook on another person. "Dang me," one comic rustic exclaims, "if that 'ere dog bean't a magicianer . . . Lord love you, he be as sensible—Aye, as sensible as I—We had scarce gotten to the thicket where [Aubri] lay, then he began to sniff, sniff, sniff at [the] murderer's pocket, + by + by a' pops [his] snout right into't."²²⁰ "Sensible" works in a punning fashion here, attributing both intelligence and exceptional sensory abilities to the animal in the same breath. In this early example of animal melodrama, Dragon's superhuman senses mislead the human characters, who mistakenly convict the mute Florio for possession of the pocketbook that Aubri had entrusted to him for safekeeping. But Dragon makes up for this misunderstanding by subsequently licking

Florio's hand and attacking the true killers, Macaire and Landry, causing the authorities to reopen the case.

Later animal melodramas more insistently align animals' extraordinary senses with the greater good, representing their scent and hearing as mysterious abilities inextricable from the animals' function as agents of Providence. In *The Conscript* (1830), for example, the aging veteran Philippe Debouche walks all night through the mountains to reach his unjustly conscripted son. As he steps across a darkened stage with his dog Fidele, he speaks to the animal, expressing his reliance on its senses for direction: "I must still confess myself your debtor—for how so dark a night as this to have made my way thro' paths so intricate I know not."²²¹ The exact nature of Fidele's abilities—whether they result from better night vision, a more acute sense of smell, or some other cause—remains ambiguous, because the discrepancy is more important than its source. Likewise in *The Miller's Dog* (1849), the dog Yelt discovers and opens a trap door to the dungeon where the villain has imprisoned the story's rightful heir—a feat that Yelt, unlike his master, can somehow accomplish in the pitch dark.²²²

When animals like Fidele and Yelt navigate through total darkness, they dramatize the fact that humans and animals occupy radically different sensory and perceptual realities—the very feature of animal performance supposed to be hopelessly distracting to theatergoers. Linking intelligence, sensory perception, and moral discernment together in their animal characters, they repurpose a persistent cultural tradition that explains displays of animal intelligence as “merely” a product of their heightened senses. Indeed, the commonplace description of animal intelligence in terms of “sagacity,” both within these plays and throughout Victorian culture, registers the

force of this tradition. As Harriet Ritvo notes,

[W]ell into the last part of the nineteenth century ‘sagacity’ was the standard term for intelligence demonstrated by animals. . . . [I]n the common usage of naturalists, sagacity indicated not the ability to manipulate mechanical contraptions or solve logical problems, but a more diffuse kind of mental power: the ability to adapt to human surroundings and to please people.²²³

As Ritvo suggests, the close association of sagacity and animal intelligence helps to reserve intelligence as a predominantly human trait and signal the superiority of teachable animals. But attribution of sagacity to other creatures originates not as a form of subjection, but rather as an acknowledgment of animal superiority—at least where their senses are concerned. The first entry for sagacity in the *Oxford English Dictionary* recognizes its prevalence, to the turn of the nineteenth century, as a way of praising an “[a]cute sense of smell,” a usage found in prominent literary works from *Paradise Lost* (1667) to Dryden’s *Fables* (1700) and Pope’s *Essay on Man* (1733).²²⁴

Well into the twentieth century, skeptics debunked displays of animal intelligence by explaining otherwise baffling behaviors in terms of sensory cues imperceptible to human beings. An 1867 article in *All the Year Round* recollects one such encounter with the learned dog Munito, whose tricks involved packs of cards: “One of the spectators was requested to name a card—say the queen of clubs—the pack was spread on the floor in a circle, faces upward. Munito went round the circle, came to the queen of clubs, pounced upon it, and brought it in his mouth to his master.”²²⁵ Munito, the writer notes, appeared to know not only the fifty-two cards in a pack, but also the letters and numbers on other decks spread out before him. After a second visit to the exhibition, however, the author realized that Munito’s trainer secretly daubed aniseed oil on cards chosen by spectators; Munito simply smelled them out and retrieved them. “Many people,” the article

concludes after another exposé of performing sparrows, “have seen an exhibition of a learned pig, whose performances were very similar to those of the learned dog: such as picking out cards, letters, figures, and numbers, and answering questions, and apparently showing mental powers, which were merely the result of the animal faculties of smell and taste.”²²⁶

As their detractors have long noted, quadruped dramas regularly showcase these kinds of tricks. The poodle Emile in *The Dog of the Pyrenees* (1845) clearly demonstrates the continuities between dogs like Munito and the animals of melodrama. Hiding in a box, Emile overhears two villains discussing the location of their secret castle. The dog, though mute, is (luckily!) literate. Not only does he retain the name of the town where their hideout is located, but he conveys it to the heroes by spelling it, using a set of alphabet blocks belonging to a local innkeeper.²²⁷ This action so astounds his companions that they ask him to perform it twice, scrambling the blocks and watching him select the proper ones to spell out B-A-R-N-O a second time.²²⁸ By building this moment of incredulity into the play itself, *The Dog of the Pyrenees* acknowledges that the allure of animals like Munito stems from the way their abilities defy easy explanation, investing animal minds with inexplicable powers.

When they incorporate such performances into the world of melodrama, however, playwrights actually enlist both the fascination of animal performances *and* their hidden, materialist origins into melodrama’s service. Even the most rigorously skeptical explanations of animal sagacity—the sort of demystification displayed in *All the Year Round* or later, famously, in the case of Clever Hans—point to animals’ access to a rich sensory realm that transcends the limits of human experience.²²⁹ With their ability to

detect and value sensory information beyond the reach of human observation, animals straddle the gap between the secular and the transcendent, between matter and spirit. They offer empirical evidence of a realm that is both material and otherworldly, one whose sensory reality forever eludes empiricism itself. In doing so, they insinuate that moral information might have a material, perceptible existence, one that lies concealed from human experience only because our relatively dull senses prevent us from detecting it. If the world we see and hear around us fails to confirm that claim, these dramas suggest, the fault is not in our dog stars, but in ourselves. The “moral occult” has a real, external, objective existence in the world—but alas, only the superhuman perception of animals can make sense of it.

3. The Hidden Virtues of Animal Characters

Although mostly overlooked or forgotten, nineteenth-century animal melodramas cast a long shadow over popular culture. Their legacy appears most obviously in the animal stars of later performance media; the roles that made Rin Tin Tin, *Lassie* (1954-1973) and *Flipper* (1964-1967) famous all draw on the tropes of their stage predecessors.²³⁰ But animal melodramas also provide the template for the animals Dickens and Disraeli introduce into early Victorian realism.

The dogs who appear in Disraeli’s *Sybil* and Dickens’s *Hard Times* exhibit undeniable vestiges of this neglected dramatic tradition. (So, in fact, does Lassie, the collie in Elizabeth Gaskell’s “The Half-brothers” (1859)—the story supposed to have inspired Eric Knight to create the character of Lassie in the twentieth century.) Indeed,

the movement of animal characters from stage to page marks the shared philosophical concerns of animal melodrama and the Victorian novel, as both struggled to reconcile moral meaning with the empirical experience of daily life. As Martin Meisel concludes in his comparative study of painting, melodrama, and realist narrative, “The nineteenth-century artist, especially the Victorian artist . . . found himself between an appetite for reality and a requirement for signification . . . seeking the technical means and structural matrices for what was surely the most paradoxical of aesthetic enterprises, the Realization of the Ideal.”²³¹ Tracing the history of these animal characters reveals why they appear in the cultural record by showing how they helped to resolve the ideological contradictions that trouble Victorian moral realism.

While heroic dogs may seem out of place in the smoggy, grim cityscapes of industrial England, Disraeli and Dickens rely on them to imagine a resolution to the philosophical conundrum that plagued so many early realist works: how to prove the moral worth of their lowly and even brutish subjects while still adhering to modern, empirical modes of knowing.²³² Charles Kingsley, Elizabeth Gaskell, and other religiously minded writers had recourse to a faith surpassing reason, drawing on Christian discourse to remind readers of the equality of all human souls. Dickens and Disraeli mostly dodge these explicit Christian messages, drawing instead on the displaced theology of melodrama to add ballast to their moral vision. Animal melodramas prove particularly useful in this respect, because their animal characters represent a possible reconciliation between empiricism and ethics, materialism and moral significance. Dickens and Disraeli could not hope to replicate the overwhelming sense of reality that live animals import to performance, of course. Instead, they picking up that thread of

melodrama that connects the moral insight of animal characters to their heightened senses, using animal characters to suggest that the alternative moral orders imagined in their novels are at once correct and empirically verifiable—or they would be, if humans had the same sensory acuity as the average dog.

Disraeli's *Sybil; or the Two Nations* shows its debts to melodrama at every level, from its inclusion of an alternate title to its overarching plot dynamics. Like other industrial novelists, Disraeli depicts an England in danger of coming apart at the seams. Unlike his peers, however, he advances a direct and comprehensive historical thesis for England's troubles, and imagines a plot with a startlingly neat resolution. England has gone off course, he suggests, because a grasping, commercial middle class has placed its dreams of wealth and power ahead of the good of the nation. England's true aristocratic leaders have been ousted and scattered. Resolving the conflict between rich and poor thus requires not revolutionary action, but rather a restoration of the older and more virtuous institutional order.

The plot of *Sybil* gradually realizes this vision of reconciliation. The novel tells the story of Charles Egremont, the idle younger brother of Lord Marney, an aristocratic landowner. Egremont cares for little outside horseracing until one day, wandering around the family estate, he comes across a small party exploring a ruined abbey on the property. The party consists of Walter Gerard—a descendant of the original abbot—accompanied by his beautiful daughter, Sybil, and their family friend, the labor agitator Stephen Morley. Egremont's infatuation with Sybil leads him to befriend the Gerards and involve himself in politics. He soon learns that his own family belongs to a false aristocracy, that usurping middle class that wrested lands and power from the natural leaders who possess

truly noble blood—families like the Gerards. As he works to right these historical wrongs and restore the social order, Egremont encounters assorted pretenders to power and status. These deceivers include Stephen Morley, the vegetarian journalist who champions the rights of the working man while courting Sybil; the antiquarian Hatton, who “discovers” noble genealogies for anyone able to afford his pricey services; Devilsdust, an orphaned factory hand raised in the workhouse; and Mr. Trafford, an ineffectual Owenite mill owner. In the end, the manipulative agitator Morley is killed, and the marriage of Sybil and Egremont ensures a lineal continuity with the true and virtuous leaders of the past that will enable this power-couple to lead England towards a brighter future.

The broadly melodramatic structure of this plot should be clear. Villainous usurpers oust and obscure true virtue through bribery and manipulation—traditional institutions lose all their authority—virtuous characters are left powerless and obscure—heroic efforts lead to a rediscovery of authentic documents and reunion of virtue and power—the social order is restored. As one displeased biographer observes, “The nobility of man’s character, and the purity of woman’s nature, could not be allowed by Mr. Disraeli to reside in plebeian bosoms. Accordingly, Mr. Disraeli, adopting one of the worn-out tricks of melodrama...makes [the Gerards] scions of a noble stock.”²³³ By far the most striking melodramatic feature of the story, however, is the heroic dog at its center. Harold, the trusty bloodhound who defends the fortunes of the Gerard family, shows all the hallmarks of a canine star in a dog drama.

Harold’s importance becomes clear at his entrance, when Sybil addresses him by name, not as a pet but as a trusted “companion.” On a charitable visit to the home of a

poor weaver, she announces, “I have a companion without . . . who bears a basket for you. Come in, Harold.”²³⁴ Harold enters carrying the basket in his mouth—a common trick in the world of dog drama, as even early caricatures of Carlo attest.²³⁵ Far heavier than his basket, however, is the weight of British tradition that Harold carries on his back. He is “a young bloodhound of the ancient breed, such as are now found in a few old halls and granges in the north of England.”²³⁶

Harold’s breeding affiliates him with the Gerard family as their canine double, the member of a small but unimpeachably virtuous aristocracy. Even the name “bloodhound,” animal fanciers have long speculated, may allude not to the breed’s tracking abilities but “to the purity of its strain, and to its possessing in its veins true hound blood unadulterated with the blood of other breeds.”²³⁷ The Gerards reveal Harold’s emblematic relation to this older, purer social order when they discuss the Battle of Hastings in the company of “the fiery and faithful bloodhound.”²³⁸ Fantasizing about a counterfactual history in which the Anglo-Saxon kingdom fought off the corruption that, in his view, accompanied the Norman conquest, Walter Gerard sighs: “[A]nd yet I cannot help wishing that Harold—’ Here the hound, hearing his name, suddenly rose and looked at Gerard, who, smiling, patted him and said, ‘We were not talking of thee, good sir, but of thy great namesake; but ne’er mind, a live dog they say is worth a dead king.’”²³⁹

Harold, however, is far more than just a symbol for a lapsed social order. He becomes critical to its restoration, as he discerns and physically defends characters whose virtue will enable them to heal the broken nation. This discernment proves especially important in the mixed-up industrial England of *Sybil*, where forgers like Hatton can

literally paper over the signs of innate and heritable virtue with lapsed peerages and misleading genealogies. Authoritative claims, like the Gerards' hidden title to the Marney estate, have been secreted away and replaced by spurious ones. In this hopelessly illegible world, Harold's superhuman abilities take on an almost prophetic role, as he proves the first to sense the villainy of characters whose moral status might otherwise be indeterminate. It is not until long after Harold's behavior provides crucial clues to characters' relative merits that Disraeli's plot finally validates Harold's abilities and interventions.

Harold's first heroic act provides a prime example. One night Egremont—under an assumed identity as a man of the people—passes the evening with his friends the Gerards and their other regular visitor, the populist Morley. It grows late, and the visitors rise to leave. As Morley rises to go, he shakes Egremont's hand. The brief contact triggers something in the dog:

Harold, who seemed half asleep, suddenly sprang from the side of his mistress and gave an agitated bark. Harold was never very friendly to Morley, who now tried to soothe him, but in vain. The dog looked fiercely at him and barked again, but, the moment Morley had disappeared, Harold resumed his usual air of proud, high-bred gentleness, and thrust his nose into the hand of Egremont, who patted him with fondness.²⁴⁰

Harold's general mistrust of Morley and affection for Egremont substantiate the revelations of virtue and vice that will play out over the course of the book, proving Harold's value as a virtue detector. But this particular incident proves even more revelatory than a simple detection of Morley's villainy. It actually predicts, with almost supernatural precision, the occurrences that follow.

When Egremont rises and prepares to leave the Gerard home, he suddenly feels that "something seemed to hold him back."²⁴¹ This eerie sensation turns out to have a

very material cause: when he turns around, he once again encounters Harold, who “had seized him by the coat, and looked up at him with an expression of affectionate remonstrance against his departure.”²⁴² Misreading Harold’s action as a simple token of affection, Egremont walks out of the house—and out of the domestic comforts of realism itself. Outside the circle of the Gerard fireside, he finds himself walking through a stagey, melodramatic setting. The rural countryside is now “enveloped in a thick white mist,” and he cannot shake a sense of being followed.²⁴³ Without warning an unseen attacker grabs him: “Suddenly he was seized; an iron grasp assailed his throat, a hand of steel gripped his arm. . . . The sound of waters assured him that he was approaching the precipitous bank of that part of the river which, from a ledge of pointed rocks, here formed rapids.”²⁴⁴

The mist, the cataract, and the surprise attacker all come straight from the stage directions of a melodrama. Luckily, so does Egremont’s rescuer. Teetering on the edge of the cliff, Disraeli’s hero seems doomed—until an unexpected friend leaps to the rescue: “At this moment [Egremont] heard the deep bay of a hound.”²⁴⁵ He knows Harold instantly. The dog successfully throws off the assailant, who flees before Egremont has a chance to look him in the face. Harold’s prior behavior, however, suggests what the plot only confirms hundreds of pages later, in its final climactic scene: Egremont’s would-be killer is none other than Stephen Morley, the reformer jealous of his competitor’s place in the Gerards’ affections. Harold’s behavior by the Gerard fireside, then, predicts not only Morley’s hidden villainy, but also his plan to lie in wait and assault Egremont after his departure. Unable to stymie Morley’s plan by delaying Egremont, he tracks both men through darkness and almost impenetrable fog to “take the seize” and throw Morley off.

The whole sequence of events seems implausible, ludicrous, and melodramatic, even for a text that often takes its cues from the stage. But its sheer implausibility only drives home its importance to Disraeli's sociopolitical scheme. Harold's abilities supply a certain novelistic need that renders his outlandish behavior invaluable. That need is the same need that drives Kingsley to imagine a feverish, interspecies evolution in *Alton Locke*: Disraeli must reconcile the empiricist modes of knowing that structure realist narrative with his sense of the innate but occluded virtues of certain overlooked and excluded members of the social order.

Disraeli's political proclivities as a medievalist and a Tory cause him to privilege certain old bloodlines, like that of the Gerards, as one source of innate virtue. Even this purportedly unproblematic marker is invisible, however, as it lies trapped in the veins of families with changing historical fortunes. But Disraeli's ethical understanding also extends beyond this simplistic vision of aristocracy to less well-born characters like Egremont himself, whose early appearance as an inveterate gambler with escalating debts does little to reveal the inherent goodness that eventually enables him to reform English society. And Disraeli's ethics even embrace certain rollicking rogues like Dandy Mick Radley and Devilsdust, whose participation in the riots that destroy Mowbray Castle and kill Walter Gerard does not preclude their eventual rehabilitation in the novel's postscript. Harold provides key evidence for the reality of Disraeli's particular distribution of virtue and vice, and he does so in a way that—however melodramatic—remains intelligible within the confines of the realist novel's empiricist, materialist worldview.

Harold's extraordinary powers thus work to bridge the invisible, transcendent moral truths of melodrama and the immanent, empiricist epistemology of the realist novel. They provide evidence for the possibility—taken for granted in the melodramatic mode—that innate virtue might be real, and they add the tantalizing suggestion that its existence might be verified empirically. They manage to do so by confining the empirical evidence for virtue to a realm that, though no longer transcendent, nevertheless remains beyond human ken: the animal sensorium. Conveniently, Harold's powers are both superhuman and materially explicable at the same time. The fact that Harold cannot speak proves equally convenient. His virtue-detecting abilities thus provide empirical evidence for Disraeli's vision of the social order, even as his muteness conveniently skirts the problem of framing this evidence in any logical, linguistic form. His inaccessible interiority is the very grounds and justification for his ideological appeal.

With each mute exhibition of his superhuman powers, Harold creates a moment of productive epistemological confusion, a place where his heightened senses open up the awe-inspiring possibility of an ethical order that is at once real and imperceptible to humans. Harold's ability to navigate through the fog seems like an unproblematic example of his heightened senses of smell and hearing to track Morley and Egremont—a display of powers akin to those that enable Fidele to lead Philippe Debouche through the dark mountain passes in *The Conscript*. But Harold's decision to track Morley and Egremont in the first place has no such obvious explanation. He appears motivated by something like divine foresight. And yet—Harold's ability to foresee some conflict between Morley and Egremont may still have an unknown but entirely material explanation, one grounded in the same powers that provide him with his tracking ability.

Harold's second great heroic scene, which occurs at the novel's finale, follows a similar pattern. Believing that a roving, rioting mob of miners and factory hands has dispersed, the pseudo-aristocratic de Mowbrays sit comfortably esconced in their family seat at Mowbray Castle. Sybil has joined the de Mowbrays in their retreat from the mob. She has "just finished a ravishing air" for the entertainment of the company when Harold stands up and begins barking, upsetting the gathering and earning Sybil's reproof.²⁴⁶ "But the dog not only continued to bark," Disraeli writes, "but even howled."²⁴⁷ Shortly afterwards, a servant enters and reveals that stragglers from the riot have infiltrated the castle park. They remain at a substantial distance from the castle, however; only later will the servant report that "they are in sight."²⁴⁸ Harold somehow detects the disturbing presence of the mob not only before it has been reported, but before they are even observable from the castle—all while he lies on the floor of the music room.

There are plenty of plausible material explanations for his behavior, of course. He might simply hear the noise they make at a distance, a noise inaudible to the rest of the company. Or he may detect the servant's discomfort before he enters the room to deliver his successive messages. But the narrator proffers no explanation at all, and Harold's behavior remains at once possible and uncanny, as it lends the dangers and evils to come a spectral reality in the empiricist world of the text. His subsequent heroics likewise teeter on the verge of the natural and the supernatural. Locked into a separate room on account of his disruptive behavior, Harold

now sprang at the door with so much force that it trembled on its hinges, while the dog again barked with renewed violence. Sybil went to him: he seized her dress with his teeth, and would have pulled her away. Suddenly uncouth and mysterious sounds were heard, there was a loud shriek, the gong in the hall thundered, the great alarum-bell of the tower sounded without, and the housekeeper, followed by the female domestics, rushed into the room.

“Oh! my lady, my lady,” they all exclaimed at the same time, “the [rioting] Hell-cats are breaking into the castle.”²⁴⁹

Harold, once again, has somehow sensed the danger, and he struggles to save the virtuous Sybil as the mob enters the castle. He manages to escort his mistress outside as the building catches fire and the crowd closes in. For the last time, the novel gives free rein to its melodramatic impulses: as the castle goes up in flames in a classic melodramatic “blow-up,”²⁵⁰ Harold holds off the mob that encircles Sybil: “Harold sprung at the throat of the foremost; another advanced, Harold left his present prey and attacked the new assailant. The brave dog did wonders, but the odds were fearful; and the men had bludgeons, were enraged, and had already wounded him.”²⁵¹ As if to repay Harold for his earlier heroics, it is now Egremont who leaps through the air to save the day: “[Egremont], covered in dust and gore, sabre in hand, jumped from the terrace, and hurried to the rescue. He cut down one man, thrust away another, and, placing his left arm round Sybil, he defended her with his sword, while Harold, now become furious, flew from man to man, and protected her on the other side.”²⁵²

Dickens never approaches such climactic action in *Hard Times*. Nevertheless, he makes his theatrical debts far more explicit. He incorporates into his cast of characters not just one or two well-trained animals, but a circus that regularly performs the sort of dramas he draws upon. *Hard Times* announces its interest in animals in its opening pages, and the daring escape at the end of the novel literally rides on the backs of animals. The novel’s first scene contains Gradgrind’s extraordinary demand that his new pupil, Sissy Jupe, “define a horse,” despite his knowledge that she is the daughter of a traveling circus performer. And the circus that appears in the novel’s opening returns at the end to save the day, providing an escape route from the narrow confines of a Gradgrindian

worldview.

The prominence of Sleary's circus has caused a number of scholars to examine *Hard Times* in relation to circus history, but these studies pay little attention to the role animal entertainments play in Sleary's programming, and none to their importance to the aesthetics of *Hard Times* itself.²⁵³ The performances that comprise the bulk of Sleary's entertainments might have appeared either in circuses or on more "traditional" stages across early nineteenth-century Britain. Josephine Sleary performs a "graceful equestrian Tyrolean flower act" that appears to blend several different routines from Astley's.²⁵⁴ Sissy's father, Signor Jupe, stars in Sleary's production of "the highly novel and laughable hippocomedietta of The Tailor's Journey to Brentford."²⁵⁵ When Sissy meets Sleary again at the end of the novel, the troupe's reliance on quadruped drama remains unaltered. One of the performers, Sleary informs her in his trademark lisp, passed away after "a heavy back-fall off a Elephant in a thort of a Pagod thing ath the Thultan of the Indieth," suggesting that Sleary's has been indulging in the taste for exotica so apparent in *The Elephants of the Pagoda*.²⁵⁶ But the most impressive thing on the current bill, Sleary suggests, is an adaptation of the well-known pantomime *The Children of the Wood* that stages the whole performance on horseback: "If you wath to thee our Children in the Wood [sic], with their father and mother both a dyin' on a horth—themthelvt both a goin' a blackberryin' on a horth—and the Robinth a coming in to cover 'em with leavth, upon a horth—you'd thay it wath the completetht thing ath ever you thet your eyeth on!"²⁵⁷

As in *Sybil*, animals borrowed from the stage intervene at the novel's climax to save the day—but in this case, they are *literally* borrowed from such performances. The

final turn of the plot pivots on Tom Gradgrind's need to escape from his father's cold-hearted pupil, Bitzer. The apotheosis of economic rationality, Bitzer decides to hand the misguided Tom over to the authorities, placing his own monetary self-interest ahead of any generosity or sentimental debts to his former schoolmaster. Desperate for a way out, the Gradgrinds turn to Sleary, who incorporates Tom into his performances, disguising him in blackface until he can be smuggled out of the country. When Sleary finally orchestrates Tom's flight, he relies on his menagerie of performing animals to guarantee his safety. Employing the unusual talents of "a horth that'll do anything but thpeak . . . a pony that'll go fifteen mile an hour . . . [and] a dog that'll keep a man to one plathe four-and-twenty hourth," Sleary hatches a plan to harness the carriage containing Bitzer and Tom to the dancing horse.²⁵⁸ When the horse stops pulling and starts performing, Tom leaps into the passing pony gig, while Bitzer remains trapped in the other carriage, pinned in place by "the learned dog barking around it."²⁵⁹

While performing animals prove crucial to this novel's plot, they prove equally important to its moral. Here, too, Dickens makes explicit what Disraeli leaves implied. Characters like Harold and Merrylegs, Signor Jupe's performing dog, import the moral clarity of melodrama into their respective realist novels without explicitly violating the novel's commitment to materialist explanation. The dialogue between Sleary and Gradgrind about Merrylegs neatly displays these novels' interest in animal powers that straddle the gap between the miraculous and the material. Merrylegs, Sleary explains, overcame both lameness and blindness to return from afar with news of Signor Jupe's death: "He had travelled a long way, he wath in very bad condithon, he wath lame, and pretty well blind. He went round to our children, one after another, ath if he wath a

theeking for a child he know'd; and then he come to me, and throwd hithelf up behind, and thtood on hith two fore-legth, weak ath he wath, and then he wagged hith tail and died.”²⁶⁰

Here again, the novel signals its debt to animal melodrama, where animals often suffer injury and laming in the service of virtue. Merrylegs's ability to find his way home despite his blindness provides yet another reminder that animal abilities vastly exceed human understanding. As Sleary slurs his way through the amazing story, however, Gradgrind repeatedly interrupts him to re-insert the events into a materialist framework:

“Thquire, you don't need to be told that dogth ith wonderful animalth.”

“Their instinct,” said Gradgrind, “is surprising.”

“Whatever you call it—an I'm bletht if *I* know what to call it”—said Sleary, “it ith athtonithing. The way in whith a dog'll find you—the dithtanthe he'll come!”

“His scent,” said Mr. Gradgrind, “being so fine.”

“I'm bletht if I know what to call it,” repeated Sleary . . . ²⁶¹

As Gradgrind is quick to observe, nothing in Sleary's story defies empirical possibility. Merrylegs could have tracked Sleary's circus by memory and smell, and navigated his way there out of an instinct for self-preservation that drove him to return to one place where he was fed and protected. But his behavior nevertheless suggests something more, the possibility that it was love for Signor Jupe and Sissy that drove him, a love that recognized the inherent moral worth of the lowly Jupes even when their behavior fell short of respectability. Merrylegs must make his journey, after all, because the alcoholic Jupe ran off a decade earlier, abandoning his daughter and his job. And Merrylegs's love seems to overcome self-interest in a very basic sense, as one of Sissy's last memories of her father involves Jupe savagely abusing the animal: “He cried out that the very dog knew he was failing, and had no compassion for him. Then he beat the dog, and I was frightened, and said, ‘Father, father! Pray don't hurt the creature who is so fond

of you! O Heaven forgive you, father, stop!’ And he stopped, and the dog was bloody, and father lay down crying on the floor with the dog in his arms, and the dog licked his face.”²⁶²

The true significance of Merrylegs’s story lies neither in Sleary’s relegation of animal behavior to the ineffable, nor in Gradgrind’s insistence on its material basis. It lies in the dialectic between the two. That dialectic describes the hope and faith of moral realism itself, the possibility that clearer empirical knowledge will lead to clearer moral action. The animal’s use of its superior senses and material knowledge to further a selfless moral end becomes proof, in Sleary’s words, “that there ith a love in the world, not all Thelf-interetht after all, but thomething very different . . . that it hath a way of ith own of calculating or not calculating, whith thomehow or another ith at leatht ath hard to give a name to, ath the wayth of the dogth ith!”²⁶³

As in the animal melodrama, Sleary leaves the exact source of the animal’s moral convictions unspoken, even unspeakable. But that is precisely the point. These novelists can find no empirical way of proving the truth of their moral intuitions, no material grounds for their revised understanding of humanity. Harold, Merrylegs, and their animal companions impart to their novels the gift of an empiricism that recognizes its own limits. They proffer the hope of a world beyond those limits that could confirm the faith of moral realism without invalidating its terms—a world where the material and the moral might seamlessly run together. Perhaps these animals sometimes appear a little absurd. But that absurdity is understandable, even admirable, because it emerges from the quixotic mission of moral realism itself.

* * *

As animal characters, Harold, Merrylegs, and the Sleary menagerie cause as many problems as they solve. They occupy an unstable place in the history of the Victorian novel, because—like the stage animals they emulate—their service to the realist project depends on their remaining partially outside of it. They prove useful because they are not accessible in the same ways, or responsible in the same manner, as the human characters that surround them. Sleary gets away with helping Tom Gradgrind emigrate, after all, because the blame for Tom's escape can be fobbed off on entities beyond British jurisdiction: Tom now resides somewhere outside the law's geographic limits, and the circus animals reside outside its conception of personal responsibility. The animals of Sleary's circus, like the robber's dog Dhu Blanche, can play an important role in the plot precisely because they escape serious social notice. By the same token, Harold and Merrylegs owe their importance to the fact that they remain partially unavailable to the principal concerns and methods of realist representation. In their case, it is the opacity of the animal mind—its untranslatability into human language—that enables them to suggest moral and material realities that conveniently transcend realist representation, always just barely escaping the language that would explain them.

With Harold and Merrylegs, Disraeli and Dickens introduce nonhuman animals as substantial players in the Victorian novel's moral project. But by embracing animal characters for the ways they defy realist representation, these novelists bequeath to later practitioners a complicated legacy. Harold and Merrylegs are realist characters whose value lies in their power to represent a world beyond realism; they enter the novel to

uphold a vision of moral community that never exactly includes them. In the process of validating the realist approach to character and moral inclusiveness, they threaten to stretch the meaning of both terms to their breaking point. They pose a troubling set of questions about the broader relationship between literary character, interiority, and moral importance that would soon engage the attention of a far more articulate proponent of the realist project: George Eliot.

Constant companion . . . —better than a dog anyhow.

—Charles Darwin, on taking a wife²⁶⁴

Upon reading her presentation copy of George Eliot's first novel, *Adam Bede* (1859), Jane Welsh Carlyle wrote to the author praising the book for its sympathetic depiction of an entire community—including its furred, four-footed members. "In truth," Carlyle exclaims in her letter, "it is a beautiful most *human* Book! Every *Dog* in it, not to say every man woman and child in it, is brought home to one's 'business and bosom,' an individual fellow-creature! I found myself in charity with the whole human race when I laid it down—the *canine* race I had *always* appreciated—'not wisely but too well!'"²⁶⁵

For all her playfulness, Carlyle's commentary shows her to be an astute reader of Eliot's realism. She immediately recognizes the unique situation of *Adam Bede* in the evolution of realist character. In praising it as a "most *human* Book," Carlyle acknowledges the novel's adherence to the longer tradition of moral realism, its determination to extend the confines of the moral community to recognize the ethical interest of individuals long overlooked. Yet she also registers *Adam Bede* as unusual in its extension of such humanity beyond the borders of the biologically human, its intermixing of dogs and humans in a moral community populated by "individual fellow-creature[s]" of several different species.

The liberal sympathies of *Adam Bede*, in short, seem to exemplify what Charles Darwin would later describe as the highest form of humanity, that "[s]ympathy beyond the confines of man" or "humanity to the lower animals" that he considered "one of the

latest moral acquisitions.”²⁶⁶ In Darwin’s evolutionary explanation, human moral development charts a course that sounds surprisingly similar, in fact, to the expansive sociopolitical project of the Victorian novel:

But as man gradually advanced in intellectual power, and was enabled to trace the more remote consequences of his actions; . . . as he regarded more and more, not only the welfare, but the happiness of his fellow-men; as from habit, following on beneficial experience, instruction and example, his sympathies became more tender and widely diffused, extending to men of all races, to the imbecile, maimed, and other useless members of society, and finally to the lower animals—so would the standard of morality rise higher and higher.²⁶⁷

Where Carlyle sees the novel’s characterization of dogs as a sign of this exceptional humanity, however, more recent critics have seen an exceptionable humanity in its canine characters. What once appeared a natural and laudable extension of the realist project looks, to more scholarly eyes, like an exercise in excessive anthropomorphism. Thus James Eli Adams sarcastically mentions “the uncannily precocious dog population of Hayslope,” especially Adam’s dog Gyp, who is “humanize[d] . . . beyond any other dog in the novel.”²⁶⁸ Even critics inclined to admire Eliot’s dogs admire them not as dogs, exactly, but as odd repositories for displaced human characteristics. Their freedom from the social repressions that bind human beings enable them, in the words of one critic, to “demonstrate fundamental human emotion,” especially “when humans can’t.”²⁶⁹

The persistent tendency to describe Eliot’s dogs in terms of their humanity indexes the importance of *Adam Bede* as a turning point in the history of realist character—in particular, in the relationship of realist character to the biological human being. Novelists before Eliot had extended the borders of their imagined communities to include factory hands, fallen women, the workhouse poor, and other demographics that

challenged contemporary standards of who counted as a member of the moral community, and thus, in sociopolitical terms, who rose above the brute. Authors had even tentatively imported quadrupeds from the melodrama to back up their new views of society, hinting at a possible place for animal life in their moral outlooks—if only as additional witnesses to these novelists’ revised understandings of humanity. In her characterization of Gyp, Eliot preserves the industrial novelists’ interest in animal alterity, as she repeatedly returns to the impossibility of understanding Gyp in the same terms as the human characters around him. Yet she manages to characterize him anyway—an achievement that indicates the inadequacy of humanity or anthropomorphism as a framework for understanding realist character.

By demonstrating the ease with which characterization can overlook intractable philosophical difficulties to extend moral membership beyond the species barrier, *Adam Bede* exhibits the radical independence of realist characterization from other modes of imagining personhood. Compelling characterization, it shows, does not rely on individual essences, but on a particular method of narrating interpersonal relationships. Thus the narrative mode of moral realism can characterize not only brutalized humans, but even entities whose humanity is inconceivable, because characterization assigns ethical interest through interactions, not through the discovery of internal moral or mental capacities. In both its underlying structure and its surprising flexibility to reimagine personhood, realist character betrays its close affiliation with the fictional person or *persona ficta* of the law—a relationship that makes realist character a valuable tool for intervening in contests over moral and sociopolitical standing. Yet the radical flexibility of this relational personhood comes at a cost. Because they assign personhood through the narration and

resolution of conflict, both the law and the novel can only realize the existence of new entities by acknowledging their appeals against others, their claims to some of the powers and interests currently allocated elsewhere. In the law and the novel, new persons always derive their standing by diminishing someone else's.

The canine characters of *Adam Bede* show Eliot discovering the radically arbitrary architecture of realist character. This understanding of character departs from the current critical consensus, which equates character with humanity and renders canine characters like Gyp and Vixen inexplicable paradoxes at the heart of the realist canon. A full appreciation of Eliot's experimental characters requires, then, a redefinition of the very idea, one that reads dialectically between those scholarly accounts that treat character as a form of anthropomorphism and those instances in Eliot's practice that show it to be otherwise. Eliot's meditations on Gyp's inaccessible interiority show her recognition of the irrelevance of interiority, selfhood, and even anthropomorphism to the novel's ability to reimagine sociopolitical subjectivity. Innate humanity proves immaterial to the novel's ethical vision, so the problem of proof that haunted the industrial novelists turns into a moot point. Yet Eliot's canine characters also reveal her awareness that the extreme flexibility of relational personhood comes at a cost. The relationships she depicts in *Adam Bede* demonstrate a growing concern that extending personhood beyond the human necessarily distracts from the needs of certain overlooked groups of human beings—in particular, the needs of women. That concern drives Eliot to expel animal characters from her novels after *Adam Bede*, when she chooses to use realist characterization to focus on the needs of those human beings that are, from her perspective, more urgent.

1. Humanity and the Question of Character

Jane Welsh Carlyle was not the only reader to acknowledge the unusual attention to dogs in Eliot's early works. Even before Eliot began writing novels proper, at least one reviewer speculated that the author of *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857-8) was "exceedingly fond of children, Greek dramatists, and dogs."²⁷⁰ A century and a half later, critics continue to single out the dogs of Eliot's first fictions, acknowledging their claims as "canine characters in their own right."²⁷¹ Yet according to the prevailing schools of literary criticism, a canine character is, at bottom, a contradiction in terms. Characters, the vast body of literary scholars insist, are fictionalized human beings. Attempts to turn animals into characters are, in essence, fanciful forms of anthropomorphism.

The venerable tradition that equates character with humanity emerges clearly in early twentieth-century attempts to codify character, and it saturates the language of later discussions. E.M. Forster's influential lecture series, *Aspects of the Novel* (1926), announces the standard to which most subsequent scholars of the novel would subscribe. Arguing that "it is the function of the novelist to reveal the hidden life at its source," Forster advances the now commonplace understanding of character that privileges mental subjectivity.²⁷² Characters, he explains, are people whose psychologies are made available to literary representation. The accessibility of their insides separates characters from real or historical people, whose interiority can only be imagined.²⁷³

Forster openly acknowledges that his psychological approach leaves animals outside the confines of realistic characterization. He believes that this is a scientific shortcoming, however, rather than an aesthetic one. "Other animals have been

introduced” in the novel, he explains, “but with limited success, for we know too little so far about their psychology.”²⁷⁴ As a result, animals fail as realistic characters, appearing in novels only in “symbolic” form, or alternately as “little men disguised . . . four-legged tables moving . . . [or] painted scraps of paper that fly.”²⁷⁵ True characters, on the other hand, “are, or pretend to be, human beings.”²⁷⁶ A key element in the failure of animal characters is their lack of human language. The impenetrability of animals makes their characterization unimaginable; Forster classes them with newborns and corpses, beings who cannot function as viable characters because their “apparatus for communicating their experience is not attuned to our apparatus for reception.”²⁷⁷

Novel criticism since Forster has followed his lead with remarkable consistency. Major overviews of character like W. J. Harvey’s *Character and the Novel* (1965) or Baruch Hochman’s *Character in Literature* (1985) use humanity and character more or less synonymously.²⁷⁸ Definitions of character that avoid mentioning humanity nevertheless contain criteria that reinforce the species barrier. M. H. Abrams, for example, defines characters as “persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it . . . and from what they do.”²⁷⁹ Although the word “human” never crops up in Abrams’s definition, these walking, talking persons are evidently anthropomorphic. The recent cognitive turn has only intensified this anthropomorphism by assuming that engaging with characters involves a kind of fictional “mind reading,” an attempt to access the experience, logic, and perceptions of others that is inapplicable to the alien subjectivities of other creatures.²⁸⁰

The anthropocentrism of character studies is perhaps most apparent in critics who deal with the outer limits of character—those minor and flat characters whose interiorities threaten to vanish entirely. Scholars studying such figures discern a need to bring in biological criteria to limit their inquiry. Thus, Alex Woloch's *The One vs. The Many* (2003) defines characterization as “the literary representation of imagined human beings.”²⁸¹ An earlier survey of minor characters offers a more liberal but equally telling definition, settling with a shrug on the idea that “a character, no matter what its deficiencies, should have some anthropomorphic quality.”²⁸² When more elaborate criteria for recognizing characters fail, then, anthropomorphism provides a kind of *sine qua non* of characterization.

This anthropomorphic tradition falls short of explaining the kinds of animal characters that generations of readers have recognized in *Adam Bede*. Gyp, the most prominent canine character in Eliot's novel, has some anthropomorphic qualities—it would be difficult to discover an animal that did not—but Eliot goes out of her way to emphasize the substantial differences between Gyp and the human characters surrounding him. Gyp's actions, the narrator observes, imply a meaningful subjectivity, but its precise nature remains frustratingly inaccessible to linguistic representation. So, when Adam asks Gyp a question using “the same gentle modulation of voice as when he spoke to [his brother] Seth,” Gyp responds, but only with a stereotyped appearance of excitement: “Gyp jumped and gave a short bark, as much as to say, ‘Of course.’ Poor fellow, he had not a great range of expression.”²⁸³

Gyp's limited expressive powers become a persistent problem in *Adam Bede*, because they leave his exact standing in the novel's moral community an open question.

This difficulty is apparent not only to the narrator, but also to the human characters who interact with him. On one of her visits to the Bede household, for example, the Methodist preacher Dinah Morris neatly summarizes Gyp's fraught position. "Poor dog!" she exclaims. "I've a strange feeling about the dumb things as if they wanted to speak, and it was a trouble to 'em because they couldn't. I can't help being sorry for the dogs always, though perhaps there's no need. But they may well have more in them than they know how to make us understand."²⁸⁴

Because Gyp lacks the more elaborate modes of communication that facilitate understanding among human beings, the novel frequently qualifies its attempts to access Gyp's subjectivity with admissions of the uncertainty attending its descriptions. At one point, the narrator concludes that "Gyp was evidently uneasy," only to lay out an elaborate case for this supposedly "evident" observation: "for he sat on his haunches resting his nose on his master's stretched-out leg, and dividing the time between licking the hand that hung listlessly down, and glancing with a listening air towards the door."²⁸⁵ The use of such a careful train of reasoning to defend an innocuous interpretation of Gyp's feelings is typical of Eliot's anxiety about the mysterious obscurity of animals, the constrained and unsatisfying outlets through which the dog's internal states "find vent."²⁸⁶ Another dog, Vixen, becomes the subject of similarly cautious "as if" speculations that guess internal states from external behaviors: "[Vixen] came creeping along the floor, wagging her tail, and hesitating at every other step, as if her affections were painfully divided between the hamper [of puppies] in the chimney corner and her master."²⁸⁷ The difficulty of understanding Gyp is even more pronounced than the difficulty of interpreting the average dog, however, because Gyp lacks not only language,

but a tail as well. “If Gyp had a tail,” the narrator observes at one point, “he would doubtless have wagged it,” but he is, sadly, “destitute of that vehicle for his emotions.”²⁸⁸

Lacking voice and a tail, Gyp becomes emblematic of the philosophical obstacles that prevent perfect sympathies between human and nonhuman animals. He provides an extreme case of inscrutability, as his bodily differences create a gulf that separates him from human characters and seems to bar any true possibility of interspecies understanding. Yet as Eliot describes it, the trouble of understanding Gyp is only an extreme example of the philosophical obstacles that prevent perfect sympathies between all creatures, even those of the same species. Many of the meditations on Gyp’s difficulties proceed, almost immediately, to musings on the similar impediments that stand in the way of true human intercourse. Dinah Morris feels sorry for Gyp’s inability to express himself because she knows that, to some extent, she shares it—she can imagine his frustration, she says, “for we can’t say half what we feel, with all our words.”²⁸⁹ The narrator laments Gyp’s missing tail as an additional hindrance to communication, only to note how his superficially undemonstrative ways resemble those of many meritorious human beings: “[B]eing destitute of that vehicle for his emotions, he was like many other worthy personages, destined to appear more phlegmatic than nature had made him.”²⁹⁰ In this ironic twist, the taillessness that prevents his clear communication with human beings actually brings him closer to them both physically and existentially. It lends him a laconic air approaching the inexpressiveness of certain human beings, even as it increases the similarities between his four-legged form and the tailless bodies of the anthropoid apes around him.

Such resemblances are not, however, forms of anthropomorphism. The connection between Gyp and the “many other worthy personages” like him does not depict or measure Gyp in inappropriately human terms. Instead, Eliot portrays the relationship between dogs and human beings as one of shared participation in the same struggle—the struggle for interpersonal recognition in the face of formidable obstacles. What might look, at first, like Gyp’s unusual humanity is, instead, his unusually complex participation in a moral community that refuses any easy equation of character, humanity, and moral merit. If some animals appear humanized in this community, some humans also appear animalized. Indeed, in Eliot’s novel, interspecies communication becomes the type and symbol of *all* interpersonal interaction, rather than an odd aberration that renders such interaction impossible.

As Eliot describes it, the efforts required to understand other human individuals are essentially indistinguishable from the efforts to understand a member of another species. Thus one character’s failure to conceive another’s perspective is excusable, because adopting another human’s perspective can be just as difficult as adopting the viewpoint of a completely different kind of creature: “[T]o shift one’s point of view beyond certain limits is impossible to the most liberal and expansive mind: we are none of us aware of the impression we produce on Brazilian monkeys of feeble understanding—it is possible they see hardly anything in us.”²⁹¹ Understanding a character like Hetty Sorrel becomes an exercise in animal cognition, as it is foolish to try to comprehend her personal motives and fascinations in straightforwardly logical terms:

Do not reason about it, my philosophical reader . . . you will never understand women’s natures if you are so excessively rational. Try rather to divest yourself of all your rational prejudices, as much as if you were studying the psychology of a canary bird, and only watch the movements of this pretty round creature as she turns her head

on one side with an unconscious smile at the earrings nestled in the little box.²⁹²

The derision that seems to color the narrator's depiction of Hetty here is undercut by the proliferation of similar animalized humans and humanized animals throughout the novel. If trying to understand Hetty is like trying to understand a member of another species, it is partially because the average human finds rational behavior and coherent self-expression almost as difficult and unnatural as the average animal does. Many of Eliot's characters confess as much, as they admit that their interactions with others take the same basic form as their interactions with inarticulate animals. "O, sir," Mrs. Poyser observes to Arthur Donnithorne at one point, "the men are mostly so tongue-tied—you're forced partly to guess what they mean, as you do wi' the dumb creatures."²⁹³ Reverend Irwine, discussing the power of beauty over the male psychology, echoes this commentary on the failure of men to find the words and logic necessary to explain the workings of their own minds: "The commonest man, who has his ounce of sense and feeling, is conscious of the difference between a lovely, delicate woman, and a coarse one. Even a dog feels a difference in their presence. The man may be no better able than the dog to explain the influence the more refined beauty has on him, but he feels it."²⁹⁴

This commentary is not, in short, confined to a single gender. If women like Hetty do not act or express themselves in rational, logical forms, men share their difficulties. Unable either to express ourselves or understand how our expressions affect the lives of others, we all become animals. When Lisbeth Bede's piteous sobbing infuriates her son, her actions are excusable because she is constitutionally incapable of conceiving how irritating they are: "It was not possible for poor Lisbeth to know how it affected Adam, any more than it is possible for a wounded dog to know how his moans affect the nerves

of his master.”²⁹⁵ Human attempts to comfort other humans become equally animalized; many interpersonal interactions boil down, finally, to the meager provision of blind sympathy and creature comforts to another. When Arthur Donnithorne discovers an upset Hetty Sorrel wandering the forest, he feels sympathy and reaches out to her as if to a wounded animal: “What else could he do but speak to her in a soft, soothing tone, as if she were a spaniel with a thorn in her foot?”²⁹⁶

In this world of mutual incomprehensibility, Gyp’s animal alterity only epitomizes the difficulties that impede all ethical interactions. The impossibility of exploring Gyp’s interiority is merely an extreme and emblematic version of the difficulty of exploring anyone’s interiority, the lack of access to decisive internal evidence for the moral merit of any person outside of ourselves. The problem of identifying and responding to Gyp becomes the problem of identifying and responding to all others, a type of the basic insufficiency of evidence to justify the existence and structure of every ethical community. Through the undeniable fact of his alterity, then, Gyp becomes emblematic of the broader struggle for interpersonal understanding that preoccupies moral realism and renders its interventions necessary.

Indeed, Gyp becomes the unlikely representative of the many marginalized entities so important to the novel’s sociopolitical project, of the ethical act of characterization that defines moral realism. His name, evidently a shortened version of gypsy, alludes to a displaced people whose precise relationship to the English community has long been a source of uncertainty and cultural anxiety.²⁹⁷ His struggles for articulation and recognition—in short, for the sort of sociopolitical standing that would mark him as more than an inhuman brute—unite him with the dehumanized labors so

familiar from the industrial novels. Indeed, describing a stonecutter, a brickmaker, and a dyer who attend night school in hopes of learning to read and write, Eliot muses on their poignant attempts to acquire these rudiments of cultivation in terms of animals struggling towards humanity. “It was touching,” Eliot writes, “to see these three big men, with the marks of their hard labour about them, anxiously bending over the worn books, and painfully making out, ‘The grass is green,’ ‘The sticks are dry,’ ‘The corn is ripe’ . . . It was almost as if three rough animals were making humble efforts to learn how they might become human.”²⁹⁸

In *Adam Bede*, then, the difficulty with animal characters is not that a canine character like Gyp is intermittently humanized, but that all other characters appear intermittently animalized. Gyp acquires unexpected prominence, ascending almost to the status of the paradigmatic realist character, because the difficulties of his inaccessible interiority only throw into stark relief the problems with all interpersonal relationships contained in the realist novel. Figures of interspecies interaction work to emphasize the essential unknowability of other beings—human or nonhuman—in an empirical framework, playing up the obstacles that accumulate whenever we try to combine the scraps of language and behavior we glean from others to create a reliable representation of their interiority and moral significance. No amount of empirical clarity can yield moral certainty. In the world of the realist novel, this revelation means that no matter how much empirical description we have about a certain character, we have no perfect or even satisfactory access to that character’s *character*.

Previous realists had stumbled upon this difficulty, of course. The dream sequence at the end of *Alton Locke* provides Kingsley’s answer to this problem, as he

turns to Christian faith to justify his particular understanding of a moral community whose membership was otherwise unprovable. Dickens and Disraeli draw on the moral certainties of melodrama, including its animal characters, in their own attempts to solve the problem. But Eliot, as she lingers over the same issues embodied in the figure of Gyp, begins to suggest that—for the novel, anyway—this impenetrability is not a problem at all. The mounting theoretical impediments to interpersonal communication do not, in practice, amount to impediments at all. From a philosophical standpoint, Gyp constitutes an impossible problem for realist characterization, and for the problem of moral merit in particular. From a practical perspective, however, his characterization is no problem at all. Epistemological and ethical issues remain, but their abstract importance pales in comparison to the reality of Gyp as he trots across the pages of *Adam Bede*, instantly recognizable as “worthy personage,” a character and a member of the novel’s moral community.

Gyp thus demonstrates the productive discrepancy between philosophical attempts to identify members of the moral community and literary attempts to identify them—the radical independence of literature from philosophical imaginations of the “worthy personage.” Gyp shows, in other words, the remarkable power of character as an independent mode of imagining personhood. This independence has escaped the attention of literary critics because of a long tradition of borrowing concepts from philosophy to dodge the difficulty of explaining, in purely literary terms, what character is. Indeed, the marked pattern of equating character, interiority, and humanity typical of scholarship from E. M. Forster onward shows the convergence of literary criticism and philosophy in

their standards for recognizing persons. It also shows their shared inadequacy when it comes to accounting for realist characterization as it is actually practiced.

In Anglo-American moral philosophy, the person is the fundamental subject of moral consideration, a being worthy of ethical recognition and capable of such recognition in turn. Given the fact that Victorian realists used characterization to introduce new subjects to moral consideration, it makes some sense to look for similarities between literary characters and the persons advanced by moral philosophy. Yet philosophical investigations of personhood show an overwhelming bias towards the interiority and humanity that prove both so problematic and so unnecessary to characterization in the realist novel. In a survey of the standard philosophical criteria for determining personhood, for example, Daniel Dennett notes the prevalence of “six familiar themes,” each weighted differently by different schools of thought: rationality, intentionality, social standing, social reciprocation, language, and a (variably defined) higher consciousness.²⁹⁹ What unites these themes is the belief that personhood is an entitlement founded on the possession of certain inherent traits or capacities. Each capacity, furthermore, derives from longstanding ideas about the unique powers of the human mind. Reason; intent or agency; social participation; language; and higher (often self-) consciousness are all familiar candidates for uniquely human attributes, and have been since before the Victorian era.³⁰⁰ As a result, moral philosophy tends to knot complex interiority, humanity, and personhood together into a kind of ineffable moral core.³⁰¹

Nor is this correlation between humanity and moral personhood an accident. As Dennett notes, person and human “are locally coextensive or almost coextensive” terms

in casual conversation, and ethics only follows common sense in trying to derive one from the other.³⁰² Starting with the laudable assumption that every human is at least theoretically entitled to ethical consideration, moral philosophers tend to work towards ideas of personhood by digging around for essential traits that would explain why humans are so worthy. The assumption that humanity and personhood must be more or less identical is often frankly self-aware. When Charles Taylor dismisses intent or agency as the deciding factor of personhood, for example, he argues that it fails because animals might possess it, too. He proceeds to champion a more specialized attribute, “moral agency,” in order to better reflect the widespread feeling of “the superiority of persons over animals.”³⁰³

The linkage between humanity and personhood shapes even those branches of moral philosophy that include animals in their ethical communities. In extending versions of personhood to other species, they rely on traits shared by humans and other animals for justification. So, for instance, the utilitarian philosophy associated with Jeremy Bentham and Peter Singer uses the criterion of sentience—the capacity to experience pleasure and pain—as the standard for identifying “beings who are similar [to humans] in all relevant respects” and, therefore, “have a similar right to life.”³⁰⁴ The deontological or animal rights approach favored by Tom Regan objects to all instrumentalizing treatment of animals—farming, riding, experimentation, and so on—provided that such animals “resemble normal humans in morally relevant ways.”³⁰⁵ Both schools of thought, then, partition rewards among other forms of life on the basis of assumed similarity to human moral persons, effectively conferring on certain animals the status of “honorary humans,” as one skeptical theorist puts it.³⁰⁶

The broad anthropomorphism of moral personhood is, perhaps, inevitable, and may not be a problem in and of itself.³⁰⁷ It becomes one, however, when smuggled across disciplinary divides to shore up theories of realist character. As Susan McHugh has pointed out, literary animals often frustrate accounts of agency and interiority borrowed from philosophy.³⁰⁸ Eliot's preoccupation with the opacity of Gyp's mind in *Adam Bede* registers precisely this friction, as the dog's ethical significance somehow defies the supposed prerequisites for moral subjectivity. Definitions of character that fall back on moral personhood, however, make it impossible to address such counterexamples. Faced with a canine character like Gyp, critics are at a loss for words. Insofar as he is a character, he must somehow be human. But he is not human, so he cannot exactly be a serious character. No wonder the response to Gyp and other animals often plunges into light irony and absurdity: the accepted terms of criticism prohibit more serious treatment.

In those rare cases where a critic does attend to nonhuman characters, moral personhood remains a barrier to any clear description of animals' place in fictional communities. Identifying the problems associated with representing literary animals, critics defer to essentially deconstructive explorations of the contradictions attending them. Thus Ivan Kreilkamp has proposed that "[a]n animal character is, perhaps by definition, an incomplete or fragile character . . . whose presence in a long novel may implicitly challenge that very form's presumption that individual identity can be maintained over a long duration."³⁰⁹ Literary animals, he suggests elsewhere, may ask readers to expand their notions of agency and subjectivity to include at least some other creatures.³¹⁰ These analyses thoughtfully identify questions raised by certain depictions of animals, but they do not acknowledge that those questions are, finally, more

philosophical than literary: these animals challenge stable versions of the agent and the subject whose relationship to realist character has its own complex, contingent history that requires closer examination.

In his intricate explorations of the epistemological and ethical commitments of Victorian realism, George Levine gets at the challenges animals pose for the novel with greater historical specificity. But Levine's efforts, like Kreilkamp's, end in a suggestive stalemate on the question of animal character. He notes that animals "are almost the perfect test of the possibility of achieving the kind of imaginative self-transference that the ideal of Victorian moral realism implies."³¹¹ His "almost" registers a human uncertainty about the nature and extent of nonhuman interiorities, the incommunicability that obstructs any ethics that depend on knowing the other as a fellow subject. There is a sense, Levine admits, in which animals ought to be honored with moral personhood, but there is another sense in which they confound the criteria of ethical recognition entirely. The most "realistic" literary animals, he concludes, may simply remind us of their impenetrability, gesturing at the range of inaccessible subjectivities coexisting in the world.³¹² The elegance of this idea does not, however, constitute a very satisfying ethical solution for all the beings it fails to include, however thoughtfully and frankly it acknowledges its failure. It does not account, moreover, for Eliot's insistence that impenetrability is, finally, a trait human and nonhuman animals share, rather than something that turns animals into a uniquely baffling ethical and epistemological puzzle.

Luckily, novelists are not bound by the intractable difficulties of moral personhood. Character does name a kind of imagined personhood in the realist novel. But the novel can acknowledge the epistemological problems associated with moral

personhood and depict persons anyway. Its ability to represent persons independent of essential and predictable traits suggests an alternative vision of personhood at work, one that functions at a very basic level in the structure of realist narrative, prior to the person's association with any individual traits. Literary personhood does not, in other words, arise from something found inside of characters. Nor does the irrelevance of interiority contravene the ethical mission of realism. Instead, it shows just how expansive realist ethics can be. Unlike moral persons, realist characters need not prove themselves according to a prescriptive standard of psychology or moral capability modeled on the human. Their personhood resides not in their essence, but in their interactions. Character names those entities who participate in the novel's ethical economy, beings whose interactions are subject to ethical evaluation. The sort of personhood advanced by realism is not, then, the personhood of moral philosophy. In its capaciousness, its contestability, and its unpredictability, it discloses its close affiliation with legal personhood.

2. The Fictional Person as *Persona Ficta*

Although critics regularly rely on philosophical concepts of personhood to identify and define literary character, the philosophical person is, itself, a derivation of literary character. The historical relationship between character and personhood shows how the growing distinctions between character and the moral person, rather than their points of contact, are the true source of realism's political and ethical charge. Indeed, in its shapeless and rapidly evolving version of social membership, realist character creates a productive tension with moral personhood that likens it to the fictional person or

persona ficta of the law. Both realist character and legal personhood exhibit a protean flexibility that enables them to disrupt philosophy's normative, ahistorical attempts to resolve value conflict by referring to rigid concepts and categorical rules. Yet all three kinds of personhood originate, ultimately, in the same ancient understanding of dramatic character.

"Person" derives from the Latin *persona*, a term describing the masks actors wore to differentiate their parts in classical drama.³¹³ Because changing masks allowed actors to assume new identities in their interactions onstage, the *persona* proved useful as a metaphor for the many roles an individual might adopt in public life. Eventually, the metaphor acquired an institutional life of its own, and the person became a key term in Roman law, where it designated any party engaged in legal proceedings.³¹⁴ Because the person now usefully tied a number of abstract ideas and identities (the legal party, the assumed dramatic character) to material bodies (the individuals bringing suit, the actors in the chorus), personhood became a highly portable concept that helped explain how beings took on new roles when placed in different relationships. Personhood emerged as a key term, for example, in medieval controversies about the connection between God and the individualized "persons" of the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost.³¹⁵ The person's ability to connect bodily matter to abstract identities also makes it central to the moral philosophy that undergirds current accounts of literary character, as well as the forms of juridical standing that underlie the modern legal system. But because these different discourses all turned the same term towards their own ends—and because that term had, in the middle ages, acquired distinct theological and transcendent connotations—it is

often difficult for commentators in law, philosophy, and theology to recognize the different roles personhood plays in their respective fields.

Legal persons, in particular, are not the same as moral persons. It took centuries, however, for jurisprudence to appreciate this fact, and the idea remains contentious outside of certain circles of legal scholarship. Until the early twentieth century, legal theorists insisted that the law must mirror moral philosophy by acknowledging the special sanctity of the human individual. Eventually, however, the courts' embarrassingly frequent recourse to a maligned entity known as the *persona ficta*—the artificial or fictional person—forced jurists to admit that the kind of personhood institutionalized in the law functioned differently from the kind enshrined in ethical theory. The history of legal personhood demonstrates just how hard it can be to exorcise the specter of the moral person. But understanding the eventual rupture between moral and legal personhood is important, because it clarifies how personhood actually works in the ongoing reconfiguration of social membership—and, consequently, how the realist novel uses characterization to intercede in this process.

Recognizable versions of the person as a messy union of the individual human body with a rational mind, agency, morality, and legal standing appear in some of the foundational texts of modern philosophy. Thus, in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), John Locke writes that the self is a body animated by consciousness. The term “person” attaches this mind-body aggregate to actions and, therefore, to consequences and ethical considerations: “*Person*, as I take it, is the name for this *self*. . . It is a Forensick Term appropriating Actions and their Merit; and so belongs only to intelligent Agents capable of a Law, and Happiness and Misery.”³¹⁶ Early

modern legal commentators followed both common sense and the philosophical tradition by describing the legal person in similar terms. But they quickly encountered examples of persons that seemed counterintuitive.

While the law recognized individual human beings as persons in the way Locke describes, courts did not limit this standing to humans. They granted similar status to municipalities, the Anglican church, and other incorporated organizations purporting to act as unified wholes. Troubled by the personhood of entities very different from human individuals, jurists felt the need to institute a metaphysical distinction that would preserve the elevated status of the human. They therefore split legal persons in two, awarding to the individual human suitor the honorific of the “natural person” and consigning every other entity to the relatively humble category of the *persona ficta*. This division presumes that the personhood of human beings is somehow real—they and their rights are sacred, primary, and antecedent to the law—whereas artificial persons, as William Blackstone explains in his *Commentaries*, are entities “created and devised by human laws for the purposes of society and government.”³¹⁷

With time, however, this metaphysical imposition became increasingly vexed. As jurisprudence expanded and adapted to new social formations, its supposedly unreal, unnatural persons expanded and adapted, too. One concerned scholar wrote of the *persona ficta* in 1908 that this “fiction, instead of disappearing . . . ha[d] increased in girth and height, and ha[d] maintained its ghostly existence, in the face of the anathema of the philosopher and the fiat of the judicial decree.”³¹⁸ Concern over the power of legal persons deemed artificial, fictional or unnatural still motivates critiques of the legal system today. When, for example, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Citizens*

United v. Federal Election Commission (2010) that the First Amendment protected corporate-funded political advertising, popular backlash called for the destruction of corporate personhood and, with it, “corporate rule.”³¹⁹ In a more scholarly vein, Colin Dayan’s recent study of legal personhood roundly attacks the *persona ficta* as a sinister scheme for usurping the natural rights of human beings. “Nowhere is the [law’s] artifice as compelling as in the creation of legal persons, entities that have nothing to do with ‘human personality,’” she writes. “These persons . . . prove the absoluteness of law’s power.”³²⁰

Anger over the *persona ficta* stems from a belief that legal personhood ought to function as the mimetic representation, in legal discourse, of an indisputably real entity called the moral person, one that—like the soul for which it substitutes—is consubstantial with the human individual. Legal personhood never has functioned in exactly this manner, but the jarring discord between moral persons and their legal counterparts often causes confusion. In this confusion, critics blame the *persona ficta* for any number of injustices perpetrated through the legal system, despite the fact that artificial persons can prove just as efficacious at defending the marginalized as they are at shielding the powers-that-be. Legal scholarship struggled ineffectively with such criticism until the early twentieth century, when jurists and historians renewed their attention to personhood as a crucial “borderland where ethical speculation marches with jurisprudence,” as F. W. Maitland described it in 1903.³²¹ Maitland paved the way for a specifically legal definition of the person by describing the basic functions common to all juridical persons. A person, he decided, named nothing more than “a right-and-duty-bearing unit” in the eyes of the law.³²²

This shift away from theory corresponded to a broader turn-of-the-century movement in jurisprudence known (as chance would have it) as *legal realism*. Legal realists contended that the meaning of the law arose and evolved in the courts themselves, so they tried to formulate legal concepts empirically by observing their application in the world, a functional approach that allied these jurists with their philosophical contemporaries, the pragmatists.³²³ Indeed, the pragmatist John Dewey took up Maitland's definition of the person and used it to argue that earlier theory had been tainted by "a mass of non-legal considerations: considerations popular, historical, political, moral, philosophical, metaphysical and, in connection with the latter, theological."³²⁴ Dewey urged the abolition of all non-legal standards for defining persons—he even proposed, ineffectually, that the law discard the term to eradicate the error once and for all.³²⁵ Persons were, he reiterated, whatever the courts ruled they were: in the law, all *personae* are equally *fictae*, as they are all made and remade through legal practice.

Treating personhood as an implement of legal discourse, rather than an instantiation of metaphysical truth, decisively severed the legal person from its moral counterpart. No longer reliant on either an external higher power or a set of internal higher powers, legal personhood became a product of legal interaction alone. *Person* named any entity whose claims (or "rights") a court was willing to entertain. Those claims arose from some kind of ambiguous interaction, an ongoing involvement with another legal party of whom the claims were made. To this second person, such claims represented a potential obligation or "duty." Rights and duties named the contested claims to power and responsibility that connected these entities. And the person, in turn,

named the parties to such contests. “[L]egal personality,” in the neat formulation of the jurist Bryant Smith, “is the capacity for legal relations.”³²⁶

Defining legal persons through their rights and duties locates the essence of personhood in interpersonal dynamics. This means, crucially, that every conflict over rights and duties opens personhood itself to contest, negotiation, and redistribution. The arbitrary and mutable nature of the legal person can appear not just unsettled but also unsettling to anyone who looks to the law for a sense of moral absolutes. No wonder, then, that so many critics try to stabilize legal personhood, turning to ontology to explain how persons deserve different rights and duties proportionate to their inherent capacities. Dewey himself could not resist the urge to set absolute limits to personhood. It would never make sense, he decided, to grant personhood to plants or objects, because conferring personhood on such beings would have no impact on their social interactions. “Molecules and trees,” he writes, “would continue to behave exactly as they do whether or not rights and duties were ascribed to them; their consequences would be what they are anyway.”³²⁷

Even this minimal border to personhood, however, misrepresents contests over personhood by drawing on pre-conceived ideas regarding who and what counts in society. In court, the innate qualities of a person need not matter, because the rights and duties of legal personhood affect not only the behavior of the person in question, but the behaviors of others toward that person. As Smith concludes in response to Dewey, “The broad purpose of legal personality, whether of a ship, an idol, a molecule, or a man, and upon whomever or whatever conferred, is to facilitate the regulation, by organized society, of human conduct and intercourse.”³²⁸ It hardly signifies whether a tree can

willfully change its behavior in response to its legal standing, because granting it personhood changes its place in relation to society. In fact, granting a tree personhood admits it into society, bestowing upon it a status that compels official recognition and response. The tree suddenly becomes a party of concern, one whose treatment must be factored into the overall web of social relations that the law serves to interpret, enforce, and revise as appropriate. Indeed, as Christopher Stone explains in *Should Trees Have Standing?* (1972), his classic text on environmental law, granting legal status to trees, tracts of land, and other nonhuman beings serves as a crucial way of codifying and enforcing ecological values.³²⁹

Notably, this account of personhood as a product of interactions does not involve any straightforward ontological claim. It is not, in other words, a version of the familiar poststructuralist argument that the subject is inextricable from its relations—an argument important to much of the interesting work occurring in animal studies and ecocriticism today. So, for example, Donna Haraway has urged new kinds of ethical responsibility arising from humans’ inextricability from other creatures, especially the dogs that coevolved with us.³³⁰ Cary Wolfe’s work at the intersection of poststructuralism and critical animal studies likewise emphasizes the arbitrary systems used to construct human exceptionalism out of a far more chaotic reality of interactions, and his recent work probes the place of the law in enforcing that exceptionalism.³³¹ But these strains of thought foreground ontology, relying on a return to the reality of human embeddedness in a more-than-human world—those material interconnections that Timothy Morton has dubbed “the mesh”—to expose the inadequacy of current political and ethical norms.³³² They are, consequently, vulnerable to opponents prepared to cavil about the meaning of

humanity and the exact nature of its relation to other beings. What makes legal personhood such a valuable tool, by contrast, is its casual relationship to ontology, its ability to either prioritize or pass over metaphysical questions on a case-by-case basis. Legal personhood provides an example of the value of bracketing ontology in the service of swift ethical intervention, and it reveals that this bracketing is, in fact, standard practice, the very foundation of the everyday experience of social order.

If the legal person enables personhood to work independently of ontology, however, it does not thereby dissolve personhood and ethics into arbitrary social constructs. Instead, it admits that history involves alterations in knowledge, and that such alterations often lead to corresponding shifts not only in our assessment of the abilities of other beings, but in the very criteria for establishing value in the first place. To admit the possibility—or, if history is any indication, the inevitability—that values change is not tantamount to denying the importance or reality of values. If anything, the legal person has far more power to actualize moral beliefs than its philosophical counterpart: as Hannah Arendt observed in the wake of the second World War, the atrocities committed against stateless persons drive home the impotence of rights discourse uncoupled from a vigilant legal system.³³³

Recently, references to an indistinct form of personhood have become increasingly common in literary scholarship, but this interest has not revealed the important historical traffic between literary persons and the flexible persons of the law. Elizabeth Fowler's argument that early modern characters represent what she calls "social persons," for example, assumes—like criticism of the nineteenth-century novel—that personhood and society are the exclusive province of human beings.³³⁴ Fowler is in

good company here; critics interested in personhood inevitably adopt the ontological and ethical assumptions fused together in the moral person. Even Barbara Johnson, who at times proves highly sensitive to distinctions between personification and anthropomorphism, casually slips into language that equivocates between personhood, subjectivity, and the rights-bearing human being.³³⁵ At their most experimental and expansive, literary critics use the person not as a way of approaching the ethical standing of nonhumans, but as a gesture toward what one recent study frankly calls a “new humanism.”³³⁶ Part of this tendency may be a problem of genre. The resurgence of interest in literary persons has concentrated on essays and lyric poetry, forms that foreground voicing and modes of address that imply an anthropomorphic speaking subject.³³⁷

Legal persons need not speak or be anthropomorphic, provided that their interactions can be narrated and judged before a court of law. The creation of legal persons through the act of narration and evaluation recalls the barely submerged genealogy connecting the legal person and the literary character. Through characterization—its own creation of *personae fictae*—the realist novel enacts imaginary redistributions of personhood in ways that resemble and even respond to the law. This relationship lends realist character a unique power to contest and intervene in practical matters of personhood, as it argues for alternative models of ethical standing before the informal court of public opinion. In the world of realism, direct, sustained attention to a narrative interaction amounts to an ethical injunction to think of the interacting parties in moral terms—as Levine puts it, realism insists on a link between “the effort of knowing and the ethic of loving.”³³⁸ This ability to enjoin ethical recognition of new sorts of

entities is a triumph of realism, but literary history has been reluctant to acknowledge the extent of its power. Like the jurists of centuries past, literary scholars still espouse narrow definitions of characterological personhood derived from moral philosophy. Part of their difficulty lies, no doubt, in the question of how to pick persons out from objects or things. If character is no longer a function of humanity or even basic interiority, how can it remain distinct from all the metonymic *stuff* that clutters the world of realism?³³⁹ Once again a pragmatic, radically open model of personhood that emerges from the literary itself offers the answer.

3. A Novel Form of Advocacy

Novels distinguish their persons not by psychology, agency, or species-affiliation, but by their status as parties to the ethical relations of the plot. As in the law, so in the realist novel: it is the narration of value conflicts and the need to settle them through some form of judgment that brings literary persons into being. Characterization, then, is not simply the representation of pre-existing beings whose qualities and merits might be predicted in advance. It is, instead, a way of using narrative to reconfigure sites of ethical rights and duties. Where narrators draw the line—what sorts of individuals or aggregates they choose to characterize, and what sorts of beings they leave beyond the pale of responsibility—comprises, in itself, a major portion of the realist novel's ethical work. The act of characterization always involves drawing such lines, partitioning social conflicts into ethically important parties with differing claims and responsibilities.

This division of plots into persons necessarily involves a struggle. Alex Woloch has deftly described this aspect of the novel in his account of the way that characters “all compete for attention within the narrative web.”³⁴⁰ But because he equates character with moral personhood, Woloch comes to some questionable conclusions about the sources of this competition. He sees it as the product of complex humans cramped into the limited space available to the novel and so forced to battle for textual priority. The realist novel’s commitment to “two contradictory achievements: depth psychology and social expansiveness” means that only a few of its characters receive the respectful attention that every character merits in theory.³⁴¹ This scheme helps justify the widespread practice of reading flat or minor characters as marginalized not only aesthetically, but politically: because they are “diminish[ed] or even stint[ed],” Woloch proclaims, “*minor characters are the proletariat of the novel.*”³⁴² But this account also implies that every character exists in ideal rotundity in some transcendent space beyond the text; only then could the text unjustly compress some persons to fit them between its covers. All characters are once again judged against a normative standard whose roots lie in theological absolutes about the human individual; the soul has, in effect, slipped back into the narrative machine.

If characterization is understood as an intervention in the very idea of personhood, rather than an attempt to represent the transcendent truth of the moral person, the shortcomings of such accounts disappear. In this model, characterological competition arises not because it is impossible for a single book to do justice to the profound complexity of a(n imagined) community of (fictional) human beings, but because personhood itself is a mode of addressing and containing conflict. Clashes of value and

disturbances in the social order signify a need to narrate conflict clearly, to reapportion rights and responsibilities in a manner that will resolve the problem. Personhood names the entities formed to locate and eventually lead such conflicts towards satisfying conclusions through the designation of responsible parties. By redefining responsibilities, every such resolution reconfigures who counts as a member of society, and how.

When the realist novel narrates and resolves value conflicts through its own system of characters, it imagines a different distribution of personhood and, therefore, new possibilities for the configuration of society as a whole. Its alternate version of the world necessarily diminishes the standing of some persons to expand the importance of others. This process applies to all potential persons, human and otherwise. In *Adam Bede*, these dynamics appear most legibly around those characters whose abjection has deprived critics of the most basic terms for describing their character status: dogs.

If Gyp and his fellow dogs do not exhibit the rich internal life or inherent humanity expected of most characters, they nevertheless participate in the struggle for ethical attention in the novel. This inclusion as novelistic persons—as parties to the interactions of the plot, to the novel’s grinding out of a conclusive redistribution of social rights and duties—makes them characters, and it explains how readers recognize them as such. The sustained attention paid to Gyp’s interactions with others, for example, places him in competition with other persons in the novel, proving that they all inhabit the same web of ethical relationships. This competition is particularly visible in Gyp’s strained exchanges with Adam’s mother, Lisbeth Bede.

Gyp and Lisbeth have much in common. Lisbeth, like Gyp, possesses an “idolatrous love for Adam,” and they both follow him, as it were, doggedly.³⁴³ Gyp even

appears conscious of their rivalry, as Adam observes to his mother: “Eh, Gyp wants me t’ look at him: he can’t abide to think I love thee the best.”³⁴⁴ The Christ-like Adam does love Lisbeth the best. But maintaining the proper priorities is always a struggle, both for Adam and for the reader, because Lisbeth’s harried prattle is hard to bear when compared to Gyp’s silent camaraderie. So when, for instance, Adam arrives home to discover that his father Thias spent the day drinking instead of working, his anger prompts a fight with his mother. Her vocal response only inflames Adam’s anger: “Lisbeth’s voice became louder, and choked with sobs: a sort of wail, the most irritating of all sounds where real sorrows are to be borne, and real work to be done.”³⁴⁵ Gyp, meanwhile, remains with Adam quietly, and the dog sticks by his side even when Lisbeth tries to tempt him away with food. When Adam finally tells Gyp he can eat from Lisbeth’s hand, the narrator sarcastically highlights the fact that Adam lashes out at Lisbeth but still coddles Gyp: “[T]hough his anger made him less tender than usual to his mother, it did not prevent him from caring as much as usual for his dog.”³⁴⁶

Characterizing Gyp, then, is tantamount to allowing him to enter into interaction—and competition—with the other “worthy personages” in the novel in a manner that invites ethical scrutiny. Narrators and readers must evaluate the competition between characters and decide on the comparative merit of their claims to sympathetic attention, weighing the appropriate consideration to accord each character (their rights, in the legal analogy) and the appropriate amount of responsibility to assign them for their interactions with other characters (their duties).

While the bare fact of Gyp’s inclusion in such contests discloses his standing as a character, the dynamics surrounding him highlight the ethical trade-offs entailed in

personhood. Admitting new candidates to social recognition diminishes the rights and increases the duties of existing persons. But new persons might edge out other candidates who seem to merit sympathetic attention, too.

In the competition between Gyp and Lisbeth, for example, Lisbeth wins out, as both Adam and the narrator take pains to make clear. Moreover, there are many indications that Lisbeth's priority is obvious and proper. Their relative standing surfaces partially through textual cajoling, as when the narrator moralizes about the treatment of dogs and women: "We are apt to be kinder to the brutes that love us than to the women that love us. Is it because the brutes are dumb?"³⁴⁷ But this hierarchy also emerges through a sinister doubling of the Gyp-Lisbeth relationship, one that demonstrates the contingent nature of personhood by imagining how the particular dynamics between Gyp and Lisbeth might play out differently.

Whereas Gyp only threatens to eclipse a woman in the contest for social recognition, another canine character actually succeeds. Gyp's bid for Adam's affection possesses a dark double in the story of Bartle Massey and his dog, Vixen. Both Gyp and Vixen bear names associated with unlovable women: although Gyp is a male in *Adam Bede*, "gypsy" has served, for centuries, as "[a] contemptuous term for a woman," a usage Eliot puts into the mouth of one of her characters in *Scenes of Clerical Life*.³⁴⁸ Vixen's name and history make the relationship between marginalized women and marginalized dogs more explicit, however. At first, Vixen's subplot looks like the heartwarming story of an abused animal adopted into a forever home—here, the schoolhouse of Adam's friend Massey, who rescued the dog from drowning.³⁴⁹ Massey, however, makes for an unlikely role model: he pours forth torrents of misogyny at every

turn, even as he provides shelter to the “brown-and-tan-coloured bitch” Vixen.³⁵⁰

Massey’s affection for Vixen may seem to accentuate the goodness beneath his otherwise crusty exterior, but it comes with a price. Vixen literally replaces the wife Massey might have had. She has given him what Adam terms “a family” in the form of pups, and Massey’s own language indicates that she occupies the role of woman of the house. “He always called Vixen a woman,” the narrator remarks, “and seemed to have lost all consciousness that he was using a figure of speech.”³⁵¹

At times the narrator plays along with the confusion good-humouredly, noting that Massey’s “table was as clean as if Vixen had been an excellent housewife in a checkered apron.”³⁵² But while Massey’s love for Vixen may be amusing and even touching, in the end it warps and disturbs his understanding of the moral community around him until his vision of society dramatically departs from the narrator’s representation of the world. Massey has so promoted Vixen in his affections that she has achieved full personhood in his eyes, but one she achieves at the expense of the human women around him. Vixen’s most vexatious behavior results in uncharitable comparisons not to brutes, but to women. When Massey becomes animated in one of his rants, Vixen—as if she, herself, is incensed by his misogyny—“jump[s] out of her hamper and bark[s] vaguely.”³⁵³ When she gives voice, Massey redirects his fury towards her: “‘Quiet, Vixen,’ snarled Bartle, turning round upon her. ‘You’re like the rest o’ the women—always putting in *your* word before you know why.’”³⁵⁴

By the same token, Massey can only conceive of women as asocial, irrational brutes without any claims to moral consideration. If Vixen’s barks sound perilously similar to women’s voices, women’s voices sound, to Massey, like the meaningless

cacophony of animals. “I hate the sound of women’s voices,” he tells Adam, “they’re always either a-buzz or a-squeak, always either a-buzz or a-squeak.”³⁵⁵ Near the conclusion of the novel, when Hetty faces execution and even the betrayed Adam is distraught, Massey is unregenerate. “For my own part, I think the sooner such women are put out o’ the world the better,” he says.³⁵⁶ Massey—a man who saved his own dog from a similar fate—conceives of Hetty as an animal that needs to be put down for the good of the community: “What good will you do by keeping such vermin alive? eating the victual that ’ud feed rational beings.”³⁵⁷

The competitive structure between dogs and women in *Adam Bede* is more than just a quirk of Eliot’s authorial psychology. It points to the historically contingent ways that several new candidates for personhood tend to vie for increased recognition at the same time, and it internalizes the tense deliberations that follow from the awareness that increased social standing for some requires denying the claims of others. When dogs struggle to displace women in the sympathies of characters and readers, in other words, they dramatize how interpersonal conflict takes on especially urgent stakes among those beings whose personhood hangs in the balance, both in the world of the novel and in the world beyond it.

A year after the publication of *Adam Bede*, the first animal shelter in England, the Temporary Home for Lost and Starving Dogs, opened in Holloway. Dickens trumpeted its appearance in *All the Year Round*, and it later garnered royal patronage and evolved into the Battersea Dogs and Cats Home.³⁵⁸ But Eliot also wrote at a time when coverture—the total dissolution of a woman’s legal personhood upon marriage—remained standard practice in Britain. As Eliot composed her novel, the first Matrimonial

Causes Act passed into law. The act made divorce more widely available by enforcing the idea of marriage as a contract between juridical persons rather than the commingling of souls, marking a significant step towards legal equality for men and women.³⁵⁹

Distant as such events may seem from each other and from the fictional, turn-of-the-century countryside around Hayslope, they hint at the mounting agitation for increased ethical recognition of the needs of both animals and women in mid-Victorian Britain. Eliot's work intervenes in these movements with its own notions of how to distribute sociopolitical standing, notions inscribed in her practices of characterization. The simultaneity of these emerging demands taxing a limited capacity for ethical attention necessitates a kind of triage, requiring writers and readers alike decide—in Eliot's words—how to distribute ethical recognition to prioritize those for whom consideration is, for the time being, “more needful.”³⁶⁰

Eliot's conclusion is clear. After *Adam Bede*, she never includes canine characters in her novels again. Dogs and other animals pervade her later works, of course, but they are never characterized: they never achieve the status of worthy personages who directly and persistently compete with human beings in bids for ethical attention. As weak echoes of Gyp and Vixen, Yap and Mumps of *The Mill on the Floss* register Eliot's rapidly diminishing interest in animals. Yap's minor importance is confined to the Tullivers' animalized childhood. And although Bob Jakin's affection for his dog Mumps threatens to turn him into a confirmed bachelor in the style of Bartle Massey—Jakin puts off thinking of a wife, he says, because “Mumps mightn't like her”—the relative weight of the dog's claim becomes clear when Jakin marries anyway, and eventually gives his dog away to the friendless Maggie.³⁶¹ Indeed, the dog's significance as an object of exchange,

a material symbol of human connection rather than a subject of connection in his own right, becomes a common motif in later Eliot. When Tom gives the dog Minnie to his cousin Lucy, it indexes both his desire to marry her and Lucy's comparative frivolity, invoking a long tradition of using lapdogs to symbolize idle wealth and social parasitism.³⁶² And as Nina Auerbach observes, the rural world of *Middlemarch* shows animals exchanged as "the visible counters of courtship" and little else; even the "saintly, statuesque" Dorothea Brooke shows a surprising lack of sympathy towards the animal creation.³⁶³

By the time Eliot publishes her final novel, *Daniel Deronda*, animals have become so insignificant to Eliot that the author cannot even keep their sexes straight. In chapter twelve of the novel Eliot introduces Fetch, Grandcourt's "beautiful liver-coloured water-spaniel" who jealously fights for the attention her master is lavishing on Fluff, "a tiny Maltese dog with a tiny silver collar and bell" who is sitting on Grandcourt's lap.³⁶⁴ After several vain attempts to win some of Grandcourt's affection, Fetch begins to whimper and finally starts howling painfully—at which point Grandcourt, previously amused by her suffering, orders his man Lush to throw her out. The canine rivalry here resembles the competitive structure in *Adam Bede*, but now, tellingly, the dogs only compete among themselves. Indeed, the narrator spares so little attention for the animals that Fetch, who begins as a female, reappears in the following chapter as a male, happily retrieving water lilies for the amusement of a party visiting Grandcourt's estate: "[T]he whole party stopped to be amused with Fetch's accomplishment of bringing a water-lily to the bank . . . and having been disappointed in his first attempt insisted on his trying again."³⁶⁵

The demotion of dogs during the course of Eliot's career makes it easy to dismiss characters like Gyp and Vixen as oddities, abortive experiments proving the rule that character is, at bottom, a category ideally suited to human beings. Yet the deliberations that produce the correspondence between character and humanity common to Eliot's later fictions reveal far more about literary character than the correspondence itself does. Those deliberations play out in *Adam Bede*, where Eliot grants animals a chance, at least, at characterization. Eliot's canine characters thus reveal that the moral stances built into the very terms of scholarship emerged far more gradually, pragmatically, and contingently in the literary record itself.

The animal characters—and the animalized human characters—in *Adam Bede* show Eliot coming to terms with the powers and limitations of moral realism. Like the industrial novelists before her, she recognizes the difficulty of using empirical methods to justify moral merit. The yawning abyss that separates empiricism from ethics makes her moral vision impossible to justify with any degree of certainty; any ontological line between moral person and insignificant object, or between human and animal, is either incompletely knowable or utterly nonexistent. At the same time, her experiments with animal characters show that characterological personhood exists entirely independent of any proof or certainty, emerging from a style of ethical narration unrelated to the innate characteristics of the subjects of the narrative.

In *Adam Bede*, Eliot stares down the dilemma at the heart of realism. She wields the narrator's surprising power to locate personhood and ethical interest almost anywhere, but she is wise enough to recognize the impossibility of achieving empirical certainty about where to assign it. Extending ethical interest to everyone is not an option,

however, because characterological personhood—like all forms of communal belonging—emerges from interpersonal exchange, an arrogation of rights that necessarily dilutes and diminishes the rights of other persons and adds to their responsibilities. Recognizing the importance of delimiting her vision of community to concentrate her moral force, Eliot abandons her experiments with animal characters. She severs her sympathetic attachments to nonhuman beings, confining her communities to the borders associated with biological humanity. The humanism that emerges in her later works is the product of this contraction of the category of character, her decision to equate character with the individual human organism. But her second novel shows just how unnatural, how difficult, and how arbitrary she considered this equivalence to be.

CHAPTER 4.**Humanizing Character**

*As for the book, I can see nothing in it just now
but the absence of things that might have been there.*

—George Eliot to John Blackwood, 3 April 1860³⁶⁶

By the time Eliot's second novel opens, animals have already been forgotten. In *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Tom Tulliver charges his younger sister, Maggie, with the simple task of looking after his rabbits while he is away at school. But Maggie becomes preoccupied with her own interests until the end of term, when Tom is expected home. Only then, in Maggie's conversation with Luke the miller, does the reader learn that Tom keeps rabbits, that they have died, and that their death is Maggie's fault:

"Dead!" screamed Maggie, jumping up from her sliding seat on the corn. "O dear, Luke! What! the lop-eared one, and the spotted doe that Tom spent all his money to buy?"

"As dead as moles," said Luke, fetching his comparison from the unmistakable corpses nailed to the stable-wall.

"O dear, Luke," said Maggie, in a piteous tone, while the big tears rolled down her cheek; "Tom told me to take care of 'em, and I forgot."³⁶⁷

Tom's rabbits offer a startling contrast to Adam Bede's dog. Whereas Gyp commanded attention as an important member of the community from the first page of *Adam Bede*, these pets are remembered only belatedly, elevated to importance only on account of their having been forgotten. Moreover, their deaths have no ethical significance of their own. There is no condemnation of Maggie's moral character for allowing these two animals to starve to death in their hutch. It hardly matters that she shares the blame with Harry, another laborer at the mill, because the rabbits' lives have no more inherent value than those of the moles nailed, trophy-like, to the stable wall. Both the rabbits and the moles serve a primarily symbolic purpose. The dead moles

participate in the traditional rural display known as a “gamekeeper’s museum”: they are exhibited to signify the success of pest control efforts and, with an eye to the future, to deter other vermin.³⁶⁸ The dead rabbits participate in a more literary display, but one that is equally symbolic: they are exhibited to signify the dynamic between Tom and Maggie and, with an eye to the future, to foreshadow Tom’s fury at Maggie’s forgetfulness of even greater duties. If the rabbits matter at all, in other words, it is not as rabbits that they matter, but as emblems of a particular dynamic developing between two human beings. They index a substantial change in Eliot’s representation of animal life.

If Eliot’s second novel opens with animals neglected and forgotten, however, it also opens with an acknowledgment of that neglect. Rather than simply setting animals aside to focus on Maggie, Tom, and the human society around St. Ogg’s, *The Mill on the Floss* continually glances back at the life it excludes in order to achieve such a focus. In its frequent references to the nonhuman world, the novel displays a pained ambivalence about its own commitment to the moral priority of human beings. It suggests that Eliot’s fabled humanism trains sympathetic attention on the lives of human beings not as an expansive ethical ideal, but as a pragmatic compromise between unconscionable selfishness and a truly expansive sympathy that would attend to the needs of a far greater community of creatures. At times the novel’s lingering sympathies for other animals—sympathies that Eliot indulged far more freely in *Adam Bede*—become so powerful that they threaten to tear the novel apart.

Critics have long observed that Eliot’s sophomore effort suffers from narrative imbalances, formal oddities, and narrative implausibilities that seem to pull the text in opposing directions.³⁶⁹ Eliot herself confessed the unevenness of the novel, admitting that

the languid detail of the early books gives way to a hurried plot and sudden denouement in the final volume. By way of explanation, baffled critics sometimes turn to Eliot's life. Eliot, they explain, was writing a fictionalized autobiography; the oddness of the novel arises from her nostalgia for her childhood, her devastation at her estrangement from her brother, and her desire for a reconciliation she knew to be impossible.³⁷⁰ Yet close attention to the symbolic and structural incongruities of *The Mill on the Floss* suggests that the novel's idiosyncrasies emerge from Eliot's own ambivalence about the nature and limits her novelistic sympathies. The bizarre features of Eliot's second novel—the intermittently embodied, didactic narrator; the intrusive narrative impinging on an expansive vision of childhood; the scenic opening and the disastrous conclusion—all represent unsuccessful containment strategies, aesthetic attempts to divide human characters from nonhuman landscapes so as to naturalize the almost microscopic attention to human social life that would define Eliot's realism.

The Mill on the Floss is a transitional novel, one that retains sympathies at odds with its supposed ideological orientation. In *Adam Bede*, Eliot had experimented with animal characters, only to conclude that they showed a dangerous tendency to distract from the needier human beings surrounding them. *The Mill on the Floss* resolves this problem by driving a wedge between human characters and nonhuman beings, inserting a distance between humans and other creatures that enables it to consign animals to the background of the novel's human drama. Eliot's didactic narrator explains that this distance is an inevitable product of moral and physiological maturity. Seen through the narrator's eyes, this *Bildungsroman* is the story of Tom and Maggie's development out of an animalized childhood into a fully human adulthood. Although they begin the novel

with ample sympathies for humans and nonhumans alike, these feelings will soon fade (the narrator assures us) with maturity and proper socialization. Over time the Tullivers will learn to recognize the priority of human beings, retaining an interest in the nonhuman world, but only as a general fondness for the natural landscape they roamed as children.

The narrator's neat scheme for dividing the human and nonhuman worlds runs into a problem, however, in the form of Maggie Tulliver. Eliot's remaining sympathies for other creatures collect around the animalized figure of Maggie, who quietly but persistently defies the plot in which she has been placed. Maggie never grows out of her childish animality. When it comes time to reject her association with other creatures in favor of an aesthetic appreciation of nature as a beautiful but inert landscape, Maggie develops a pathological attachment to the scenery of her childhood. Her love of her particular patch of ground becomes so insistent that it threatens to destroy the equivalence between human characters and nonhuman landscapes that the narrator works so hard to construct. This tension is only overcome in the shocking finale: the flood overcomes all practical distinction between character and scenery as the river rises up and drowns Maggie, materially reclaiming her as an element of the landscape she loves.

Devastating as it is, Maggie's fate enables Eliot to bury her own ethical attachments to other creatures and devote her novels to the exclusive exploration of human lives. Her later works rely on a neat division between character and landscape to uphold her humanist ethic—the very division that *The Mill on the Floss* struggles to naturalize. Yet to the end, Eliot's novels betray an awareness that this distinction is essentially arbitrary. The rhetorical categories of character and landscape enable Eliot to

draw a line between humanity and other creatures that reflects her own moral priorities, but she never loses sight of the formal nature of the distinction. In her final novel, she returns to questions of character and landscape to show that they reflect pragmatic ethical ends rather than absolute moral truth. In the process, she admits the historical contingency of her own humanism, and gestures at the possibility of future ethics independent of, and even critical towards, conventional definitions of the human.

1. When I Grow Up (To Be a Man)

Maggie Tulliver leads a beastly sort of life. From her earliest childhood, she exhibits a close association with the denizens of the natural world. Sometimes this association takes the form of a physical resemblance: wrestling with a mess of unruly hair, Maggie “incessantly toss[es] her head to keep the dark heavy locks out of her gleaming black eyes—an action which [gives] her very much the air of a small Shetland pony.”³⁷¹ Her animality runs deeper than mere appearances, however. Her early rebellions mark her as “half-wild,” a label she seems to accept whenever she complements her defiant words “with a toss of her mane.”³⁷² When the Dodsons refuse to help the Tullivers in their time of need, Maggie’s fury becomes almost predatory—she verbally rips into her aunts and uncles, “her eyes flashing like the eyes of a young lioness.”³⁷³ Even when Maggie behaves, she possesses an undeniably animalistic manner; her quieter, more watchful attitudes make her look “like a Skye terrier suspecting mischief.”³⁷⁴ The most sensitive characters in the novel recognize Maggie’s peculiarity, and find themselves mysteriously drawn to her alluring inhumanity. When Philip Wakem

first meets Maggie during her visit to Mr. Stelling's school, for instance, he finds himself entranced by the way she wavers between a beauty and a beast: "What was it, he wondered, that made Maggie's dark eyes remind him of the stories about princesses being turned into animals?"³⁷⁵

This animal symbolism features in many critical discussions of *The Mill on the Floss*.³⁷⁶ Speculations about the metaphoric meaning of Maggie's animality, however, have missed the novel's broader, more important insistence that Maggie should somehow *grow out of* her animal associations. Despite Eliot's famous partiality towards Maggie Tulliver, *The Mill on the Floss* is of two minds about the animal wildness that constitutes one of her most memorable characteristics.³⁷⁷ It depicts her early animality as a universal feature of childhood, but the narrator's intrusive commentary—and the structure of the *Bildungsroman* itself—treats maturity as a humanizing process that ought to rid all characters, Maggie included, of their affiliations with animal life. Becoming an adult, the narrator suggests, means becoming human, joining society and leaving behind those early experiences of sympathy with the natural world. Youthful attachments to the nonhuman world may persist, the narrator suggests, but only as a generalized love of landscape, a fond memory of nature and the earth that reconciles adults to the anguish and disappointments of human social life. This Wordsworthian developmental framework successfully explains Maggie's childhood experience. As she grows, however, her animality remains, defying the espoused logic of the novel. The tension between the narrator's assurances about human development and Maggie's persistent animal associations suggests that cutting ethical ties to the more-than-human world is a far more difficult process—and a far more arbitrary one—than the narrative's conventions allow.

In her early years, Maggie's animal nature does not stand out as particularly unusual. As children, both Tom and Maggie not only mingle with animals—for all intents and purposes, they *are* animals. Growing up at Dorlcote Mill outside the town of St. Ogg's, the siblings develop a profound appreciation for the natural world. They gambol about with their terrier Yap “very much like young animals.”³⁷⁸ The children's unbounded world is like “Eden before the seasons were divided, and when the starry blossoms grew side by side with the ripening peach.”³⁷⁹ This Edenic childhood enables an unbiased acquaintance with everyone and everything that populates the surrounding countryside. Living in a world free from fine moral and philosophical distinctions, Maggie and Tom possess a “strangely perspectiveless conception of life.”³⁸⁰ Class distinctions, too, have yet to shatter the inclusiveness of this childhood world, so Tom and Maggie can share their more-than-human community with their rustic friend, the human scarecrow Bob Jakin. Bob lives in even closer kinship to animals than Tom or Maggie, and much of his fascination derives from this intimacy: “Bob knew, directly he saw a bird's egg, whether it was a swallow's, or a tomtit's, or a yellow-hammer's; he found out all the wasps' nests . . . he could climb trees like a squirrel, and had quite a magical quality of detecting hedgehogs and stoats.”³⁸¹ Although not as learned as Bob, Tom has his own boyish wisdom that extends to human and nonhuman subjects alike, providing a window onto his expansive but chaotic worldview: “He knew all about worms, and fish, and those things; and what birds were mischievous, and how padlocks opened, and which way the handles of the gates were to be lifted.”³⁸²

Tom's approach to locks and fences shows a childish expertise in crossing over barriers—physical, social, and perhaps even legal—erected by the adults around him. The

novel figures adulthood as the imposition and reinforcement of such barriers on childhood experience. So, when Tom and Maggie are given permission to leave behind the social niceties of the dinner table and have dessert “in the summer-house,” they “scamper[] out among the budding bushes of the garden with the alacrity of small animals getting from under a burning-glass.”³⁸³ Their parents often suspend their own manners around the children in unapologetically dehumanizing ways, leaving Tom and Maggie as free as birds from societal rules and protections: “The children were used to hear themselves talked of as freely as if they were birds, and could understand nothing.”³⁸⁴

This animalized idyll cannot last, however. As the Edenic allusions suggest, it is bound to fall apart over the course of Tom and Maggie’s development. But the fall is more gradual than the novel’s Biblical overtones imply. The age difference between the siblings slowly opens up a rift in how they understand their respective places in the world, a painful discrepancy in their childhood experience that precedes their family’s more drastic fall from grace. Maturity, in the novel, is its own kind of fall, entailing an accession into society and a human self-consciousness that wrenches human beings from their early embeddedness in nature. The first cracks in the Tullivers’ harmonious childhood begin to show even in the novel’s opening books, because Tom is already old enough to discern certain social niceties that escape his younger sister. The strength of his friendship with Bob Jakin owes something, in fact, to Tom’s transitional position between youthful animality and full adult socialization. Bob appeals to both the childish and the adult sides of Tom’s personality: Bob’s intimate knowledge of natural phenomena plays to Tom’s childlike wonder at the natural world, while his low origins

appeal to Tom's nascent awareness of the Tullivers' social superiority, preventing Bob's impressive powers from threatening Tom's growing ego: "Such qualities in an inferior, who could always be treated with authority in spite of his superior knowingness, had necessarily a fatal fascination for Tom."³⁸⁵

Tom's socialization gives him a sense of his place in the social hierarchy, and a cognate sense of the superiority of all human society to the natural world. His youthful animality, in other words, rubs up against a growing belief in human pre-eminence over other creatures—and a corresponding license to treat them however he likes. Thus although Maggie, Tom, and their young cousin Lucy all show a fascination with the animals at their uncle Pullet's farm, their interests are radically different. Maggie excels at telling "stories about the live things they came upon by accident" that delight her cousin into interest in animal life.³⁸⁶ In their very lack of realism, Maggie's stories highlight either her inability or her deliberate refusal to categorize the creatures around her as asocial beings removed from her own experience of interpersonal relationships. So, as she inspects the well-fed spiders who take up residence in her father's mill, Maggie wonders how their socioeconomic position affects their relationships:

The spiders were especially a subject of speculation with her. She wondered if they had any relatives outside the mill, for in that case there must be a painful difficulty in their family intercourse—a fat and floury spider, accustomed to take his fly well dusted with meal, must suffer a little at a cousin's table where the fly was *au naturel*, and the lady-spiders must be mutually shocked at each other's appearance.³⁸⁷

Maggie's sympathetic interest in the doings of other creatures proves contagious to Lucy. Lucy "[has] a delighted semi-belief" in the narratives Maggie tells, which inspires her to invite Maggie to look at animals like one of the toads Tom finds in a window-well: "Lucy wished Maggie to enjoy the spectacle also, especially as she would

doubtless find a name for the toad, and say what had been its past history.”³⁸⁸ Tom, however, has “a profound contempt for this nonsense of Maggie’s.”³⁸⁹ He proves, in a different way, “fond of animals—fond, that is, of throwing stones at them.”³⁹⁰ Maggie’s powerful sympathies with other creatures clash with her brother’s will to power, and the conflict sometimes stands in the way of their playing together. Her qualms about skewering worms, for example, render her reluctant to go fishing until Tom convinces her, somewhat disingenuously, that the activity is harmless: “She had told Tom, however, that she should like him to put the worms on the hook for her, although she accepted his word when he assured her that worms couldn’t feel (it was Tom’s private opinion that it didn’t much matter if they did).”³⁹¹

In the growing divide between the siblings, Maggie’s regard for nonhuman lives not only distances her from Tom—it classes her among the animal life he cannot respect. When an increasingly domineering Tom roams the countryside searching out animals to tease and torture, for instance, the narrator describes his behavior as “indicating thus early that desire for mastery over the inferior animals, wild and domestic, including cockchafer, neighbours’ dogs, and small sisters, which in all ages has been an attribute of so much promise for the fortunes of our race.”³⁹² Maggie appropriately joins the likes of animal creation in this flippant list, as her interest in other creatures marks her persistent association with them and her increasing separation from her older brother. At the same time, the facetious tone of the observation indicates the narrator’s strained role as a kind of mediator between the positions that Tom and Maggie represent.

The narrator’s supposed partiality towards Maggie Tulliver jars against the text’s emphatic insistence that maturity means becoming more Tom-like, participating fully in

human society and leaving youthful acquaintance with other creatures behind. Although the book may censure Tom's patriarchal exercises in human mastery, it nevertheless endorses his vision of maturity as an acceptance of human primacy. The early, bestial childhood of Tom and Maggie is, in fact, already tinged with the narrator's ambivalent nostalgia for such kinship, a recognition and even admiration tarnished by the recurring sense that such scenes must and should end soon. When the Tulliver children make up after a tiff, for example, the novel relies, as usual, on animal comparisons to describe their behavior. But an odd perspective taints and distorts the intimate scene. "[T]hey ate together," the narrator writes, "and rubbed each other's cheeks and brows and noses together, while they ate, with a humiliating resemblance to two friendly ponies."³⁹³ Here the touching animal closeness of the reconciliation is interrupted by a strangely disembodied humiliation. Tom and Maggie are, in this moment, utterly unselfconscious, engaged in an act of eating together that only ends when they run out of cake. Not only do they show no signs of humiliation, but they are completely incapable of observing themselves from a distance that would allow them to detect their equine appearance. Their animality is not, in other words, humiliating to them. Instead the narrator is embarrassed *for* Tom and Maggie, at once moved by and ashamed of this particular lapse in human decorum. Jacques Derrida has suggested that humans' shame at their animality may be the only universally accepted distinction between humans and other creatures, and the narrator of *The Mill on the Floss* seems, in such moments, to provide a case in point.³⁹⁴

Yet the novel is, remarkably, not only ashamed of animality, but also rather ashamed of its shame. In a number of digressive commentaries, the narrator shows a

sympathy divided between Maggie's affective bond with other creatures and Tom's scornful superiority over them. This ambivalence manifests as a scathing irony that recurs in the novel's extensive observations on the relationship between humans and animals. It is visible, for instance, in the description of Tom's mastery over other creatures (including Maggie) as "promising." It appears in the "humiliating" episode of sibling reconciliation as well. There, the horsey behavior of Tom and Maggie elicits an intrusive meditation on the passage of time as a force that must change Tom, Maggie, and all other maturing human beings. When we reach adulthood, the narrator remarks, "We no longer approximate in our behaviour to the mere impulsiveness of the lower animals, but conduct ourselves in every respect like members of a highly civilized society."³⁹⁵ Scathing self-doubt creeps into even this normative statement: we do not so much *become* civilized members of society as learn to behave "in every respect like" them, performing a human distinction whose reality is open to question. Furthermore, the narrator hints, this maturity involves checking our natural instincts and, in the process, losing something good-natured inside ourselves: "We learn to restrain ourselves as we get older. We keep apart when we have quarreled, and express ourselves in well-bred phrases, and in this way preserve a dignified alienation, showing much firmness on one side, and swallowing much grief on the other."³⁹⁶

The single "dignified alienation" in this passage actually names three kinds of distance that the narrator considers intimately related: the distance between youth and maturity ("as we get older"), the distance that separates humans from "the lower animals," and distant politeness enjoined by those social norms that "keep [us] apart when we have quarreled." By linking humanity with socialization and treating them both

as functions of physiological development, the narrator characterizes alienation from nature as the inevitable side-effect of human maturity. But this sort of growth entails, at the same time, a regrettable loss of kinship with other creatures, and the narrator cannot entirely help insinuating that such loss is an arbitrary form of socialization, not the inevitable result of human biological difference. Hence the quiet sarcasm of the narrative voice, which grows even more direct in the shorter passages on human uniqueness sprinkled throughout the text. When Maggie experiences an early taste of sorrow, for example, the narrator remarks on “that superior power of misery which distinguishes the human being, and places him at a proud distance from the most melancholy chimpanzee.”³⁹⁷ The same ambivalence about human exceptionalism sometimes manifests as social commentary showing Eliot’s intuition that humanity is not so much a decisive biological distinction as way of differentiating an ingroup, celebrating its superiority over the diverse others it excludes: “[I]s not the striving after something better and better in our surroundings, the grand characteristic that distinguishes man from the brute—or, to satisfy a scrupulous accuracy of definition, that distinguishes the British man from the foreign brute?”³⁹⁸

This recurring need to chew over the distinction between humans and animals looks, at first, like a distinctly post-Darwinian anxiety. Indeed, many critics have suggested that the novel’s animal tropes owe something either to Darwin or to other scientific theories circulating in Victorian England.³⁹⁹ Eliot and her partner George Lewes did read *On the Origin of Species* immediately after its publication in November 1859. At the time, Eliot had written close to one-half of *The Mill on the Floss*, so the connection between Darwin’s work and her own makes chronological sense.⁴⁰⁰ Eliot’s

journal indicates, however, that she was too disappointed by Darwin's lack of organization to absorb the revolutionary contributions of his theory. "We began Darwin's work on 'The Origin of Species' tonight," she writes on 23 November. "It seems not to be well written: though full of interesting matter, it is not impressive, from want of luminous and orderly presentation."⁴⁰¹ Later, she and Lewes would grow to champion the theory and befriend Darwin and his wife, Emma. But her early response suggests that natural selection had little impact on her novel-in-progress. She seems to have understood *The Origin* primarily as a comprehensive treatment of evolutionary ideas already available at the time, explaining in a letter to a friend that "[i]t is an elaborate exposition of the evidence in favour of the Development Theory, and so, makes an epoch."⁴⁰²

Despite the intriguing chronology, then, *The Mill on the Floss* probably owes little to Darwinian thought. On closer examination, this is hardly surprising. The tone of the novel's early books vacillates between a wistful, nostalgic desire to mingle with the denizens of the natural world and a sense that alienation from such creatures is the definitive milestone of human development. Neither attitude makes sense in a Darwinian framework. *On the Origin of Species* hints at an unbreakable spectrum connecting humans to other animals, a spectrum Darwin lays out more explicitly in his next evolutionary study, *The Descent of Man* (1871). Eliot's narrator, in other words, is agonizing over a human distinction that Darwin's books render immaterial. The narrator's ambivalence is not, then, the product of some post-Darwinian anxiety about man's inextricability from animal creation. It is, instead, a retrospective lament at a supposedly inevitable break between humanity and nature. This lament bears the traces of

a theory of development very different from Darwin's—the developmental theory popularized by the poetry of William Wordsworth.

Wordsworth's poems provide a clear precedent for both the notions of development and the wistful narrative voice of *The Mill on the Floss*. Eliot's lifelong devotion to Wordsworth's works began in her youth, and she and Lewes were, in fact, reading *The Excursion* aloud to each other during their travels in Dorsetshire, where Eliot was scouting locations for her novel while Lewes experimented with his saltwater aquarium.⁴⁰³ In both its narrative voice and its preoccupation with a brother-sister relationship, however, *The Mill on the Floss* demonstrates a more particular debt to "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey."⁴⁰⁴ There, Wordsworth's speaker returns to the banks of the Wye River with his sister, reflecting on their earlier years and noting how he has

changed, no doubt, from what I was, when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams . . .⁴⁰⁵

In his deerlike youth, the speaker experienced total sensual immersion in the nonhuman world:

For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by,)
To me was all in all.⁴⁰⁶

But this version of the speaker exists only the past, and he can no longer access or even fully represent his childhood experience of total unity with nature:

I cannot paint
What then I was.⁴⁰⁷

Complete, unthinking affinity with nature becomes a mark of childhood naïveté no longer available to a fully mature human subjectivity:

That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures.⁴⁰⁸

If Wordsworth's speaker has experienced a decisive break from the natural world, however, his younger sister has not. His recollections are prompted not only by the landscape, but by the sister who still seems, at least to his mind, a part of it. The speaker turns, in the last section, to his sister, and remarks:

. . . [I]n thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister!⁴⁰⁹

Her lingering affinity with the natural world is—as in *The Mill on the Floss*—a mark of immaturity, something that, the speaker insists, will vanish

in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure . . .⁴¹⁰

The Wordsworthian speaker experiences a traumatic sense of loss in the transition from his childhood experience of oneness with nature to adult isolation from it. “The Youth,” Wordsworth writes in the “Intimations Ode,”

still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At Length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.⁴¹¹

The “severing of our loves” that accompanies maturity does, however, come with its own consolations that grow in tandem with the “years that bring the philosophic mind.”⁴¹²

This consolation—the “sober pleasure” of “Tintern Abbey”—is the inevitable product of distance itself. If adults can no longer experience the transports of complete belonging within the natural world, maturity enables the contemplation of nature at a distance: in short, of landscape. Torn from nature, mature human beings gain the aesthetic distance necessary to consciously appreciate the earth in the form of the landscapes that shaped their psychosocial development.

“Tintern Abbey” figures such landscapes as surprisingly portable sources of inspiration. Memories of the landscape around the Wye accompany the speaker during his life in London and replenish his faith in existence when human society seems at its most wretched. “The wild green landscape,” he insists, has stayed with him long after he departed his early, wild community and entered the exclusively human world of city life.⁴¹³ It has comforted him “in lonely rooms . . . [i]n hours of weariness” and strengthened his moral character, as he reflects that the “feelings” the landscape inspires

may have had no trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man’s life;
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and love.⁴¹⁴

He therefore dubs

nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of [his] purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of [his] heart, and soul
Of all [his] moral being.⁴¹⁵

The natural world, in this Wordsworthian version of *Bildung*, has been consigned to the realm of memory and processed as an element of moral development. The speaker can appreciate its influence precisely because it no longer exerts an all-consuming power over his mind and senses. As an aestheticized landscape, it provides a reminder of a lost

experience of harmony with all existence—one that remains useful as a way of inspiring renewed affection and reconciliation with the vicissitudes of life in human society. This Wordsworthian nature appreciation thus insists on a transferable sentiment of admiration and wonder, one that assumes the possibility of progressing from a love of nature to a love of human society. The title of the eighth book of the *Prelude* nicely encapsulates this act of psychological sublimation: “Retrospect—Love of Nature Leading to Love of Man.” Wordsworth thus helped to advance and popularize the idea that love of nature could be a pro-social force because, as William Hazlitt would later put it, “Nature is a kind of universal home, and every object it presents to us an old acquaintance with unaltered looks.”⁴¹⁶ As Jonathan Bate summarizes, this “love of nature,” in turn, “leads Wordsworth to be able to love and to see love even in the city.”⁴¹⁷

Whether or not Wordsworth’s writing actually achieves this transference, and what its political implications might be, remain matters of debate.⁴¹⁸ Wordsworth’s Victorian readership seems, however, to have accepted and even embraced the idea. Thus John Stuart Mill writes in his *Autobiography* that Wordsworth’s locodescriptive poetry had precisely the intended effect on him, and thereby saved him in the midst of his emotional breakdown. Wordsworth’s poems, he says, “Addressed themselves powerfully to one of the strongest of my pleasurable susceptibilities, the love of rural objects and natural scenery.”⁴¹⁹ But Wordsworth’s scenery is more than a mere picture; Mill insists that it “would never have had any great effect on [him], if [Wordsworth] had merely placed before [him] beautiful pictures of natural scenery.”⁴²⁰ Instead, the power of Wordsworth comes from his ability to teach a way of reading scenery as “a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all

human beings.”⁴²¹ Wordsworthian scenery entails an approach to interpreting the nonhuman world that paradoxically prioritizes human doings. It makes it possible to turn to nature “not only without turning away from, but with a greatly increased interest in, the common feelings and common destiny of human beings.”⁴²²

This doubled movement offers an attractive dialectic resolution to the conflict between Tom and Maggie that threatens to tear *The Mill on the Floss* in two. Divided between a desire to embrace membership in the natural world and a need to defend the ethical priority of human beings, Eliot seizes on a Wordsworthian understanding of human development that treats human separation from other creatures as a necessary and even valuable part of growing up. This approach to *Bildung* carves out a compromise between Tom and Maggie, as it affords a prominent place for nature in adulthood—albeit only *as* place. The natural community experienced in childhood flattens, over time, into a static landscape whose beauty functions as an memento of our fond attachment to this world. The narrative voice of *The Mill on the Floss* happily espouses this “mature” approach to nature. The narrator even conveniently glosses his⁴²³ descriptions of childhood with reflections that echo and endorse Wordsworth’s message on nature and the passage of time:

Life did change for Tom and Maggie; and yet they were not wrong in believing that the thoughts and loves of these first years would always make part of their lives. We could never have loved the earth so well if we had had no childhood in it,—if it were not the earth where the same flowers come up again every spring that we used to gather with our tiny fingers as we sat lipping to ourselves on the grass—the same hips and haws on the autumn hedgerows—the same redbreasts that we used to call “God’s birds,” because they did no harm to the precious crops.⁴²⁴

The youthful experience of universal fellowship fades, but the sentiment it instills, the narrator suggests, does not. That sentiment becomes a more general appreciation for

“the earth,” a vague collective concept that encompasses the flowers and hedgerows, the robins and stoats and earwigs and toads of Maggie’s childhood. The appeal of a Wordsworthian speaking position for Eliot is undeniable, as its contemplative remove from nature provides an alluring solution to the ecological dilemma she faced in her own moral realism: the question of how to appropriately acknowledge felt attachments to the nonhuman world without sacrificing any of the primacy of the human community.

What works for the Wordsworthian poet or the lyric subject, however, proves more problematic in the narrative world of the novel. Wordsworth presents the process of estrangement from the more-than-human world as a *fait accompli*, almost a necessary precondition for the act of poetic speaking. The poet’s “philosophic mind” is no longer embedded within the nature he muses over; that severed connection now exists only as another “emotion recollected in tranquillity” whose immersive qualities are forever lost.⁴²⁵ The same is true for Eliot’s narrator, whose mature distance spawns an awareness of the “humiliating resemblance” of Tom and Maggie to other animals. But *The Mill on the Floss* is a *Bildungsroman*; it presents the growth of its protagonists in something like real-time. While the narrator can treat nature from the safe distance of retrospection, Tom and Maggie must actively grow out of it, and the decisive developmental rift—“the years that bring the philosophic mind”—must somehow pass before the reader’s eyes.

The task of narrating the break that constitutes human uniqueness turns out to be a much more difficult job than simply positing it as an inevitability that has already occurred. *The Mill on the Floss* actively works to demote the nonhuman world over the course of its story, to convert it into a distanced landscape that poses no distraction from the human ethical relations that define its characters. The scenery of *The Mill on the*

Floss, like the Wordsworthian landscape it mimics, is repeatedly represented as a source of pleasurable contemplation, but one at a remove from the mature human characters supposed to constitute the novel's moral focus. In the very process of reifying such scenic landscapes, however, *The Mill on the Floss* reveals the effort required to produce them. The difference between morally significant characters and beautiful but inert landscapes is not the product of natural moral difference, the novel suggests, but rather of ethical attention skillfully controlled by the social priorities of the narrative voice. The artifice involved in differentiating human characters from the natural landscape becomes especially apparent in the monologues that bookend the novel, in which the presence of the narrator steps in to shape the landscapes that dominate both its peacefully scenic opening and its catastrophic geological conclusion.

2. Figure and Ground

The opening scene of *The Mill on the Floss* is so boring that even the narrator falls asleep over it. The novel begins with a lengthy description of the watery world around St. Ogg's, as the narrator wanders (in every sense) from the town, to its river the Floss, up its tributary the Ripple, and finally to Dorlcote Mill, which sits—the novel's title notwithstanding—on the Ripple:⁴²⁶

And this is Dorlcote Mill. I must stand a minute or two here on the bridge and look at it, though the clouds are threatening, and it is far on in the afternoon. Even in this leafless time of departing February it is pleasant to look at—perhaps the chill damp season adds a charm to the trimly-kept, comfortable dwelling-house, as old as the elms and chestnuts that shelter it from the northern blast. The stream is brimful now, and lies high in this little withy plantation, and half drowns the grassy fringe of the croft in front of the house. As I look at the full stream, the vivid grass, the delicate bright-green powder softening the outline of the great trunks and branches that gleam from

under the bare purple boughs, I am in love with moistness, and envy the white ducks that are dipping their heads far into the water here among the withes, unmindful of the awkward appearance they make in the drier world above.⁴²⁷

The most interesting thing about this description is the way it carefully avoids any special interest in anything. It dodges and delays, refusing either emphasis or subordination by employing a combination of simultaneity (marked by “even” or “as”) and paraphrasis. This technique builds a coordinated list broken only by the occasional “and,” a syntax that distributes attention equally among all objects. Its verbs, where they occur, are of the quietest, stillest kind. Bland linking verbs (“is”), verbs that denote stasis (“stand,” “shelter,” “lies”), and verbs that emphasize contemplative reception (“look,” “adds”) predominate. Taken together, these features generate a litany of details that fill out the scene without urging a particular, heightened focus on any single element of the picture.

At just over two pages, this chapter is unusually short. But because it manages to describe a place without keying the reader into any object of particular importance, it *feels* long. No wonder, then, that the narrator eventually dozes off:

Now I can turn my eyes towards the mill again, and watch the unresting wheel sending out its diamond jets of water. That little girl is watching it too: she has been standing on just the same spot at the edge of the water ever since I paused on the bridge. And that queer white cur with the brown ear seems to be leaping and barking in ineffectual remonstrance with the wheel; perhaps he is jealous, because his playfellow in the beaver bonnet is so rapt in its movement. It is time that the little playfellow went in, I think; and there is a very bright fire to tempt her: the red light shines out under the deepening gray of the sky. It is time, too, for me to leave off resting my arms on the cold stone of this bridge. . . .

Ah, my arms are really benumbed. I have been pressing my elbows on the arms of my chair, and dreaming that I was standing on the bridge in front of Dorlcote Mill, as it looked one February afternoon many years ago. Before I dozed off, I was going to tell you what Mr. and Mrs. Tulliver were talking about, as they sat by the bright fire in the left-hand parlour, on that very afternoon I have been dreaming of.⁴²⁸

The drowsy, meandering mind of the narrator underscores the hypnotic quality of the scenic description that opens *The Mill on the Floss*, the monotony that builds as the

movement from sentence to sentence only deepens the stasis of the scenery represented. By paying equal attention to everything, this scenic description pays serious attention to nothing. The reader's mind drifts with the narrator's, growing unfocused, bored, and sleepy. When Eliot lets her own speaker fall asleep, she acknowledges this effect, outdoing her beloved Homer: she nods, certainly—but she winks, too.

The self-conscious twist at the end of Eliot's opening indicates that this scenery is underwhelming or even skippable because it has been designed that way. Its deliberate dullness sets it off from the narrative proper, the realm of characters whose interactions ought to captivate the reader by demanding close ethical attention and evaluation. In *The Mill on the Floss*, the story does not so much emerge from the scenery as occlude it. The scenic description of the first chapter provides a dull, prosy version of Wordsworthian landscape, as the narrator lingers over a beloved green world that now seems to exist only in memory. It elicits "that sweet monotony where everything is known, and *loved* because it is known" that the narrator associates with the beloved childhood "home-scene."⁴²⁹ The second chapter comprises a waking—a literal *start*—accompanied by a new kind of attention, with Mr. Tulliver in the midst of a monologue about what he wants for his son. The difference between the two opening chapters institutes a formal distinction between scenic description and characterization, the first intimation of the novel's broader attempt to divide the two and create an aesthetic distinction between humanity and the nonhuman world. This distinction works by carefully controlling readerly attention, connecting characters into a web of ethical interactions that never extends to the scenery around them.

The lengthy description that Eliot affords to her opening landscape spreads attention thinly across a number of objects, an aesthetic effect that insulates its object from serious ethical analysis. “Narration,” as Georg Lukács observes, “establishes proportions,” while “description merely levels.”⁴³⁰ The equality that description creates is not an enviable one, because it renders everything equal only in the sense of being equally flat. The dullness of Eliot’s opening is the inevitable consequence of such flatness extended so long that it makes sustained interest impossible. “Without the interaction of struggle among people,” Lukács concludes, “without testing in action, everything in composition becomes arbitrary and incidental.”⁴³¹ When Eliot treats certain elements in her novel as objects of description, rather than subjects of narration, she includes them within the text, but removes them from the ethical dynamics at the center of her moral realism.

The descriptive approach of “Outside Dorlcote Mill” is not unique to Eliot’s writing. Timothy Morton, observing similar rhetorical structures in Romantic poetry and American nature writing, has dubbed this set of formal strategies *ecomimesis*, highlighting its reliance on features like “the paratactic list . . . [and] the imagery of disjointed phenomena surrounding the narrator” to “evoke distance” and thereby establish a sense of environment for the reader.⁴³² Eliot’s opening chapter, in other words, constitutes an exercise in environmental writing. And as one might expect, the features of this environment are overwhelmingly nonhuman. By consigning nonhumans to her aesthetic environments, Eliot sets the stage for the purely human drama of her fiction. Indeed, her practice seems to presage the ideological distinction that associates narration with humans and description with nonhuman “things” that Lukács would later endorse. A

proper realism, Lukács declares, reserves narration for human beings—a reflection of his Marxist humanist belief that human interaction comprises the sole source of meaning and value in the world. “Description,” he declaims, “debases characters to the level of inanimate objects,” neglecting a world of “epic interrelationship” for “a succession of fetishized objects” that effectively assents to capitalist commodification of human experience.⁴³³

Eliot’s application of description to the nonhuman landscape thus seems, at first, to reinforce her own humanism. It obeys a broadly Lukácsian impulse to narrate human doings while demoting natural objects through the relative isolation and stasis of description. But if *The Mill on the Floss* demonstrates the historical use of description as a literary means of separating and prioritizing humanity against a nonhuman background, it also confesses the strain involved in such a separation. The environmental writing that opens Eliot’s second novel does—for the most part—consign the nonhuman world to a scenic background. But it fails to make a completely clean break between human characters and the nonhuman landscape. Animals, plants, and a few rustic structures “as old as the elms and chestnuts” dominate the scenery around St. Ogg’s.⁴³⁴ Outside of the speaker, there are only two humans present—one wagon driver and one little girl—and they are both figured as leaving the scene. The narrator watches as the waggoner’s cart quickly “disappears at the turning behind the trees.”⁴³⁵ As for the little girl, she should be leaving the scene, too—or so the narrator asserts: “It is time the little playfellow went in, I think.”⁴³⁶

The narrator never does see her go in, however. She cannot seem to break herself away from the landscape. This little aesthetic difficulty—or “small mistake of nature,” as

the narrator later describes her—will grow in interest and importance to dominate Eliot's second novel.⁴³⁷ Her name, of course, is Maggie Tulliver. But at this point she is not even a character, much less the protagonist of Eliot's story; the narrator affords her no more attention than any other element of the landscape. Maggie and her dog, Yap, represent nothing more than two more objects added to the list of scenic details among which the narrator's eyes wander, formally integrated into the landscape around "those large dipping willows," "the trimly-kept, comfortable dwelling house," "the elms and chestnuts that shelter it," "the full stream, the vivid grass, the delicate bright-green powder softening the outline of the great trunks and branches that gleam from under the bare purple boughs," "the white ducks," and "the withes."⁴³⁸

In fact, Maggie's introduction to the text resembles the later introduction of Tom's rabbits—by the time she receives any attention at all, she has already been overlooked. The narrator belatedly confesses that he has forgotten to mention this little girl, who "has been standing on just the same spot at the edge of the water ever since [he] paused on the bridge" several paragraphs before.⁴³⁹ Nor does his attention linger on her and her dog, as the narrative lingered and focused on Adam and Gyp in Eliot's previous work. After opining that this little girl should leave the scene and go inside, the speaker passes on to "the bright fire," "the deepening gray of the sky," and "the cold stone of [the] bridge."⁴⁴⁰ The girl, in other words, begins as an element of the scenery across which the narrative attention flits with only intermittent interest, even as the speaker registers a certain impropriety in her mingling in this litany of nonhuman objects.

The second chapter rapidly reverses this perspective, imposing a decisive rupture between the novel's scenic background and its human characters. Whereas the embodied

narrator of the opening muses over St. Ogg's and Dorlcote Mill as idyllic landscapes relegated to a hazy memory world, the second chapter thrusts readers into an animated dialogue between Mr. Tulliver and his wife, who sit around "the bright fire in the left-hand parlour" whose glow provided only one element of the earlier backdrop.⁴⁴¹ The sudden switch of foreground and background leaves Maggie Tulliver stranded, caught somewhere in the middle distance. The still girl in the scenery—the one "standing on just the same spot at the edge of the water" throughout the opening—momentarily vanishes.⁴⁴² Only when she becomes the subject of conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Tulliver does Maggie's mother belatedly realize, once again, that Maggie has been overlooked: "'An' now you put me i' mind,' continued Mrs. Tulliver, rising and going to the window, 'I don't know where she is now, an' it's pretty nigh tea-time.'"⁴⁴³

Mrs. Tulliver naturally turns to the landscape to find her daughter. As if to accentuate her daughter's status as an element of a formally composed scene, Mrs. Tulliver first catches sight of her through the visual frame of the window, lost in the distance and trapped behind glass. "Ah, I thought so," she muses, "—wanderin' up an' down by the water, like a wild thing: she'll tumble in some day."⁴⁴⁴ Wild and thinglike, Maggie is an unlikely heroine. Concerned that her daughter is mingling a bit too closely with the fluvial scenery, Mrs Tulliver "rap[s] the window sharply" to signal Maggie to come inside.⁴⁴⁵ In the process, Maggie receives a sharp knock from the background to the foreground, from scenic description to narrative characterization, that allows her to assume the role of protagonist in the Tullivers' tale.

This knock is never as decisive, however, as either the narrator or Mrs. Tulliver would like. Throughout the novel, Maggie remains troublingly attached to the nonhuman

life from which she ought to distance herself. That attachment comes across in her persistent associations with nature and its inhabitants. So, long after Tom and Maggie have left their childhoods behind, Maggie remains evocative of the more-than-human world. Her supposed civilization, in the final books of the novel, looks less like a blossoming humanity than a forced, ineffective attempt at domestication. By her own account, the experience of adulthood has maimed her the way wild animals are damaged by lengthy confinement. “It is with me as I used to think it would be with the poor uneasy white bear I saw at the show,” she tells her cousin Lucy. “I thought he must have got so stupid with the habit of turning backwards and forwards in that narrow space, that he would keep doing it if they set him free.”⁴⁴⁶

Lucy’s generosity to Maggie, in turn, looks suspiciously like the adoption of a mistreated animal. Lucy is, after all, “fond of feeding dependent creatures, and [she] knew the private tastes of all the animals about the house, delighting in the little rippling sounds of her canaries when their beaks were busy with fresh seed, and in the small nibbling pleasures of certain animals which, lest she should appear too trivial, I will here call ‘the more familiar rodents.’”⁴⁴⁷ Maggie’s role in the Deane household, Philip suggests only half-jokingly, makes her “better than a whole menagerie of pets” to her cousin.⁴⁴⁸ Maggie’s animality is as pronounced in her late rebellions as in her coerced domesticity: when Stephen Guest leans in to kiss her, she looks at him “like a lovely wild animal timid and struggling under caresses.”⁴⁴⁹

The persistence of Maggie’s animal associations indexes her failure to thrive under the developmental prescriptions of *The Mill on the Floss*. As she grows, those prescriptions dictate a cutting of ties with the natural world, and a vague, compensatory

sense of attachment to the earthen landscape. Instead of acquiring the distant aesthetic appreciation of scenery that should console her to her alienation from nature, however, Maggie's attachment to her childhood surroundings only intensifies. As Nina Auerbach notes, Maggie's character is remarkable for "her charged relationship both to animals and to the natural world."⁴⁵⁰

There is something both animalistic and earthy in Maggie from the very beginning. Her father cannot help associating his beloved daughter with his own sister, Gritty Moss, a woman whose earthy name fills the mouth like a fistful of gravel.⁴⁵¹ But as the narrative drives a wedge between its human characters and their childhood communion with nature, Maggie's association with the land becomes more prominent. In her "early womanhood" Maggie, "[w]ith her dark colouring and jet crown surmounting her tall figure, . . . seems to have a sort of kinship with the grand Scotch firs, which she is looking up as if she loved them well."⁴⁵² Philip—the only artist in the novel, and the only character with any serious claim to understanding Maggie—also classifies her not only as somehow animal, but also as an inextricable piece of the scenery around St. Ogg's. In his last portrait of her, he depicts her as a Hamadryad or woodland spirit, one caught in the process of breaking away from the landscape she inhabits:

"I've begun my picture of you among the Scotch firs, Maggie," said Philip, "so you must let me study your face a little, while you stay—since I am not to see it again. Please, turn your head this way."

This was said in an entreating voice, and it would have been very hard of Maggie to refuse. The full lustrous face, with the bright black coronet, looked down like that of a divinity well pleased to be worshipped, on the pale-hued, small-featured face that was turned up to it.

"I shall be sitting for my second portrait then," she said, smiling. "Will it be larger than the other?"

"O yes, much larger. It is an oil-painting. You will look like a tall Hamadryad, dark and strong and noble, just issued from one of the fir-trees, when the stems are casting their afternoon shadows on the grass."⁴⁵³

The reality of Maggie's life stands in stark contrast to Philip's romantic painting. Whereas he imagines her glorified or even deified by her bewitching inhumanity, the trajectory of her development in fact constitutes a series of increasingly devastating humiliations. Even these humiliations, however, indicate Maggie's intimacy with the earth. As Jonathan Arac observes, humiliation is, etymologically speaking, a laying low, a term traceable to the Latin *humus*, meaning "ground, earth."⁴⁵⁴ Maggie's journey through Book III, "The Valley of Humiliation," is literally central to the text, one of Eliot's many references to *Pilgrim's Progress* in her narrative of Maggie's life. But her humiliations are, in fact, manifold. Maggie experiences early "humiliation about her hair."⁴⁵⁵ Soon after, she fights with Tom and Lucy in a "humiliating encounter" at Garum Firs.⁴⁵⁶ At Mr. Stelling's school, she feels "humiliation" at her inability to read Euclid.⁴⁵⁷ The religion she adopts after reading Thomas à Kempis is an elaborate ritual of "self-humiliation and entire devotedness."⁴⁵⁸ When Tom disciplines her for secretly carrying on with Philip in the Red Deeps, Maggie "rebel[s] and [is] humiliated in the same moment."⁴⁵⁹ Stephen Guest's early advances leave her "quivering with rage and humiliation."⁴⁶⁰

In each of these episodes, Maggie is laid low and driven earthward. Often, the humiliation of Eliot's characters is quite literal, indicating her own awareness of the word's etymology. Maggie's "humiliating encounter" with Tom and Lucy, for example, involves physically shoving her frilly, feminine cousin into the muck. Maggie's impulsive violence turns her well-bred cousin into a "startling object . . . with one side of her person, from her small foot to her bonnet-crown, wet and discoloured with mud, holding out two tiny blackened hands, and making a very piteous face."⁴⁶¹ The

socioeconomic humiliation borne by the Tulliver family also begins with a fall to earth. As his legal battle against Pivart and Wakem drives him towards bankruptcy, Mr. Tulliver stubbornly clings to the idea of his eventual victory. “[T]here are certain human beings,” the narrator observes of Mr. Tulliver, “to whom predominance is a law of life,—they can only sustain humiliation so long as they can refuse to believe in it, and, in their own conception, predominate still.”⁴⁶² When he reads the letter explaining that his mortgage has been transferred to Wakem’s possession, Mr. Tulliver can no longer deny his own humiliation. He physically tumbles from his high horse: “In half an hour after this, Mr. Tulliver’s own waggoner found him lying by the roadside insensible, with an open letter near him, and his gray horse snuffing uneasily about him.”⁴⁶³

The most dramatic of all the novel’s humiliations, however, are its last. Maggie’s overnight voyage with Stephen Guest ends with their coming to land unmarried at Mudport, a town whose name suggests Maggie’s soiled reputation. After destroying her own claims to virtue and betraying the trust of Lucy, Philip, and Tom, Maggie Tulliver becomes, in essence, a social impossibility. She no longer has a place in the community of St. Ogg’s. Her expulsion from society throws her very personhood into question. In a novel that is always, as Sally Shuttleworth points out, “aware of its own fictionality,”⁴⁶⁴ Maggie’s ruined character at St. Ogg’s takes on a distinctly metafictional dimension, threatening her basic claim to literary character itself. Maggie’s behavior, in the face of this threat, shows her own dawning awareness of the interpersonal dynamics that structure the narrative representation of social life.

Upon their arrival in Mudport, Maggie and Stephen discuss their options. From Stephen’s perspective, Maggie has none: she must be married. The alternative—being

cast out of society—is, socially, no alternative at all, and he is perfectly happy to marry her. But Maggie’s characteristically wide view of relations has made her aware that the satisfaction of her needs and desires must, necessarily, hurt those around her. “I have caused sorrow already,” she tells Stephen, “—I know—I feel it; but I have never deliberately consented to it: I have never said, ‘They shall suffer, that I may have joy.’”⁴⁶⁵ Her situation dramatizes the painful trade-offs of social existence, the give-and-take of interpersonal relations that ensure that one individual’s rightful reward is experienced, by someone somewhere, as pain, loss, or duty. Poised, at this moment, on the very edge of social existence, Maggie can rejoin the moral community by accepting her role in the ethical competition that structures it, or she can renounce those rules and, with them, social belonging itself. She chooses renunciation: “I cannot marry you: I cannot take a good for myself that has been wrung out of their misery.”⁴⁶⁶

Maggie’s decision is, in a sense, the “right” one. It springs from a deeper feeling and wider vision than the narrow morality of St. Ogg’s society. Yet it is, finally, tantamount to a rejection of membership in any society at all. It severs Maggie’s ties to other human beings and effectively removes her from the only form of moral community conceivable within the novel. In place of the social relationships proper to adulthood, Maggie clings with renewed tenacity to a past embodied in the scenery of her youth. “If the past is not to bind us,” she famously asks Stephen, “where can duty lie?”⁴⁶⁷ Her decision to embrace “her deep humiliation” by returning home constitutes a particularly flagrant refusal to play by the rules of society itself, a rejection of her own personhood that leaves no place for her in the novel except as an element of the scenery she clings to with such fondness.⁴⁶⁸

Maggie's attachment to her childhood home becomes increasingly pathological in the final pages of the novel. It assumes the status of an instinctive drive that makes no social sense. Rejecting Stephen, Maggie turns towards the fragmented recollection of relationship and belonging associated with the scenery of her youth: "Home—where her mother and brother were—Philip—Lucy—the scene of her very cares and trials—was the haven towards which her mind tended—the sanctuary where sacred relics lay—where she would be rescued from more falling."⁴⁶⁹ Going against the current of the entire novel, Maggie quite literally heads upstream in a final attempt to return to a beloved past and childhood surroundings that she associates with a sense of belonging. But by maintaining "her childlike directness" and "cling[ing] to all memories of the past," Maggie only seals her fate as a wild child whose inability to grow into human society turns Society itself against her.⁴⁷⁰ Her past does, indeed, become "the anchor of [her] purest thoughts," as Wordsworth has it, but that anchor only drags her down.

The last chapters pit Maggie's admirable but impractical attachment to place against her own social welfare. Dr. Kenn wisely urges her to "take a situation at a distance," to remove herself from her childhood surroundings as an act of self-preservation.⁴⁷¹ In this, at least, his advice follows the opinion of the Society that rejects Maggie and demands that she "go out of the neighbourhood—to America, or anywhere."⁴⁷² But Maggie, who rejects the spatial and temporal distances enjoined by the novel and its fictionalized "Society," refuses to leave either her place or her past, which she understands as two ways of naming the same thing. "I should feel like a lonely wanderer—cut off from the past," she says by way of explaining her decision to stay put.⁴⁷³

Instead of joining a distant community and severing her relationship to her native landscape, then, Maggie severs her relationship to her community and joins the native landscape. One at a time, the ethical threads binding her to other characters snap. Stephen has gone away. The Deanes reject her. Dr. Kenn cannot employ her, because the rumors surrounding her threaten his livelihood and the reputation of his children. Tom refuses to see her, justifying his rejection in words with pronounced metafictional overtones. “I loathe your character,” he tells Maggie: “I will sanction no character such as yours.”⁴⁷⁴ The erosion of Maggie’s characterological standing confirms Philip’s earlier warning about renunciation. “It is mere cowardice to seek safety in negations,” Philip tells her in the Red Deeps: “No character becomes strong in that way.”⁴⁷⁵ After her final renunciation, the few interpersonal relations Maggie maintains are weak connections to characters who can no longer be seen with her, such as Lucy and Philip, or characters whose marginal social position only drives home Maggie’s status as an outcast. She takes up residence in the home of Bob Jakin, the wandering peddler whose close kinship with the animal world so endeared him to the Tullivers in childhood. Despite his mounting financial success, Bob remains so peripheral to St. Ogg’s society that he experiences some difficulty, at first, in comprehending “all the dubiousness of Maggie’s appearance with Mr. Stephen Guest on the quay at Mudport.”⁴⁷⁶

As Maggie’s social ties weaken, her affiliation with nonhuman nature increases. When he takes her in, Bob recognizes her utter isolation, and gives her the unlikely gift of his dog, Mumps, in place of a human companion. “Lors,” he muses, “it’s a fine thing to hev a dumb brute fond on you; it’ll stick to you, an’ make no jaw.” Maggie welcomes her new companion: ““Yes, do leave him, please . . . I think I should like to have Mumps for

a friend.”⁴⁷⁷ Mumps is less a friend, however, than a token of Maggie’s friendless, asocial position. After Maggie accepts him, Mumps fades into the background, never to be seen again. His new mistress will soon suffer the same fate.

Philip’s final letter reiterates the idea that Maggie is becoming more a place than a person. “[P]erhaps I feel about you,” he writes, “as the artist does about the scene over which his soul has brooded with love.”⁴⁷⁸ Here his musings blur into the narrator’s, as Philip, too, adopts the Wordsworthian suggestion that landscape consoles adults to the struggles of human society. Only now Maggie, rather than nature, plays the part of the scenery that “reconciles [Philip] to life.”⁴⁷⁹ Like the countryside remembered amidst the din of city living, Maggie provides an object of inward contemplation and spiritual respite: “The place where you are,” Philip concludes, “is the one where my mind must live, wherever I might travel.”⁴⁸⁰

As the novel closes, Maggie’s position exactly reverses her situation at its opening. She begins as part and parcel of the scenery, before her mother jarringly calls her into the world of characters. The novel ends with the opposite transformation, as Maggie recedes from character back into the background. In her final moments the novel’s scenery actually *comes to claim her*, breaking its bounds and exhibiting its own strange agency in removing her from the cast of characters populating St. Ogg’s. As the estuary floods over, Maggie finds herself swept up in the onrushing tide, and experiences the dreaminess, the narrative disconnect, and the disorienting flatness that serve to demarcate scenery in the novel’s opening pages. “The whole thing had been so rapid—so dream-like,” the narrator writes of Maggie’s experience of the flood, “that the threads of

ordinary association were broken: she sank down on the seat clutching the oar mechanically, and for a long while had no distinct conception of her position.”⁴⁸¹

Maggie’s last efforts involve a desperate attempt to get back to the mill, to reunite with Tom in the setting of their earliest memories. It is perhaps her most decisive, and most successful, action in the entire novel. She not only reaches the mill and finds Tom there, but she actually brings about—however briefly—the return of the past that the narrator deems irrecoverable. Maggie experiences again the childhood sense of total community. She feels, for the last time, that “we are all one with each other in primitive mortal needs,” a sensation that clears her mind and “[leaves] only the deep underlying, unshakable memories of early union” that guide her back to Tom.⁴⁸² Miraculously, the encounter between Tom and Maggie converts the hard-hearted Tom into the childhood self he left behind. The old Tom reappears and grows hazy, as a “mist gather[s] over the blue-grey eyes, and the lips [find] a word they [can] utter: the old childish—‘Magsie!’”⁴⁸³

In returning to the union of their childhood, Tom and Maggie participate in what the broader current of the novel designates a formal impossibility. They return to a realm that the narrative has consigned to a beloved but vanished past, a world that must be held permanently at a distance, revisited only in the form of a flattened, aestheticized landscape. So it is only fitting that they end the novel by becoming one with that scenery, as Tom experiences “a certain awe and humiliation,” the novel’s last and gravest pull earthward.⁴⁸⁴ The account of their final moments exhibits a chaotic confusion of character and landscape, with Tom and Maggie passively waiting for the scenery to swallow them up: “Nothing else was said; a new danger was being carried towards them by the river.”⁴⁸⁵

The indeterminate agency of the danger—its status as the subject of a passive sentence driven by the river—emphasizes the violation of the passive and active taking place here, the way the scenery seems to come alive and participate in the affairs of human characters. The nature of the danger is strangely indeterminate, too. It consists of some kind of “wooden machinery” from the docks, but otherwise its exact character remains mysterious, as if the narrator cannot quite attend closely enough to identify what, exactly, is coming for Tom and Maggie.⁴⁸⁶ It is as if the dreamlike quality of attention that the novel bestows on its scenery proves incapable to the task of seeing and narrating that scenery when it unexpectedly enters the action. Instead, the narrator gestures at a living landscape that begins to resemble both an inhuman object and, at the same time, the Tullivers themselves: “Huge fragments, clinging together in fatal fellowship, made one wide mass across the stream.”⁴⁸⁷ Fragments meaninglessly strung together compose the vision of landscape that opens the novel, the little disconnected bits of countryside that never receive the meaningful ordering of narration and characterization. But their “clinging together in fatal fellowship” fits as a description of the broken, fragmentary lives of Maggie and Tom as well. At this moment—when character and scenery seem hopelessly confused—Maggie and Tom vanish into the landscape: “The next instant the boat was no longer seen upon the water—and the huge mass was hurrying on in hideous triumph.”⁴⁸⁸ In their deaths, Maggie and Tom experience a triumphant return to that undifferentiated childhood world that the formal divisions of *The Mill on the Floss* make impossible: “The boat reappeared—but brother and sister had gone down in an embrace never to be parted: living through again in one supreme moment the days when they had clasped their little hands in love, and roamed the daisied fields together.”⁴⁸⁹

The epitaph inscribed over Tom and Maggie's shared tomb glosses their deaths as the resolution of an otherwise tensely obstinate separation: "In their death they were not divided."⁴⁹⁰ The dangling modifiers "their" and "they" refer, presumably, to Tom and Maggie. But this epitaph is also the novel's epigraph, and the resolution that unites Tom and Maggie also resolves the aesthetic and ethical divisions that pull the novel's sympathies in opposing directions. The chapters that bookend the narrative offer a sense of peaceful closure compared to the tumultuous struggles of the Tullivers' lives. A great deal of this closure comes through the unchallenged ideology of the narrator, whose enjoyment of the landscape is only enriched by Maggie's permanent place within it. In the novel's opening paragraph, the narrator experiences the river as a friend whose changefulness, dark coloring, and bubbly warmth eerily resemble the personality of Maggie Tulliver: "How lovely the little river is, with its dark, changing wavelets! It seems to me like a living companion while I wander along the bank and listen to its low placid voice, as to the voice of one who is deaf and loving."⁴⁹¹ The conclusion reiterates this fond feeling located somewhere in the earth, assigning it to an unnamed, solitary wanderer who, once again, resembles both the narrator and Philip Wakem: "His great companionship was among the trees of the Red Deeps, where the buried joy seemed still to hover—like a revisiting spirit."⁴⁹² The formal tension between character and landscape, between humanity and the rest of the earth, thus ends with the lives of the novel's protagonists. Dead and buried under the soil, their intermingled bodies are at last indistinguishable from the landscape they loved but were forced to leave behind: in their death they are not divided.

3. The Moral of Landscape

With Maggie Tulliver, Eliot lays to rest her own doubts about limiting her moral vision to the human community. James Buzard has charted the gradual narrowing of Eliot's moral community over the course of her career, as she closes down her sympathies "in reaction against the omnisympathizing, or at least casuistical tendency, she perceives in her earlier fiction," a tendency that risks creating "a universalized fellowship [that] would petrify narrative fiction, an open-ended pluralizing of perspectives that would bring it to a grinding halt."⁴⁹³ Buzard writes with the human community in mind, but *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss* show that Eliot's first exclusions are not human beings at all, but the animal lives that surround and interact with them. Through Maggie, Eliot imagines what universal sympathies might look like, and concludes that they would erase all meaningful distinction between figure and ground, society and nature, and character and landscape—the divisions that enable ethics in the first place. Maggie's death makes her, in effect, the sacrificial victim or scapegoat for Eliot's humanist ethics. In her expulsion from society and, finally, from character itself, she carries away the otherwise unbearable weight of all the lives and ethical claims Eliot must purge from her work to achieve her incomparable moral focus on the intricacies of human social life.

Eliot's later fictions unproblematically adopt the differentiation of human character and nonhuman landscape that proves so difficult to attain in *The Mill on the Floss*. The problems presented by the ethical needs of nonhuman beings recede into the hazy, scenic distance. Landscape becomes a pleasant backdrop, a Wordsworthian

memento of moral sentiment that guides well-bred humans through life. The journey from Middlemarch to Stone Court, for example, involves “[l]ittle details [that] gave each field a particular physiognomy, dear to the eyes that have looked on them from childhood . . . These are the things that make the gamut of joy in landscape to midland-bred souls.”⁴⁹⁴ The lingering potential for understanding members of the nonhuman world as persons remains, but only as a defanged figure of speech, as the fields are harmlessly attributed a “particular physiognomy.”

In this framework, nonhuman nature only proves problematic for those characters who fail, as children, to experience any fellowship with it. These unlucky souls drift through life morally groundless, unattached to the world they inhabit. Thus in *Daniel Deronda* (1876), Gwendolen’s shallowness manifests as an inability to appreciate the landscape around her, which the narrator understands as a moral shortcoming:

I am not concerned to tell of the food that was eaten in that green refectory, or even to dwell on the glories of the forest scenery that spread themselves out beyond the level front of the hollow; being just now bound to tell a story of life at a stage when the blissful beauty of earth and sky entered only by narrow and oblique inlets into the consciousness, which was busy with small social drama almost as little penetrated by a feeling of wider relations as if it had been a puppet-show.⁴⁹⁵

Gwendolen’s lax ethics—her inability to appreciate the “wider relations” that mean so much to Maggie—originate in her failure to bond with the sort of prolific interspecies community that shapes Maggie’s childhood:

Pity that Offendene was not the home of Miss Harleth’s childhood, or endeared to her by family memories! A human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of earth, for the labours men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that early home a familiar unmistakeable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge: a spot where the definiteness of early memories may be inwrought with affection, and the kindly acquaintance with all neighbors, even to the dogs and donkeys, may spread not by sentimental effort and reflection, but as a sweet habit of the blood.⁴⁹⁶

The neighborliness of dogs and donkeys, in these scenic passages, matters primarily as a cherished aesthetic conceit that recalls a bygone sentiment. Eliot effectively removes these creatures from the annals of society that memorialize “the grand historic life of humanity,” lumping them together as part of that “gross sum of obscure vitality, that will be swept into the same oblivion with the ants and beavers.”⁴⁹⁷

Banished from the moral community in Eliot’s later novels, animals proliferate as symbols of exclusion itself. Just as the unprecedented accumulation of animal associations around Maggie Tulliver presages the painful necessity of her expulsion from society, animal associations in later works justify the narrator’s relative lack of interest in or sympathy for certain minor human characters. The normally conscientious narrator of *Middlemarch* (1871-1872), for example, has no problem shunting Celia Brooke to the sidelines of the novel. Celia’s marginal position is only justified in a series of animal comparisons. Celia—conspicuously called “Kitty” by her more central sister—is, in Dorothea’s mind, “hardly more in need of salvation than a squirrel.”⁴⁹⁸ The narrator echoes her heroine’s animal imagery a page later: “[Celia] was not sparing the sister of whom she was in occasional awe. Who can tell what just criticisms Murr the Cat may be passing on us beings of wider speculation?”⁴⁹⁹ Eliot’s failure to extend full sympathy to Rosamond—perhaps, along with the “handsome lizard”⁵⁰⁰ Grandcourt, one of the few unredeemed villains in all of Eliot’s writings—manifests itself as a condemnation of Rosamond as an essentially animal being. As Lydgate discovers, Rosamond’s willfulness is excusable only if she is, in some basic sense, admitted to be incapable of moral responsibility. Rosamond is thus forgiven only through consignment to a subhuman existence, which in fact magnifies the horror of her power: “He wished to excuse

everything in her if he could—but it was inevitable that in that excusing mood he should think of her as if she were an animal of another and feebler species. Nevertheless she had mastered him.”⁵⁰¹

The abject state of animals in Eliot’s mature fiction finds its clearest expression in one of the most famous passages in all of her writing. “If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life,” Eliot writes in *Middlemarch*, “it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel’s heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence.”⁵⁰² This simile encapsulates the status of nonhuman beings in Eliot’s works after *The Mill on the Floss*: not only are animals excluded from the moral community, but their exclusion has come to appear so natural that they serve as a convenient justification for further exclusions whose necessity is not so clear. Serious attention to all human beings is impossible, the narrator insists, in the same way that serious attention to the lives of all plants and animals is impossible: both would, finally, overwhelm us in an almost physical sense, drowning us in a flood of pain, need, and hunger.

In treating the exclusion of animals as a foregone conclusion, Eliot’s later novels seem to afford animals only their ancient political function as brutes, beings whose “natural” exclusion from society makes them a potent symbol for socially excluded human beings. Indeed, Eliot appears to align character, humanity, and moral merit in an equivalence identical to the one that Kingsley embraces at the end of *Alton Locke*. *The Mill on the Floss* concludes, like *Alton Locke*, with a turn to religious tradition to define the nature and limits of its moral community, defending proper morality as “a wide fellow-feeling with all that is human.”⁵⁰³ In the final book, the novel condemns the

gossips of St. Ogg's for their neglect of Maggie, a neglect they consider a righteous defense of the moral tone of "their favourite abstraction, called Society, which served to make their consciences perfectly easy in doing what satisfied their own egoism."⁵⁰⁴ The narrator contrasts this selfish version of society against the enlightened sympathies of the parish priest Dr. Kenn. Indeed, the novel's approach to sympathy merges with Dr. Kenn's explicitly Christian example in trumpeting the teachings of a "Higher Authority" than Society, drawing on the parable of the Good Samaritan as its moral paragon: "That Authority had furnished a very explicit answer to persons who might inquire where their social duties began, and might be inclined to take wide views as to their starting-point. The answer had not turned on the ultimate good of Society, but on 'a certain man' who was found in trouble by the wayside."⁵⁰⁵

The apparent similarity between Eliot and Kingsley masks a marked difference, however, in the paths they take to arrive at their respective equations of character with humanity. Whereas early Victorian realists fought for a more expansive vision of human community that would justify the inclusion of new sorts of people in the novel's cast of sympathetic characters, Eliot found herself confronting the diametrically opposite problem. Taken to its logical conclusion, Eliot discovered, a realism bent on tracing moral connections reveals a web of interaction and obligation extending far beyond the biological borders of the human. This expansiveness, marvelous as it might seem at first, threatened to become counterproductive and even sinister: in the resulting chaos, the moral urgency of the human needs that prompted realists to write in the first place might be lost, drowned by the overwhelming volume and variety of ethical claims that flood a truly indiscriminate sympathy. Thus while Kingsley, Gaskell, and other realists of a

Christian bent find a gospel vision of universal human fellowship useful as a way of overcoming narrow, self-interested understandings of rights and duties, Eliot takes refuge in the Christian tradition for the opposite reason. She recognizes in its theology a useful and widely accepted outer limit to ethical obligation—one that justifies, in a seemingly natural fashion, a moral community that exceeds self-interest but stops short of spreading so broadly that it becomes meaningless.

Eliot's fabled humanism is not, in short, the product of sympathetic expansion to all worthy beings. It is, instead, a hard-won compromise position, one that commits to broadly human sympathies as a middle-ground between selfishness and an ecological vision of universal fellowship so expansive as to instill a terrifying, sublime awe. Moreover, because Eliot arrives at this position as an apostate, she treats it as a pragmatic moral stance, not gospel truth. This awareness is legible in the gradual, painful excision of nonhuman lives from her novels that occurs in *The Mill on the Floss*. But it is visible in her later works, too, because the very scenery that enables Eliot's exclusion of other creatures serves as a kind of scar marking those exclusions in her later fictions. To the very end of her career, Eliot revisits these scars. In her final novel, the morally astute Daniel Deronda wrestles, like Maggie, with all the moral claims cut off by the division of their world into human society and natural landscape.

Like Maggie Tulliver, Deronda struggles with sympathetic attachments so wide that they paralyze his capacity for moral action. It is, famously, not until the end of his eponymous novel that Deronda acquires significant moral agency, a development made possible after he learns of his Jewish ancestry and chooses to narrow his ethical focus to the suffering of his own people. Before he commits to his own community, however,

Deronda dabbles in the kind of impersonal sympathetic attachment that muddies the distinction between character and landscape. The crisis in his personal history occurs, in fact, when Deronda begins to drift, quite literally, into this current of thought in a scene whose elements—a boat in the current, a quasi-hypnotic state, and a woman on the brink of drowning—reconfigure the crucial moments in Maggie Tulliver’s history. As Deronda idles in a skiff, he wonders whether it might be possible to view himself as an element of the landscape: “He was forgetting everything else in a half-speculative, half-involuntary identification of himself with the objects he was looking at, thinking how far it might be possible habitually to shift his centre till his own personality would be no less outside him than the landscape.”⁵⁰⁶ Rather than continuing to drift in this state of inattention and equal sympathy with all things, however, Deronda picks out a “moving figure” against the landscape. This figure will turn out to be Mirah Lapidoth, and his sudden, heightened interest in her will constitute the decisive moment in his history: it snaps him out of idleness and culminates, finally, in his emergence as a leader of his community.

Deronda discovers, in short, that ethical direction only emerges through narrowness, a channeling of sympathetic energies that directs an otherwise chaotic flood of ethical claims towards productive outlets. This discovery, moreover, takes the form of an ability to discern and focus on individual figures set off against the wider landscape of ethical possibilities. By restaging this discovery at the end of her career, Eliot reaffirms what critics have forgotten: that her humanist ethics are the product of an intentional narrowness, a division of both the world and the novel into human moral persons and static backgrounds that is the product not of nature, but of art. The ability to make such distinctions turns Daniel Deronda into a moral agent. But the ability to recognize their

artificiality is just as important; it is a sign of his moral merit in the first place. Deronda resembles Eliot's late narrators in his capacity to take a wide view of relations without letting that vista hypnotize him into inaction. He manages to see the truth of interconnection without being paralyzed by it, and thus embodies the ability to "concentrate[] on this particular web," and ignore "that tempting range of relevancies called the universe."⁵⁰⁷

Ethics only work, Eliot suggests, through the imposition of moral hierarchies onto a far more chaotic reality of interconnection. If narrowness is necessary, however, failure to recognize it *as* narrowness is its own form of moral myopia. Thus Deronda's goodness manifests, in part, as a lasting regard for the scenic environments that harbor all the ethical concerns he chooses to overlook. This regard enables him, when pressed, to admit that such backgrounds are replete with beings whose unvoiced and unmet needs are worthy of respect and who, from another perspective, might emerge as subjects of serious ethical attention. The necessity of remembering even the forgotten—and the aesthetic value of scenery as an aid to such remembrance—emerges in a brief but telling confrontation between Deronda and Grandcourt.

The two men join a larger group touring Sir Hugo's property, where Deronda grew up. Eventually this visit takes them to the stables. In a subtle nod to "Tintern Abbey," the stables occupy the remains of an old church. Eliot promptly launches into her established mode of scenic description, mingling objects and animals in a hypnotically paratactic list that confers equal attention on all of them:

Each finely-arched chapel was turned into a stall, where in the dusty glazing of the windows there still gleamed patches of crimson, orange, blue, and palest violet; for the rest, the choir had been gutted, the floor leveled, paved, and drained according to the most approved fashion, and a line of loose-boxes erected in the middle: a soft light fell

from the upper windows on sleek brown or grey flanks and haunches; on mild equine faces looking out with active nostrils over the varnished brown boarding; on the hay hanging from racks where the saints once looked down from altarpieces, and on the pale golden straw scattered or in heaps; on a little white-and-liver-coloured spaniel making his bed on the back of an elderly hackney, and on four ancient angels, still showing signs of devotion like mutilated martyrs—while over all, the ground pointed roof, untouched by reforming wash, showed its lines and colours mysteriously through veiling shadow and cobweb, and a hoof now and then striking against the boards seemed to fill the vault with thunder, while outside there was the answering bay of the bloodhounds.⁵⁰⁸

The effect of entering this once-sacred space is so powerful that it literally moves Deronda: walking through the door, he unthinkingly doffs his cap. The impassive Grandcourt, already jealous of Deronda's place in Gwendolen's affections, takes the opportunity to mock his rival: "'Do you take off your hat to the horses?'" said Grandcourt, with a slight sneer."⁵⁰⁹ Deronda's response highlights the profound moral difference between the two men. Rather than blushing or denying the possibility, Deronda flatly acknowledges it: "'Why not?'" said Deronda, covering himself."⁵¹⁰

When Deronda covers himself, he signifies his basic assent to the social order he and Grandcourt inhabit. He is not standing in a socially sanctioned house of worship, and he concedes as much by putting his hat back on. At the same time, however, his response to Grandcourt does not conflate social standards of value with any timeless, natural order. He admits the possibility of other ways of assigning value, questioning the immutability of the social order even as he acquiesces to it. Deronda's response, in other words, is to cover himself not only physically but morally.

George Eliot's landscapes allow her to cover herself in much the way Deronda does. Her scenic descriptions occupy a usefully indeterminate space in her novels. Excluded from narrative proper, banished from the web of ethical interactions in her later novels, nonhuman lives nevertheless persist, memorialized in these odd set-pieces.

Ensconcing animals and plants in these two-dimensional landscapes, Eliot blankets them with a kind of collective moral regard without entangling them among the ethical responsibilities enjoined by narration and characterization. The scenery becomes a reservoir for the many claimants to character that her humanism implicitly excludes. By including such exclusions in an altered form, she neutralizes the ethical threat posed by nonhuman characters. But in admitting such lives into the backgrounds of her novels, Eliot recognizes the contingent nature of both her ethical priorities and the aesthetics that enforce them. Through their scenery, then, her realism pays its respects to a more expansive moral landscape that it must—if only for a time—overlook.

CHAPTER 5.**Of Character and Environment**

I find that he does not know the flowers of the field!

—George Gissing, on meeting Thomas Hardy⁵¹¹

Thomas Hardy's landscapes are remarkable. Wessex, the terrain so richly mythologized in his fiction, has become an indelible part of Hardy's legacy. He referred to his fictions, collectively, as the Wessex novels, and he highlighted the thematic importance of environment to his writing by dubbing his best and best-known fictions "Novels of Character and Environment."⁵¹² This lavish attention to environments both natural and social is, as generations of critics have pointed out, unprecedented in the English novel, and it has garnered Hardy praise as a new kind of "landscape novelist."⁵¹³ Indeed, Hardy's works seem to mark a watershed moment for environmental consciousness in English literature. He persistently connects human characters to their natural surroundings in a way that feels strikingly current, acknowledging the embeddedness of humans in a more-than-human world. In emphasizing such connections, he seems to respond to, and even reverse, the separation between human society and nonhuman nature that defines Eliot's novels after *Adam Bede*. As a consequence of Hardy's pronounced interest in the relationship between humans and their natural environments, several prominent critics have touted Hardy as an early model of "ecological" or posthumanist narrative, a writer who extends his sympathies beyond the human in ways that herald a more ethical and inclusive future for humans and nonhumans alike.⁵¹⁴

For all his attention to the nonhuman world, however, Hardy makes a rather perverse mascot for ecological thinking. No sensible person would choose to live out their life in Hardy's Wessex, a place where human desires are thwarted and crushed at every turn, where Nature is a mindless, pitiless force that whimsically injures, tortures, or kills any creature unlucky enough to be born with a brain stem. In Hardy's greatest works, his profound interest in the sensuous details of nonhuman life never eclipses the bleak pessimism that saturates his cosmology. Moreover, as many critics observe, this pessimism springs from the same understanding of man's embeddedness in nature that has drawn such discordantly cheerful praise in recent criticism. Hardy's early acceptance of Darwinian evolutionary theory may lead him to foreground man's interactions with the natural world, in other words, but it also inspires Hardy to depict that world as a senseless, aimless chaos, one totally oblivious and unforgiving towards the lofty moral and intellectual strivings of human life.

The best scholarly accounts of Hardy's writing reflect this unsettling traffic between his interest in nonhuman nature and his horror at its inhumanity. They replicate Hardy in their tendency to become trapped in what one critic frankly acknowledges to be a never-ending "see-saw argument . . . [of] circular or mutually qualifying positions."⁵¹⁵ The result is a disturbingly bipolar affect, one that reflects that Gillian Beer calls Hardy's "creative vacillation" between "[h]appiness and hap."⁵¹⁶ Critics linger on this tension as a kind of inevitability, treating Hardy's despair as an acceptable consequence of proto-ecological thinking, a post-Darwinian awareness of the aimlessness of life mitigated by the sensuous joy of actually living.

Yet the odd discrepancy between Hardy's crushing pessimism and our relative contentment in the same post-Darwinian world remains largely unexplained. Even in these sophisticated critical treatments that acknowledge both Hardy's attraction to the natural world and his despair, there is a charming but unselfconscious tendency to read his work reparatively, fighting against the grain of the texts themselves in order to produce readings that accentuate the positive and eliminate—or at least markedly downplay—the negative.⁵¹⁷ Critics emphasize those intermittent lyrical moments when Hardy seems most in tune with other creatures and the material world, treating these brief flashes of hope and joy as an adequate counter to the otherwise oppressive atmosphere of his work. It is as if our eyes had adjusted to the Darwinian gloom that staggered Hardy: we travel cheerfully through the same twilight landscape, comforted by that string of faint, flickering lights that Hardy saw as a pathetic glow oppressed by the overwhelming darkness.⁵¹⁸

This tendency in Hardy criticism achieves its uplift only by overlooking the complicated, evolving relationship between Hardy's philosophical commitments and his literary technique, a relation with lasting consequences for literary representations of the nonhuman world. In the process, it glosses over the vast gulf separating Hardy's understanding of the natural environment and our own. As he transitioned from early-career genre experiments in pastoral and sensation fiction into the realist novels for which he is mostly remembered, Hardy worked to develop an aesthetic capable of reflecting the fraught metaphysical position of human beings whose lives were inextricable from their nonhuman environments. The mere fact that Hardy strove to represent this

embeddedness, however, is less interesting—and finally less consequential—than the particular aesthetic techniques he employed to depict this interconnection.

In his attempts to reunite the human and nonhuman worlds that George Eliot had set asunder, Hardy drew heavily on prior approaches to character and landscape. His particular revisions of those conventions inadvertently create a monstrous image of a domineering Nature at odds with Society, a literary and philosophic structure that shapes the harshly antagonistic worldview that overwhelms his late works. Ironically, this beloved “ecological” novelist proved an important figure in the decisive literary turn away from the natural world, as his vision of the relations between humanity and Nature depict Nature as a monstrous force opposed to the moral value vested in the hearts and minds of individual human beings.

A careful look at the structure of feeling that animates Hardy’s late work shows his despair emerging from a sense that individuals are at the mercy of two monolithic and equally meaningless, self-perpetuating systems, Nature and Society. This outlook emerges from the particular aesthetic techniques Hardy uses to think through the fact of ecological embeddedness. Hardy’s synthesis of realist character and Wordsworthian landscape renders Nature and Society as active but monstrously inhuman entities that effectively batter individual human beings into total submission. Indeed, the despairing outlook of late Hardy can be traced to a pathological perspective on the natural world he first delineates in the novel often recognized as a turning-point in his career, *The Return of the Native* (1878).⁵¹⁹ *The Return of the Native* shows Hardy at his most experimental, exploring a wide variety of formal and philosophical approaches to the nonhuman world through the perspectives associated with different characters living on Egdon Heath. In

fact, *The Return of the Native* clearly details the shortcomings of the perspective that would become typical of Hardy's late work, the perspective that Hardy adopted on the grounds that it was the most "modern." It did, indeed, become the most modern, as its depiction of the alienation between humans and their environments would become characteristic of much modernist literature, to the lasting detriment of humans and nonhumans alike. In the figures of Thomasin, the heath-folk, and the spectral Diggory Venn, however, *The Return of the Native* offers an alternative vision of a more-than-human community that both Hardy and the English novel, in their late-century turn inwards, decided to leave behind.

1. Hunted and Trapped

The protagonists of Hardy's late fictions, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1890-1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1894-1895), are a beleaguered bunch. Their lives comprise a series of escalating frustrations and disappointments that torture them until, finally, they die. Early on, Tess and Jude idealistically strive to navigate the world in a morally responsible fashion, but their efforts grow increasingly vexed as a series of unintended consequences build into a devastating crescendo that destroys any possibility of a meaningful life. In Tess's case, a selfless attempt to keep her family solvent despite her father's drunkenness leads to the death of the Durbeyfields' prized horse, which soon leaves an unprotected Tess under the sole supervision of the wicked Alec D'Urberville. In Jude's, an honorable desire to pay his way to a Christminster education puts him in the way of Arabella Donn, who soon seduces him and tricks him into marrying her,

destroying his hope of either love or formal education. In each case, good individual intentions transform, over time, into horrific consequences.

Who or what is responsible for these tragic twists of fate? Any attempt to answer this question in Hardy's novels results in a kind of whiplash, as his narratives rapidly alternate between blaming Nature and blaming Society for the destruction of admirable moral intentions. In *Tess* and *Jude*, these two forces bat human lives between them like cats playing with prey before they devour it. The novels' shifting visions of responsibility make them useful case studies for understanding the characteristic structure of Hardy's despair. Both books flip between positions that seem, at first, like polar opposites. One moment, Hardy's narrator shows loving attention towards natural creatures; the next, revulsion at the monstrous injustice of the natural world. The books are equally fickle in their vacillations between a desire to impose moral codes on a cruel Nature and a desire to embrace that Nature, condemning the oppressive moral codes of Society instead. In *Tess*, an increasingly domineering, intrusive narrator takes up these vacillating positions. In *Jude*, the narrator recedes slightly, allowing Jude and Sue to voice the opposing stances. Both works show Hardy's fraught relationship to the natural and social environments surrounding his characters, a repugnance at the outer world that drives him, over time, to discount external relations altogether, locating all value and significance in the human interior.

Because Hardy's attention to the natural world is so striking, there are moments when it is possible to forget that the Nature depicted in his late works is, at best, an unwelcome figure, and often a profoundly sinister one. Overwhelmingly, however, Nature visits human individuals as an intruder from without, interceding in human lives

with sudden, strange commands that people are powerless to resist. In the face of these natural urges, social considerations become a mere afterthought. The power of Nature over Society plays out, in literary terms, as the domineering control of characters by the landscapes around them, which seize human beings and force them to march in biological lock-step with the processes affecting—or afflicting—nearby plants and animals: “Amid the oozing fatness and warm ferments of the Var Vale, at a season when the rush of juices could almost be heard below the hiss of fertilization, it was impossible that the most fanciful love should not grow passionate. The ready bosoms existing there were impregnated by their surroundings.”⁵²⁰ In these moments, characterized individuals move in synch with a thick living medium around them, which may give the fleeting impression that humans live in a sort of holistic, ecological world. But rather than describing this relationship as a kind of harmony, Hardy depicts it as a combination of animal joy and sinister powerlessness, mingling sensuous fascination with barely concealed horror.

In one of the more famous instances of such natural synchronicity, Tess Durbeyfield is drawn towards Angel Clare by his harp playing. The passive voice is, in this case, the correct one, as the environment around her suddenly thickens, and differences between air and matter, subjects and objects, character and scenery become meaningless. Soon Tess loses herself in her surroundings:

It was a typical summer evening in June, the atmosphere being in such delicate equilibrium and so transmissive that inanimate objects seemed endowed with two or three senses, if not five. There was no distinction between the near and the far, and an auditor felt close to everything on the horizon. The soundlessness impressed her as a positive entity rather than the mere negation of noise. . . . Tess was conscious of neither time nor space.⁵²¹

Angel's music pulses through this gelatinous protoplasm, pulling Tess towards him. As she moves, she leaves a trail through the fetid medium that encompasses her. It, in turn, stains and marks her with its gooey abundance:

The outskirt of the garden in which Tess found herself had been left uncultivated for some years, and was now damp and rank with juicy grass which sent up mists of pollen at a touch, and with tall blooming weeds emitting offensive smells—weeds whose red and yellow and purple hues formed a polychrome as dazzling as that of cultivated flowers. She went stealthily as a cat through this profusion of growth, gathering cuckoo-spittle on her skirts, cracking snails that were underfoot, staining her hands with thistle-milk and slug-slime, and rubbing off upon her naked arms sticky blights which, though snow-white on the appletree-trunks, made madder stains on her skin; thus she drew quite near to Clare, still unobserved of him.⁵²²

This sensual pull erases the difference between character and environment, and even the individual differences between characters themselves. So, in an almost identical manner, Nature shatters the cheerful bucolic routine of the dairymaids at Talbothays. They all develop a simultaneous lust for Angel Clare that, like Tess's desire, arises from the simple and inescapable fact of seasonal change. As the weather warms, so do their hearts and bodies, and they suffer from the senselessness of a Nature that urges them to defy social conventions. This Nature manifests, once again, as an environmental thickening, as the atmosphere throbs and pulses with a kind of peristalsis that forces the maids towards a man they would never choose of their own rational volition: "The air of the sleeping-chamber seemed to palpitate with the hopeless passion of the girls. They writhed feverishly under the oppressiveness of an emotion thrust on them by cruel Nature's law—an emotion which they had neither expected nor desired."⁵²³

In its utter disregard for conventions, Nature itself becomes cruel, visiting irresistible desires on its victims and destroying their chances of contented peace in human society—"such is the vulpine slyness of Dame Nature."⁵²⁴ This force visits men

and women alike: “[A]s Clare was oppressed by the outward heats, so was he burdened inwardly by waxing fervour of passion for the soft and silent Tess.”⁵²⁵ In *Jude the Obscure*, the force of Nature becomes cartoonishly human, as biological desires take the shape of arms that physically clutch Jude Fawley and drag him down a path towards Arabella, Sue, and personal destruction that he would never will for himself:

In short, as if materially, a compelling arm of extraordinary muscular power seized hold of him, something which had nothing in common with the spirits and influences that had moved him hitherto. This seemed to care little for his reason and his will, nothing for his so-called elevated intentions, and moved him along, as a violent schoolmaster a schoolboy he has seized by the collar, in a direction which tended towards the embrace of a woman for whom he had no respect and whose life had nothing in common with his own except locality.⁵²⁶

To be fair, there are times when Hardy seems to champion acquiescence to natural impulses as a truer moral good than the baseless conventions of civilized life. Nature decides the fate of human beings by ingraining in them “[t]he ‘appetite for joy,’ which pervades all creation; that tremendous force which sways humanity to its purpose, as the tide sways the helpless weed, [and which] was not to be controlled by vague lucubrations over the social rubric.”⁵²⁷ If Nature has the power to dictate human activities, after all, it becomes not only pointless but foolish for human characters to disobey. Society, in these moments, appears like the true source of misery, as it imposes a groundless conventional morality on humans whose Nature makes it impossible to obey such codes in the first place.

So, for example, the narrator intimates that much of Tess’s suffering arises not from her rape, but from her acceptance of those absurd social codes that treat her loss of virginity and subsequent motherhood as moral wrongs. That these consequences—like all the consequences Hardy associates with Nature—were the result of the violent violation

of a person who never desired them matters little to a purblind Society. Tess makes a moral error only in accepting the codes of a Society that does not adequately understand or account for Nature, a fundamentally lawless world where Tess's fate is both unexceptional and even, according to Nature's lack of standards, unexceptionable. Tess's simpler, happier mother can accept the situation with "the fatalistic convictions common to field-folk and those who associate more extensively with natural phenomena than with their fellow-creatures."⁵²⁸ By classifying the experience as natural, Mrs. Durbeyfield manages to process it and move forward: "Well, we must make the best of it, I suppose. 'Tis nater, after all, and what do please God."⁵²⁹ The narrator effectively agrees with Mrs. Durbeyfield, chiding Tess at length for her guilty sense of violating a morality that is, itself, a violation of lawless Nature. Thus when Tess imagines the natural world peering scornfully at her for losing her virginity, the narrator remarks on her mistaken conflation of unfounded ethical rules with natural ones:

At times her whimsical fancy would intensify natural processes around her till they seemed a part of her own story. . . . The midnight airs and gusts, moaning against the tightly-wrapped buds and bark of the winter twigs, were formulae of bitter reproach. A wet day was the expression of irremediable grief at her weakness in the mind of some vague ethical being whom she could not class definitely as the God of her childhood, and could not comprehend as any other.

But this encompassment of her own characterization, based on shreds of convention, peopled by phantoms and voices antipathetic to her, was a sorry and mistaken creation of Tess's fancy—a cloud of moral hobgoblins by which she was terrified without reason. It was they that were out of harmony with the actual world, not she. Walking among the sleeping birds in the hedges, watching the skipping rabbits on a moonlit warren, or standing under a pheasant-laden bough, she looked upon herself as a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence. But all the while she was making a distinction where there was no difference. Feeling herself in antagonism she was quite in accord. She had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly.⁵³⁰

It would seem to be Society, then, and not Nature, that drives poor Tess's despair. Tess and other confused characters cling to social conventions that fly in the face of an unrestrained and unrestrainable Nature. "Most of her misery," the narrator helpfully explains, "had been generated by her conventional aspect," just as her misreading of Nature is built from "shreds of convention."⁵³¹ Angel Clare makes the same mistake in rejecting Tess. In a particularly preachy moment, the narrator expands on Angel Clare and "the shade of his own limitations": "With all his attempted independence of judgment this advanced and well-meaning young man, a sample product of the last five-and-twenty years, was yet the slave to custom and conventionality when surprised back to his early teachings."⁵³² Nature, then, would seem to be good; only a hidebound Society with its antiquated conventions defies the natural order and makes it appear immoral.

Yet Hardy cannot rest in this position. Some creeping resentment towards the domineering commands of Nature regularly sneaks back into his language. He never fully escapes from the dream of moral order that he associates with a poorly ordained Society, and his writings simmer with suppressed rebelliousness against the heartless Nature that forces his characters to behave in ways they do not and would not choose. The harmonious, beautiful Nature of Wordsworth's poetry becomes the butt of increasingly bitter narratorial jests. "Some people," Hardy observes in the opening pages of *Tess*, "would like to know whence the poet whose philosophy is in these days deemed as profound and trustworthy as his song is breezy and pure, gets his authority for speaking of 'Nature's holy plan.'"⁵³³ Tess and Hardy both see "ghastly satire in the poet's lines" from the "Intimations Ode" that describe children as a blessing from Nature: "To her, and

to her like, birth itself was an ordeal of degrading personal compulsion whose gratuitousness nothing in the result seemed to justify, and at best could only palliate.”⁵³⁴

Nature and Society, then, become equally fraught structures, each judged in terms of the other, and each found wanting. Tess and Jude are both caught, in their own ways, between these two incommensurable codes until their options are exhausted. Where the intrusive narrator in *Tess* rapidly flips between bemoaning Nature and castigating Society, the dialogue-heavy *Jude* plays out the same debate in the conflict between Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead. Their crisis comes to a head after the appalling murder-suicide that leaves all their children dead. As Jude and Sue argue about the causes of their misery, Sue clings to a belief that their sorrow is a punishment for violating the moral code of Society. They should never have dared to claim that following Nature might be more virtuous than abiding by social norms. Sue, grasping for meaning in the events of their lives, declares:

We went about loving each other too much—indulging ourselves to utter selfishness in each other! We said—do you remember?—that we would make a virtue of joy. I said it was Nature’s intention, Nature’s law and *raison d’être* that we should be joyful in what instincts she afforded us—instincts which civilization had taken upon itself to thwart. What dreadful things I said! And now Fate has given us a stab in the back for being such fools as to take Nature at her word!”⁵³⁵

Shortly thereafter, Jude assures her to the contrary: “Sue—my own too suffering dear!—there’s no evil woman in you. Your natural instincts are perfectly healthy; not quite so impassioned, perhaps, as I could wish; but good, and dear, and pure.”⁵³⁶ The external twists and turns of their lives, Jude explains, are utterly meaningless, having no significant relationship to the morality of their feelings for each other: “‘Nothing can be done,’ he replied. ‘Things are as they are, and will be brought to their destined issue.’”⁵³⁷ Sue leaves, of course, and Jude grows ill. But on his deathbed he is still muttering

“terribly profane language about social conventions” that dissolve into coughs as he succumbs to consumption.⁵³⁸

Although Jude dies and Sue lives, Hardy’s position appears, in the end, to align with Jude’s. Standing over his corpse, the swinish Arabella—“a complete and substantial female animal—no more, no less”—reiterates Jude’s insistence that Sue lost her only chance at happiness when she broke her natural bond with Jude and returned to her conventional one with Phillotson.⁵³⁹ When Arabella hears that Sue claims to have found peace, Arabella scoffs, “She may swear that on her knees to the holy cross upon her necklace till she’s hoarse, but it won’t be true . . . She’s never found peace since she left his arms, and never will again till she’s as he is now!”⁵⁴⁰

Thus Nature has the last word in Hardy’s novels, but it is hardly a consoling one. Obeying Nature’s dictates is the closest approach to joy in Hardy’s world, but it is still at bottom a resigned submission to an alien and undesirable rule. To believe in a harmonious relationship with Nature, Hardy suggests, is a kind of willful blindness or mental impairment. To take such a vision seriously, you would have to be drunk. Indeed, it is only after hours and hours of self-medication that the Chaseborough revelers—the same crowd that attacks Tess, and later allows Alec to take her off and have his way with her—can trick themselves into experiencing something like environmental holism:

[H]owever terrestrial and lumpy their appearance just now to the mean unglamoured eye, to themselves the case was different. They followed the road with a sensation that they were soaring along in a supporting medium, possessed of original and profound thoughts, themselves and surrounding nature forming an organism of which all the parts harmoniously and joyously interpenetrated each other. They were as sublime as the moon and stars above them, and the moon and stars were as ardent as they.⁵⁴¹

It is a delightful feeling, no doubt, but it constitutes a damning rejoinder to anyone who would earnestly suggest Hardy’s work as an example of proto-ecological consciousness.

Although Hardy's final novel shows that the vaunted distinctions separating Nature and Society in his work are flimsy at best, their close connection is no cause for celebration: both constitute hegemonic impersonal codes battling to control the fate of a bruised, deflated humanity. Nature's laws become as brittle, cruel, and senseless as the moral codes they oppose. As the blame shifts with increasing speed from one to the other, the two effectively blur together into equally ugly, meaningless forces that determine the senseless fates of human lives. Jude quickly learns that "Nature's logic" is as arid and groundless as Society's; it is "too horrid for him to care for."⁵⁴² As the equally empty systems of Nature and Society converge, Hardy begins describing them in the same terms, representing biological urges in language that equates them with meaningless institutional mandates. When Arabella recognizes that Jude desires her, for example, she sees his erotic awakening as the obedience of a mindless bureaucratic underling: "She saw that he had singled her out from the three as a woman is singled out in such cases, for no reasoned purpose of further acquaintance but in commonplace obedience to conjunctive orders from headquarters, unconsciously received by unfortunate men when the last intention of their lives is to be occupied with the feminine."⁵⁴³

Trapped between their animal helplessness before the dictates of Nature and their subjection to the pointless rituals of Society, Jude and Tess are, finally, hunted down. No wonder Tess and Jude both show heightened sympathies for hunted and trapped animals: these creatures provide iconic, visceral examples of the fate of every sentient being—Tess and Jude included—that finds itself caught at the intersections of Nature and Society, the places where these two opposing codes snap cruelly together. On one of her many long journeys on foot, Tess takes shelter under some holly bushes for the night.

There, she hears odd sounds, noises that punctuate her restless sleep with vocalizations and the heavy thud of objects falling all around her. When she wakes up, she discovers a bevy of bleeding pheasants around her, animals injured in the previous day's hunt. They have been dropping dead around her all night, but a number still subsist in pain, unknowingly waiting for the gamekeeper to discover them. She immediately recognizes these "harmless feathered creatures, brought into being by artificial means solely to gratify these [violent] propensities" as "fellows in nature's teeming family."⁵⁴⁴ "With the impulse of a soul who could feel for kindred sufferers as much as for herself," Tess does the humane thing: "with her own hands she broke the necks of as many as she could find."⁵⁴⁵ Jude performs a similar service when he wakes, one night, to the sound of a rabbit in a trap. Knowing that the creature cannot escape alive—it will either "die in the fields from the mortification of the limb" or "remain bearing its torture till the morrow, when the trapper would come and knock it on the head"—Jude rises, able to "rest no longer till he had put it out of its pain."⁵⁴⁶ He wanders outside and tracks the animal in order to deliver the *coup de grace*: "The faint click of the trap as dragged about by the writhing animal guided him now, and reaching the spot he struck the rabbit on the back of the neck with the side of his palm, and it stretched itself out dead."⁵⁴⁷

The deaths of Tess and Jude are, in like manner, merciful blows delivered to trapped, agonized animals. At the end of his life, the narrator explains, Jude has been "brought to bay by events."⁵⁴⁸ Tess is hunted down in an even more direct sense, as both the beginning and the end of her agonies take the form of hunting scenes. When Alec rapes Tess, the narrator famously glances away, diverting the reader's attention to the plants and animals surrounding—even witnessing—the crime: "Darkness and silence

ruled everywhere around. Above them rose the primeval yews and oaks of The Chase, in which were poised gentle roosting birds in their last nap; and about them stole the hopping rabbits and hares. But, might some say, where was Tess's guardian angel?"⁵⁴⁹

Here Nature seems complicit in Alec's crime, as his violation, however disturbing to us, does not violate the normal course of events for the trees, birds, and beasts all around them. Treating the setting of the rape as a natural scene, however, overlooks its actual location at the intersection of Nature and Society, material laws and moral ones. The yews and oaks may seem "primeval," but they actually make up part of "The Chase," a tract of land whose name designates it as a staging area for that elaborate ritual interaction of the human and nonhuman known as hunting. The trees that hide Alec's crime are old, but the Chaucerian pun on venery—the hunt, but also the sport of Venus—is older. The rape's setting transforms it into a meditation on the chaos and pain that occur at the intersection of Nature and Society, the devastation that results when people try to navigate these two different realms that they must somehow occupy at the same time, worlds whose interface breeds many of the evils of human existence. It is no coincidence that the offspring conceived on this meeting grounds for the human and nonhuman is named Sorrow, "that bastard gift of shameless Nature who respects not the social law."⁵⁵⁰ Tess's misery ends in the same symbolic location where it began, as a personified immortal concludes his "sport" with the successful destruction of his human quarry: "'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals (in Aeschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess."⁵⁵¹

For the most part, *Tess* and *Jude* represent their characters' predicaments as horrifyingly unjust and, at the same time, inescapable. There are brief and vague gestures

towards an improved future, a world that Tess and Jude will never see, but that may someday be accessible—perhaps to 'Liza Lu, or to later generations of scholars from Jude's social stratum. But these future lives recede into a hazy distance that eludes Hardy's imaginative vision. Conditions for the present remain inexorable: Nature never changes, and Society changes so slowly that its alterations are, for Hardy, almost equally unimaginable. So, trapped between the looming, external, superhuman structures of Nature and Society—each of them enormous, oppressive, and deterministic—Hardy beats a hasty retreat in what seems like the only direction left: inwards.

Although critics sometimes remark on the surprising lack of interiority in Hardy's characters, *Tess* shows Hardy's growing hopes for the human mind as the last bastion for significance in an antagonistic, inhuman world. Indeed, where Hardy is concerned, the mind *is* the world—or the only one with any meaningful value, anyway. Because the average human fate is merely a chaotic, senseless buffeting between the opposing forces of Nature and Society, internal essences become the only reliable way of measuring a person's moral value. This realization constitutes the substance of Angel's education in *Tess*:

During this time of absence he had mentally aged a dozen years. What arrested him now as of value in life was less its beauty than its pathos. Having long discredited the old systems of mysticism he now began to discredit the old appraisements of morality. He thought they wanted readjusting. Who was the moral man? Still more pertinently, who was the moral woman? The beauty or ugliness of a character lay not only in its achievements, but in its aims and impulses; its true history lay not among things done, but among things willed.⁵⁵²

Angel thus recognizes, however belatedly, that Tess's internal motions matter and mean in a way her external situation does not. The stranger who shows Angel the error of his judgment preaches the same message, slightly obscured by a semantic shift between

Hardy's time and our own: "[The stranger] viewed the matter in quite a different light from Angel; thought that what Tess had been was of no importance beside what she would be, and plainly told Clare he was wrong in coming away from her."⁵⁵³ Angel's fellow traveler appears to be contrasting Tess's meaningless past against her future as Angel's devoted wife—and in one sense, he is. But he is also, crucially, contrasting her external history against her internal one. Hardy's usage of "would" suffers from syntactic ambiguity. It is easy to read it simply as the past form of the modal auxiliary "will," in which case it designates Tess's future as Angel's wife, but conjugated in the past tense conventional to narrative accounts. But "would" also serves as a conditional form of "to will," expressing the primacy of Tess's internal preferences and desires—including her desire to become Angel's wife—over whatever contingent fate has befallen her or may await her. What matters, the stranger indicates, is not what she was, but what she wills herself to be, not, in Angel's phraseology, "things done, but . . . things willed."

This lesson gibes with the narrator's commentary on Tess's despair, which emphasizes the mind, and not external circumstances, as the locus and measure of all meaningful experience. Commenting on Tess's antagonistic feelings about the landscape in the wake of her rape, the narrator clarifies that the world was, in a very important sense, exactly as Tess saw it. When Tess's "whimsical fancy" makes the trees and wind appear "a part of her own story," these things effectively *are* part of Tess's story: "Rather they became a part of it; for the world is only a psychological phenomenon, and what they seemed they were."⁵⁵⁴ The subjective foundation of reality could actually work to Tess's advantage, if only she would realize it. Then she would see herself as other minds experience her: merely as a thought, and a thought whose shape and image she can, to a

surprising extent, control. Instead of experiencing her life as determined by the fact of a violation that marks her as permanently ruined and miserable, Tess could distance herself from her fallenness by not appearing fallen. Even those who know the facts of her case would be cheered by her cheerfulness, and think less persistently of it. “To all humankind besides[,] Tess was only a passing thought,” the narrator explains: “Even to friends she was no more than a frequently passing thought. If she made herself miserable the livelong night and day it was only this much to them—‘Ah, she makes herself unhappy.’ If she tried to be cheerful, to dismiss all care, to take pleasure in the daylight, the flowers, the baby, she could only be this idea to them—‘Ah, she bears it very well.’”⁵⁵⁵

Tess’s great mistake in her dealings with Angel is, in fact, her naïve belief that her external history must factor into an honest evaluation of her moral value. Ironically, Mrs. Durbeyfield’s ancient, earthy, and comic approach to sexual knowledge—what a husband doesn’t know can’t hurt him—proves, in this case, more modern and more advanced than Tess’s tragically conventional integrity. Given that Tess’s character is innocent and faithful, the mere fact of her sexual experience weighs nothing in Hardy’s moral balance. Tess’s rape conveys no meaningful information about her as a person; telling Angel her history only confuses him, as he has as much difficulty separating external and internal histories as Tess does. We laugh, or shake our heads knowingly, when Angel idealizes Tess as “a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature,” but his ignorant idealism in fact brings him closer to understanding her true character than his later, corrected knowledge.⁵⁵⁶ If anything, the past that repels Angel is what makes her a plausible partner for him in the first place, as—in a slightly unsavory twist of Hardy’s—the horrifying objective fact of her rape has a perversely positive effect on her subjectivity. Her trauma shocks her out of

ignorance by forcing her to muse over guilt and suffering, elevating her to the mental station and internal complexity that piques Angel's interest: "Tess's passing corporeal blight had been her mental harvest."⁵⁵⁷

Relocating value in internal essences allows Hardy to snatch something meaningful from the chaotic tussle of Nature and Society, situating moral worth in a withdrawing inner sanctum deep within the human skull. His growing interest in interiority serves as a reaction formation against the sprawling impersonal forces of the environment, forces that take turns thwarting the best intentions of human actors. In the face of these monolithic systems, intention itself becomes the only protected space of significance and value. When Hardy finally abandons the novel altogether in favor of lyric poetry, the shift only confirms what the arc of his career already suggested. For Hardy, the external world of relations that forms the substance of Victorian realism no longer holds the key to explaining the meaning and value of life. These relations are merely environments, concatenations of unpredictable forces that thwart, pervert, and destroy the significant intentions of human individuals. With its concentration on the voice of a single speaker and its ability to locate significant action not in the vicissitudes of Nature and Society, but in the sensitive mind's responses to them, lyric poetry reflects Hardy's growing certainty that any meaning or value left in the world must reside in the subjectivity of individual human beings.

For all his beautiful passages on the nonhuman world, then, Hardy's career arc ultimately describes a vehement and decisive turn away from the natural world. Hardy recognizes the physical entanglement of characters and their environments, but he resents it bitterly as cruel, coercive, and overpowering—an existential betrayal of the inward

experience of the human mind. In response, he effects a willful moral severance of character from environment. This equation of character and moral meaning with human individuality both symptomizes and contributes to the broader “inward turning” that characterizes the end of the nineteenth century and the beginnings of the twentieth, the end of the Victorian era and the rise of modernism.⁵⁵⁸

Hardy’s earlier novels suggest that he did not always think this way. From an ecological perspective, the real tragedy of Hardy is his propagation of a vision of Nature and Society whose pathological tendencies he had already acknowledged and explored in his earlier work. Hardy’s late characters, in short, face a dilemma of his own making. *Tess* and *Jude* both bundle a set of vast, complicated interactions together, categorize them as human or nonhuman, and reify them into “forces” under the respective headings of Society and Nature. In the process, they create the conditions of the nihilistic universe they claim merely to depict.

Hardy develops this worldview much earlier in his career, in *The Return of the Native*. There, he follows a number of different characters as they engage with the distinctive natural and social world of Egdon Heath. The multiple perspectives of the novel enable Hardy to experiment with different ways of representing the interactions between characters and their environments, human and otherwise. The novel’s protagonists, Clym Yeobright and Eustacia Vye, embody the ambivalent, binaristic perspective that Hardy would eventually embrace as the most “modern.” But the novel retains serious reservations about this modern view, and it points, through its other characters, to alternative perspectives on the natural world that suggest a happier, healthier, and more accurate road not taken.

2. The Character of Hardy's Despair

What is Egdon Heath? The answer varies with the answerer. From a drily technical perspective, Egdon Heath is a place, a fictional span of earth bounded by the Vale of Fromm to the south and west, Blackmoor Vale to the north and west, and Sandbourne to the east. Some critics vehemently defend this perspective, underscoring the heath's status as a location and nothing more.⁵⁵⁹ Most declare, however, that Egdon Heath is more than a mere place—that it is, in some sense, a person, a fully realized character within the imagined community of *The Return of the Native*.⁵⁶⁰ But the real innovation of *The Return of the Native* is its ability to encompass and represent both these apparently oppositional positions. In Hardy's novel, Egdon Heath is both a character *and* a landscape, and it is with this peculiar literary innovation that many of Hardy's intransigent philosophical problems truly begin.

The famous opening of *The Return of the Native* shows Hardy trying to revise older conventions of character and landscape to reflect a distinctively modern awareness of human embeddedness in the nonhuman world. Most interpretations of these opening chapters focus—understandably enough—on the elaborate personification of Egdon Heath, which leads many critics to commend the heath as an unprecedented treatment of landscape in English literature. But Hardy's narrator in fact announces an ambition to build on and modify precedents almost immediately, situating his depiction of the landscape in a complicated relationship with the conventions Hardy inherits from Wordsworth and George Eliot. Attending to Hardy's predecessors clarifies his literary

innovations in *The Return of the Native*—and shows how those innovations fostered the pessimistic worldview that became so indelibly associated with his work.

The opening pages of *The Return of the Native* appear, at first, to describe the heath as an utterly novel, unexplored literary terrain that rejects and overturns traditional approaches to natural scenery. As Robert Langbaum points out, *The Return of the Native* represents an epochal shift in Hardy's technique, as he breaks away from the simple pastoral novels of his early career and "takes the modern world into account."⁵⁶¹ Part of this shift means rethinking how to represent humanity's relationship to the nonhuman world in modern terms that discard unrealistic, palliative perspectives on nature and the landscapes that typify such views. Conventional notions of landscape are, the narrator suggests, hopelessly out of date. "[S]pots renowned for mere prettiness . . . [and] the sort of beauty called charming" have a purely historical interest for the modern mind.⁵⁶² That aesthetic is an anachronism, a hopeless relic of a classical world that took comfort in Italianate landscapes dotted with "[s]miling champaigns of flowers and fruit."⁵⁶³ Pleasant, placid scenes jar against the modern sensibility, Hardy insists, as they bespeak a cheerful naïveté unavailable to a clear-eyed modern. "[T]hey are permanently harmonious," the narrator explains, "only with an existence of better reputation as to its issues than the present."⁵⁶⁴

Appreciation for the more sublime "scenery of Egdon Heath" remains relatively rare, as it "appeal[s] to a subtler and scarcer instinct, to a more recently learnt emotion" than conventional landscapes.⁵⁶⁵ Yet Hardy suspects that admiration for places like Egdon will grow. Affection for the domesticated landscapes "of square fields, plashed hedges, and meadows watered on a plan so rectangular that on a fine day they look like

silver gridirons”—precisely “the things that make the gamut of joy in landscape to midland-bred souls,” in Eliot’s cheerful phrase—is on the wane.⁵⁶⁶ As the nineteenth century nears its end, Hardy prophesies, tastes will shift towards this drearier, more sublime natural setting: “Indeed, it is a question if the exclusive reign of this orthodox beauty is not approaching its last quarter.”⁵⁶⁷

But the apparent contrast between Egdon Heath and the hedgerows dear to the middling characters Eliot’s realism—or even between Egdon and the wooded banks of the Wye—masks a deeper aesthetic continuity. If Hardy proposes Egdon as a modern corrective to the stale scenic conventions of the past, it is not because of a quarrel with Wordsworthian appreciation of landscape itself. Instead, *The Return of the Native* proposes Egdon Heath as a more fitting, but more modern exemplar of the Wordsworthian ideal. Egdon is a better object for contemplation, an apt substitute for the dull geometric artifice of landscapes past. The quarrel, at this stage, is not with the cultural significance of Wordsworthian Nature, exactly, but with the scenery supposed to represent it. The Wordsworthian point of view persists in *Return of the Native*, but it opens out onto the bleak, disconsolate scrublands of Egdon Heath, rather than Wordsworth’s woodlands or Eliot’s fields and meadows.⁵⁶⁸

Thus the heath, like the rolling terrain around Tintern Abbey and Eliot’s “home scenes,” assumes social and aesthetic significance primarily as a memory world. It lingers in the minds of those who grew up there, providing unexpected consolation in the face of modern existence: “It was a spot which returned upon the memory of those who loved it with an aspect of peculiar and kindly congruity.”⁵⁶⁹ The landscape provides unexpected mental and emotional refuge amidst the tumult of modern life, as it suggests a meaningful

affinity between human beings and the world they occupy: “It was at present a place perfectly accordant with man’s nature—neither ghastly, hateful, nor ugly; neither commonplace, unmeaning, nor tame; but, like man, slighted and enduring; and withal singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony.”⁵⁷⁰ Indeed, the cheering qualities of the landscape reside precisely in its realistic reflection of the middling prospects of the typical human life. The beauty and tranquility of superficially happier places actually have a depressing influence on a conscientious observer, because they contrast so markedly with the grim realities of existence: “Gay prospects wed happily with gay times; but alas if times be not gay. Men have oftener suffered from the mockery of a place too smiling for their reason than from the oppression of surroundings oversadly tinged.”⁵⁷¹

As in Wordsworth and Eliot, there is something inspiring in the place’s very permanence, its cyclical rejuvenations that contrast so markedly to the frenzied pace of human society:

To recline on a stump of thorn in the central valley of Egdon, between afternoon and night as now, where the eye could reach nothing of the world outside the summits and shoulders of heathland which filled the whole circumference of its glance, and to know that everything around and underneath had been from prehistoric times as unaltered as the stars overhead, gave ballast to the mind adrift on change, and harassed by the irrepressible New. The great inviolate place had an ancient permanence which the sea cannot claim.⁵⁷²

The uplifting aspects of this scenic description almost explain how some readers could emerge from *The Return of the Native* with the impression that the book is “convincing proof of [Hardy’s] appreciation of, and sympathy with, Nature,” a novel populated by characters “entirely in harmony with their environment.”⁵⁷³ But Hardy’s adoption of

certain conventions of landscape jars against his more unusual treatments of Egdon Heath, creating disturbing incongruities that render the terrain increasingly monstrous.

When he argues for the interest of Egdon Heath in Wordsworthian terms, Hardy retains a conceptual distinction between human society and nonhuman nature that he inherits, in different forms, from both Wordsworth and Eliot. But other aesthetic strategies in *The Return of the Native* work to overturn this distinction, animating and enlivening the landscape in personal terms. Indeed, the features of the novel that grab the attention of most readers—the personification of the heath, the material interactions between the land and human characters, and the symbolic connections between characters and their environments—constitute innovative developments poised to challenge any simple division between human characters and natural scenery. Hardy effectively characterizes the landscape, reintroducing nonhuman actors to the foreground of the Victorian realist novel through the figure of Egdon Heath. Yet these innovations remain bound to the less obvious, but doggedly persistent Wordsworthian division between human society and nonhuman nature enforced in the novel's opening. Nature becomes animated and interacts with humans in unprecedented ways, but because Nature remains an essentially distinct entity, its personality appears monstrously inhuman, frighteningly devoid of every redemptive human moral trait. Consequently, the formal devices that would seem capable of knitting humans and nonhumans together ultimately depict those interactions in antagonistic terms, with a monstrously animated natural world repeatedly foiling, stalling, and obstructing the sphere of human relations.

This basic tension emerges in the first chapter, where the novel's older understanding of landscape rubs up against its more innovative personification of the

heath. Egdon preserves a good deal of the immutability of Wordsworthian nature, its timeless incorruptibility in contrast to the feverish changeability of human society. But it also mobilizes the landscape into an active, dynamic character. So rather than depicting the conventional difference between Nature and Society as a contrast between what are, in essence, separate spheres, Hardy's narrator depicts the immutability of Nature as an interaction with or response to human Society. From this perspective, the relatively inert, unchanging qualities of Egdon Heath stop looking like a mode of existence outside human time and begin looking, instead, like a form of phlegmatic resistance to human progress.

Indeed, much of the first chapter consists of the narrator noting features that most observers would consider constant and static aspects of the heath—its dark coloration, or its acidic, nutrient-poor soil—and converting them into the willful stubbornness of a dynamic character. Egdon's darkness is not a timeless quality of the land, but a dogged resistance to temporal processes of lightening and darkening. In the human sphere, this resistance takes the form of interventions in the expected course of human affairs, actions that obstruct and meddle in the course of social life, altering human actions and moods: "The face of the heath by its mere complexion added half-an-hour to eve: it could in like manner retard the dawn, sadden noon, anticipate the frowning of storms scarcely generated, and intensify the opacity of a moonless midnight to a cause of shaking and dread."⁵⁷⁴

This characterization of Egdon Heath does not actually discard older traditions of natural landscape; it simply reinterprets them. In each case, the novel activates supposedly passive traits of the landscape and adopts a new perspective towards them.

This perspective does, in a sense, reconnect humans to the nonhuman world, as it shows natural scenery capable of operating on human society and subjectivity. It also urges new attention to a landscape that might seem stable and boring, as the narrator's insistence on seeing life and activity working beneath the scene's apparently changeless character sparks precisely the kind of ethical attention that constitutes realist characterization. It thereby re-narrativizes the nonhuman world that Eliot had transformed into scenic background, taking traits that she had consigned to static description and re-imagining them as parties to the ethical interactions of narrative. "[T]here was that in the condition of the heath itself which resembled protracted and halting dubiousness," the narrator remarks at one point. If the heath seems to hesitate, however, it would be wrong to conclude that the place is totally frozen in time:

It was the quality of the repose appertaining to the scene. This was not the repose of actual stagnation, but the apparent repose of incredible slowness. A condition of healthy life so nearly resembling the torpor of death is a noticeable thing of its sort; to exhibit the inertness of the desert, and at the same time to be exercising powers akin to those of the meadow, and even of the forest, awakened in those who thought of it the attentiveness usually engendered by understatement and reserve.⁵⁷⁵

Famously, this narrativized landscape becomes the subject of increasingly rich and complex personification. In fact, however, Hardy picks up right where George Eliot left off, reanimating some of her favorite dead metaphor to create a landscape that is newly vivified and newly fascinating—but also newly monstrous. Eliot assures her readers that locals can recognize landscapes by reading their "particular physiognomies," but the physiognomic metaphor merely emphasizes the familiarity and legibility that allows locals to associate particular landscapes with the general sentiment of home. She carefully avoids the move from personification to personhood by isolating and distancing the scenery from a narrative network confined to human beings. Hardy follows Eliot in

assigning the landscape a living face. But he unspools Eliot's vague personification into an extended metaphor that ceases to be a metaphor at all. In *The Return of the Native*, the seemingly harmless poetic trope of "[t]he face of the heath" stimulates the very kind of interest in the scenery that Eliot's novels work to suppress.⁵⁷⁶ The landscape proves narratively related to the lives of other characters, and it therefore takes on a character of its own. As the metaphor comes to life, it leads the novel into increasingly detailed observations of the heath that reveal the landscape's inextricability from the human community living on and around it.

The title of the first chapter of *The Return of the Native* frames the comparison between land and face as a kind of riddle, a suggestive turn of phrase and little more. The "Face on Which Time Makes But Little Impression" is not, in the human sense, a face at all. Yet Hardy becomes infatuated with the idea, carrying the conceit through the text with increasingly complex—and increasingly disturbing—results.⁵⁷⁷ The ancient road over the heath "bisect[s] that vast dark surface like the parting-line on a head of raven hair."⁵⁷⁸ The bonfires burning at intervals over the rolling furze redden and cut into the landscape like injuries: "Some were large and near, glowing scarlet-red from the shade, like wounds in a black hide."⁵⁷⁹ A boy in dark clothing "appear[s] on the dark ridge of heathland, like a fly on a negro."⁵⁸⁰ "[A] knot of stunted hollies" create a black spot that "in the general darkness of the scene [stands] as the pupil in a black eye."⁵⁸¹ When the wind blows over the heath, it passes through holly and "mummied heath bells," amplifying across the "pits and prominences" of the land to create "what may be called the linguistic peculiarity of the heath."⁵⁸² This eerie experience brings to mind the etymological relationship between breath, wind, and spirit, leaving the narrator with an

unsettling sense that the vast, sublime landscape is a single being speaking in the several tongues it knows:

‘The spirit moved them.’ A meaning of the phrase forced itself upon the attention; and an emotional listener’s fetichistic mood might have ended in one of more advanced quality. It was not, after all, that the left-hand expanse of old blooms spoke, or the right-hand, or the right-hand, or those on the slope in front. It was the single person of something else speaking through each in turn.⁵⁸³

There is a thin, but very real line between assigning the landscape a metaphorical face—the standard meaning of personification—and treating it as an actual person, a party to the ethical interactions of the text. In an essay on Hardy’s inanimate persons, Satoshi Nishimura suggests that “[f]or Hardy, characterization is completed personification, the trope of prosopopoeia taken literally.”⁵⁸⁴ Nishimura is right—but it would be timid to limit this observation to Hardy. Realist characterization is always and by definition a form of personification. It can be distinguished from personification only because characterization extends personhood into the world of interpersonal relations, transforming its object from the imaginative suggestion of a single mind into an actual being whose presence must be acknowledged and evaluated. Characterization is a form of personification that depicts its imagined persons not as inconsequential conceits, but as parties engaged in interactions with ethical consequences—consequences that render these persons “real” members of the community depicted in the text.

The Return of the Native illustrates this transformation from its very first chapter. Yet the recipient of this attentiveness remains defined by its status as a landscape, a space distinguished from the human beings who live on it and pass through it. The novel’s renewed attention to the landscape recognizes the dynamic relations connecting humans and nonhumans, but it preserves the conceptual opposition dividing humans from

nonhumans, characters from landscape, and Society from Nature. The result is an uncanny contradiction in terms: a disturbingly human figure aggregated from all things inhuman—an active environment that is both outside human society and incessantly meddling in it—a scenic background forever intruding into the foreground in unexpected and incomprehensible ways.

Born of what might seem, at first, a reparative synthesis of oppositional logics, Egdon Heath proves to be not a resolution of binaries but their very embodiment. It forms a horrifying hybrid, a Thing inherently, innately oppositional to human comprehension, an antagonistic actor embodying tensions and resistances of all kinds. By characterizing this nonhuman landscape as a single, monolithic entity, Hardy has introduced the entire nonhuman world into his story as an entity whose interactions with human beings take the form of competitive, relational personhood. Nature becomes a party to struggles for priority in its relations with human beings. Even its simplest, most unchanging traits become responsive, competitive, and agonistic. Its “natural and invariable” appearance becomes the sign of a peculiar resistance to, and antipathy towards, social progress.⁵⁸⁵ It proves an “untameable, Ishmaelitish thing . . . Civilization was its enemy.”⁵⁸⁶ Its prehistoric appearance starts to signify a scornful, phlegmatic preference for the antimodern and unfashionable: “Ever since the beginning of vegetation its soil had worn the same antique brown dress, the natural and invariable garment of the formation. In its venerable one coat lay a certain vein of satire on human vanity in clothes.”⁵⁸⁷

Perhaps because they mostly occur in the opening pages of *The Return of the Native*, before any human characters have come into view, these passages can seem like objective statements about Egdon Heath, the final word on its nature and effects. Indeed,

most critics appear to understand them in this way, and naturally connect them to Hardy's broader understanding of man's relationship to nature. But in this novel, at least, this perspective on Egdon Heath is just that—a perspective, one visible only to certain subjects observing the matter from their own personal angles. This new view of the landscape as a phlegmatic actor refusing to participate in the trappings of modernity appeals to a particularly modern rejection of civilization and its imperative towards so-called progress. The landscape becomes more than a consolation to unsettled minds: it becomes a perverse source of inspiration, a role-model that provides “ballast to the mind adrift on change, and harassed by the irrepressible New.”⁵⁸⁸ At this point in the novel, the mind possessing such a sensibility remains purely speculative and theoretical. But it soon becomes apparent that this understanding of the heath reflects not its sole and ultimate truth, but the perspective and values of the novel's protagonist, Clym Yeobright.

If the sublimities of Egdon Heath seem poised to overtake charming landscapes in the affections of future men and women, Clym is their representative man. He has “the typical countenance of the future,” a “modern perceptiveness” that marks him as distinct from most of the rural characters who surround him.⁵⁸⁹ Although “Clym had been so inwoven with the heath in his boyhood that hardly anybody could look upon it without thinking of him,” his exceptional mind and talents allow him to escape the country of his birth and climb in the world as a jeweler, first in Budmouth, then London, and finally in Paris. But he returns from his time in Paris bristling with contempt for the meaninglessness of the modern world. He discovers that life in Paris “is no better than other spots;” it has no more inherent interest than life on the heath, a fact he finds “depressing.”⁵⁹⁰ “But not so depressing,” he explains to a group of baffled Egdon locals,

“as something I next perceived—that my business was the silliest, flimsiest, most effeminate business that ever a man could be put to.”⁵⁹¹ He flees this vapid life to return to the heath, which he loves precisely because it constitutes an “obscure, removed spot” that stands in direct opposition to “the French capital—the centre and vortex of the fashionable world.”⁵⁹²

Clym’s mature affection for the heath is hopelessly intertwined with his recent rejection of cosmopolitan modernity. He takes an almost sadistic glory in the heath’s ability to stymie human cultivation and progress: “[H]e could not help indulging in a barbarous satisfaction at observing that in some of the attempts at reclamation from the waste, tillage, after holding on for a year or two, had receded again in despair, the ferns and furze-tufts stubbornly reasserting themselves.”⁵⁹³ The sense of belonging he feels on the heath is, in other words, far more complex than the love of a native returning to the pleasurable familiarity of his origins, or even of a gloomy person in sympathy with gloomy surroundings. The Wordsworthian passages in the novel direct attention to his recollections of childhood unity with the heath, but they do little to explain his return.

Clym is occasionally depicted as a sort of emanation of the land:

He was permeated with its scenes, with its substance, and with its odours. He might be said to be its product. His eyes had first opened thereon: with its appearance all the first images of his memory were mingled: his estimate of life had been coloured by it. His toys had been the flint knives and arrow-heads which he found there, wondering why stones should ‘grow’ to such odd shapes; his flowers the purple bells and yellow gorse; his animal-kingdom the snakes and croppers; his society its human haunters.⁵⁹⁴

By his own confession, however, he grew to despise these remote and provincial origins:

“When I first got away from home I thought this place was not worth troubling about. I thought our life here was contemptible.”⁵⁹⁵ His return retains the polarizing logic of his youth—he still understands rural Wessex as hopelessly remote from the currents of

modern civilization—reversing only his original valuation. As a young man, he grew to hate the heath as a backwardly antisocial and antimodern place; as a slightly older one, he loves it for the same reasons. His embrace of Nature is inherently misanthropic, a sense of solidarity with a heath whose antimodernizing effects align with his own rejection of Society.

Clym's polarized conception of the heath finds its diametric opposite—its mate, in every sense—in the figure of Eustacia Vye. “Take all the varying hates felt by Eustacia Vye towards the heath,” the narrator tellingly remarks, “and translate them into loves, and you have the heart of Clym.”⁵⁹⁶ Clym and Eustacia are more alike than they are different: both envision the heath as a monstrosly uncivilized macroorganism, a superhuman inhumanity that sets its face against the achievements of modern society. United in this conception of the natural world around them, they differ only in their appraisals of it. The “fascination” that draws them together—really a magnetic attraction between two opposed poles—reflects this submerged symmetry.

The divine powers of Eustacia Vye derive, at bottom, from the relatively commonplace power of a beautiful woman to lord over a provincial watering-hole. Eustacia's likeness to a pagan goddess of the earth or the night is a secondary acquisition, an accident of environment and circumstance rather than the reflection of a fundamentally interesting personality. “Budmouth was her native place,” the narrator explains, “a fashionable sea-side resort between twenty and thirty miles distant.”⁵⁹⁷ Forced to relocate to the heath and live with her grandfather, Eustacia “hate[s] the change.”⁵⁹⁸ In her grim situation, she acquires a grim mystery, an allure she could not maintain in the fashionable society she pines for: “Isolation on a heath renders vulgarity

well-nigh impossible. It would have been as easy for the heath-ponies, bats, and snakes to be vulgar as for her. A narrow life in Budmouth might have completely demeaned her.”⁵⁹⁹

Eustacia’s geographic and emotional movements strikingly reflect and reverse the trajectory of Clym’s life. A native of Egdon, Clym idealizes its bleak natural surroundings, and leaves behind the gay society he experienced in Budmouth, London, and Paris to return home. Eustacia, a native of Budmouth, idealizes the gay society she experienced there, and seeks to leave behind her bleak natural surroundings to return home. Their mirrored experiences result in equally polarized conceptions of Egdon. Both Eustacia and Clym develop strong affective attachments to the jarring contrast between gay modern society and the dreary timelessness of the natural landscape:

Thus it happened that in Eustacia’s brain were juxtaposed the strangest assortment of ideas, from old time and from new. There was no middle-distance in her perspective: romantic recollections of sunny afternoons on an esplanade, with military bands, officers, and gallants around, stood like gilded uncials upon the dark tablet of surrounding Egdon. Every bizarre effect that could result from the random intertwining of watering-place glitter with the grand solemnity of the heath, were to be found in her. Seeing nothing of human life now, she imagined all the more of what she had seen.⁶⁰⁰

Eustacia sees the heath as the hateful contrary of the delightful civilization she once knew, and she smoulders with a fury that adds dignity to her otherwise superficial charms. Ironically, she develops a suppressed rancor, contrariness, and isolated majesty that—to the eyes of a newly converted antimodern like Clym Yeobright—align her with the very environment she despises. “Egdon was her Hades,” the narrator remarks, “and since coming there she had imbibed much of what was dark in its tone, though inwardly and eternally unreconciled thereto. . . . A true Tartarean dignity sat upon her brow, and not factitiously, or with marks of constraint, for it had grown in her with years.”⁶⁰¹

The attraction between Clym and Eustacia that follows is oddly structural: its logic emerges from the mirrored relations established between their respective characters, rather than any plausible personal or psychological needs that might bring the two together. Plot-wise, Eustacia constitutes a kind of chess-piece with no moves left. After she tricks Wildeve into marrying Thomasin Yeobright, Eustacia is out of options. Clym is not quite the glamorous Parisian she imagined, but as an educated woman isolated on the heath, hungry for some kind of action “[i]n a world where doing means marrying,” she has little choice but to marry the only male character who approximates to her social stratum.⁶⁰² On Clym’s side, the attraction is equally unromantic, but even less comprehensible. From their first face-to-face meeting, he recognizes that Eustacia’s priorities have nothing in common with his own. She confesses that she “cannot endure the heath,” whereas he prefers it above all other places. “To my mind,” he responds, “it is most exhilarating, and strengthening, and soothing. I would rather live on these hills than anywhere else in the world.”⁶⁰³ Not only does she have no interest in educating the people of Egdon—Clym’s avowed mission in life—she despises them: “I have not much love for my fellow creatures. Sometimes I quite hate them.”⁶⁰⁴ Her ignorance of the local landmarks and history contrasts with her knowledge of even the most mundane events at Budmouth, and Clym recognizes her attitude as a damning indication of her underlying personality:

“I was not even aware that there existed any such curious Druidical stone. I am aware that there is a parade at Budmouth.”

Yeobright looked thoughtfully on the ground. “That means much,” he said.⁶⁰⁵

The moral and psychological incompatibility between the two remains glaringly obvious even to Clym, who admits to himself that Eustacia “love[s] him rather as a visitant from a

gay world to which she rightly belonged than as a man with a purpose opposed to that recent past of his which so interested her.”⁶⁰⁶

In improbable courtships of this kind—the attachment between Maggie Tulliver and Stephen Guest provides an obvious precursor—critics of nineteenth-century fiction often have recourse to that great unmentionable of mid-Victorian realism, sex. Clym’s need to marry Eustacia might have its origins in certain unspoken bodily needs, which would explain his persistence despite the glaring impediments to a happy marriage. Some critics have suggested as much.⁶⁰⁷ But Hardy’s narrator goes out of his way to deny and disavow even this slim possibility. “[H]is love,” the novel assures us, “was as chaste as that of Petrarch for his Laura.”⁶⁰⁸

Yet if it is hard to explain the magnetism between Eustacia and Clym in psychological terms, it makes undeniable aesthetic sense. Their symmetrical trajectories attract Clym and Eustacia towards each other, and there is a perverse congruence in their Manichaean perspectives on Egdon and Paris that draws them into the same strange force field. In pairing Clym and Eustacia together, *The Return of the Native* highlights the underlying congruity of their apparently disparate understandings of nature. Their polarized perspectives on Egdon as an embodiment of inhuman, antimodern nature that nevertheless shapes and influences human affairs only leaves room for two positions towards the land: a civilized hatred for this antisocial world, or an antisocial affection for its opposition to the frippery of modern life.

The logical bond uniting these symmetrically opposed positions also appears in the suddenness and ease with which the one position can convert into the other. In his relationship with Eustacia, Clym’s affection for Egdon betrays its essential instability; at

several key moments in the narrative, his interpretation of the landscape undergoes a dramatic and inexplicable reversal, inverting itself to reveal the compatibility between his love and Eustacia's hatred. At the moment Clym and Eustacia seal their engagement, Clym's eyes follow her as she disappears over the horizon, and he experiences the first dizzying reversal of his understanding of the landscape:

Clym watched her as she retired towards the sun. The luminous rays wrapped her up with her increasing distance, and the rustle of her dress over the sprouting sedge and grass died away. As he watched, the dead flat of the scenery overpowered him, though he was fully alive to the beauty of that untarnished early summer green which was worn for the nonce by the poorest blade. There was something in its oppressive horizontality which too much reminded him of the arena of life: it gave him a sense of bare equality with and no superiority to a single living thing under the sun.⁶⁰⁹

The vast featurelessness that Clym normally finds such an inspiring aspect of Egdon becomes, in this moment, terrifying rather than soothing in its monotony. The flatness that evidences its resistance to human efforts reminds him, suddenly, that he belongs to that community of striving humans incapable of rising or building anything meaningful in the face of such a force. Clym's perverse admiration for the heath only lasts, in other words, as long as he can revel in its misanthropic elements, affiliating himself with a Nature triumphant over the meanness of human Society. Reminders of his own humanity, and his own social hopes, throw a new light on the indifference of the heath, and its antisocial elements become profoundly disturbing.

Clym confronts the inhumanity of Nature a second time late in the novel, after his mother dies of exposure on the heath. Stepping out of the shack where her body lies, he finds himself face-to-face, so to speak, with "the imperturbable countenance of the heath, which, having defied the cataclysmal onsets of centuries, reduced to insignificance by its seamed and antique features the wildest turmoil of a single man."⁶¹⁰ This brief, revelatory

glimpse of the heath's horror tellingly draws on both its characterization—the prosopopoeia that lends it a metaphorical face and a very real capacity for dynamic interaction—and its inhumanity, lingering over the riveting horror spawned by the depiction of the heath as both animate and inanimate, character and landscape, personal and yet profoundly inhuman. “A consciousness of the vast impassivity in all which lay around him took possession even of Yeobright in his wild walk towards Alderworth,” the narrator marvels.⁶¹¹ The vision is structurally identical to the one he experienced earlier, when Eustacia pledged herself to him: “He had once before felt in his own person this overpowering of the fervid by the inanimate; but then it had tended to enervate a passion far sweeter than that which at present pervaded him. It was once when he stood parting from Eustacia in the moist still levels beyond the hills.”⁶¹² By the end of the novel, the unnerving symmetries between Clym and Eustacia are complete, as he literally occupies the position she once held vis-à-vis the landscape: “From a distance there simply appeared to be a motionless figure standing on the top of the tumulus, just as Eustacia had stood on that lonely summit some two years and a half before.”⁶¹³

Clym and Eustacia provide early examples of the ideological positions that come to dominate Hardy's later work. Clym returns to Egdon Heath as part of his embrace of a chaotic, inhuman Nature utterly opposed to the frivolous vanities of Society; Eustacia despises Egdon Heath as a swath of chaotic, inhuman Nature and longs for the petty victories and elaborate rituals of Society. Crucially, these positions share—and really emerge from—a conception of the heath as a unified, inhuman entity engaged in dynamic interactions with human society. They emerge, in other words, from a perspective that sees Egdon Heath as at once a landscape and a character. The homologous structure of

the two positions explains their surprising commensurability, visible not only in Clym's occasional revulsion at the heath but—more thoroughly and profoundly—in Hardy's later works, where the narrator of *Tess* and the protagonists of *Jude* undergo similar reversals, alternately judging Nature by the standards of Society and Society by the standards of Nature, alienated from each in turn, and finding both miserably inadequate.

It may seem strange to trace Hardy's late despair to the effects of a characterized landscape like Egdon Heath, especially given that there are no comparable figures in any of Hardy's other fictions. Hardy seems, in fact, to have recognized the pathological results of this vision of landscape. The characters who see Egdon as an antisocial character end up dead or profoundly demoralized, and Hardy regularly disavows such an understanding of Nature elsewhere in his life and work.⁶¹⁴ In *Jude*, he even singles out anthropomorphic understandings of Fate and Nature as the products of a diseased mind. The toll of Sue's sorrows converts her from an enlightened philosopher into a crazed believer in a conscious, malicious world:

Vague and quaint imaginings had haunted Sue in the days when her intellect scintillated like a star, that the world resembled a stanza or melody composed in a dream; it was wonderfully excellent to the half-aroused intelligence, but hopelessly absurd at the full waking; that the First Cause worked automatically like a somnambulist, and not reflectively like a sage; that at the framing of the terrestrial conditions there seemed never to have been contemplated such a development of emotional perceptiveness among the creatures subject to those conditions as that reached by thinking and educated humanity. But affliction makes opposing forces loom anthropomorphous; and those ideas were now exchanged for a sense of Jude and herself fleeing from a prosecutor.⁶¹⁵

In distancing himself from a fallacious belief in Nature or Fate as conscious and anthropomorphic, however, Hardy does not actually undo the psychological effects of the personification explored so extensively in his characterization of Egdon Heath. The so-called "forces" of Nature, Fate, and Society remain operative in Hardy as unified

concepts that interact with individual human lives, and those interactions remain subject to ethical evaluation—even if it is that backhanded form of ethical evaluation that pronounces them amoral or irresponsible, and responds with despair. Literary entities that engage in interpersonal interactions and receive ethical evaluation are literary persons, or characters. Repeated disavowals of the humanity of Nature might dehumanize it, but they do not change its peculiar importance in Hardy's imagined communities, its prominence as an entity singled out and subjected to intense ethical scrutiny. If anything, the example of Egdon Heath demonstrates that such characters only become more fascinating and horrifying as they acquire a marked inhumanity. The late Hardy may acknowledge that Nature, Society, and Fate are inhuman, but they leave a human-shaped hole in the world, acquiring a literary personality that receives as much attention and responsibility as any human individual.

The lasting effects of this phenomenon are apparent, in fact, in the description of Sue's sophisticated reading of the world. Sue, Hardy insists, had once been smart enough to recognize lack of a conscious subject framing and steering the world. Nevertheless, Hardy's articulation of this supposedly objective view of the amorality of the cosmos creates a string of verbs that syntactically gesture towards the grammatical subject being denied and disavowed. "[T]here seemed never to have been contemplated such a development of emotional perceptiveness among the creatures subject to those conditions as that reached by thinking and educated humanity," Sue thinks, using a bizarrely convoluted passive voice that continues to connote an oversight or mistake, rather than the simple randomness it pretends to describe.⁶¹⁶ Anthropomorphism may be gone, but what remains is the search for ethical responsibility, and the singling out of responsible

parties, that defines characterization and personhood. Long after *The Return of the Native*, Hardy continues to set his novels in a world dominated by the kind of impersonal personalities embodied in the figure of Egdon Heath.

3. Overlooking the Heath—A Cheerful Prospect

If Egdon Heath is both a character and a landscape, it is also something more. It exceeds both categories in ways mostly—but not entirely—invisible to Clym and Eustacia. As J. Hillis Miller observes, *The Return of the Native* is unique among Hardy's works in the wide array of characters with some claim to being the novel's true protagonists.⁶¹⁷ The surprisingly populous cast of characters on the depopulated terrain of Egdon Heath enables Hardy to experiment with multiple perspectives on the same subject, focalizing the narrative through different individuals who perceive the heath in different ways. In fact, the happiest and most successful characters in *The Return of the Native* have no interactions with Egdon Heath at all. They may know their environment extraordinarily well, but they do not know or see it *as* an environment: they have no attachment or emotional investment in the heath as a distinct entity, a unified landscape with a distinct role to play in their lives. Figures such as Thomasin Yeobright, Diggory Venn, and the general population of heath-folk belong to a community that does not divide natural landscape from human society in any straightforward way. As a result, they never experience their lives as either allied with, or opposed to, Egdon Heath or that broader Nature it comes to symbolize. Their relatively peaceful existence testifies to the

reparative potential of rethinking character and scenery in ways that subvert or ignore the conceptual binaries that divide the world into human Society and nonhuman Nature.

Although the majority of Egdon's inhabitants have a healthier and more heterogeneous understanding of life on the heath than Clym and Eustacia, Diggory Venn provides the most important foil to the married pair. The narrator may poetically suggest that Clym is "permeated with [the heath's] scenes, with its substance, [and] with its odours," but Venn has a far more material claim to this distinctive relationship to the land.⁶¹⁸ As a reddleman, Venn sells red ochre, a clay pigment used to mark rams and determine the mating patterns among flocks of sheep.⁶¹⁹ It is a dirty business, and Venn's body and all his possessions are saturated with the ferrous clay's "lurid red," as the soil not only covers but actually materially enters his garments and body: "He was not temporarily overlaid with the colour: it permeated him."⁶²⁰ "[T]is growed into my skin and won't wash out," Venn later explains to Johnny Nunsuch, who fears Venn as a terrifying, uncanny earth-devil.⁶²¹

Venn's close relationship to the land manifests itself not only in his outward appearance, but also in his approach to the heathlands he haunts. A native of Egdon who returns, like Clym, in a transformed state—"I always put you next to my cousin Clym in mind," Thomasin tells him at one point—Venn offers a radically different perspective on the countryside.⁶²² With an eye "keen as that of a bird of prey," Venn sees the surrounding heath not as a personified landscape or Nature, but as a community, a shifting population of distinct organisms with their own narrative trajectories and relationships that connect them to each other and to him.⁶²³ Nor is this exactly surprising—Venn's work, after all, involves selling products that make visible the

particular relationships among superficially homogeneous flocks of sheep. In those sections where Venn, rather than Clym and Eustacia, acts as the focalizer for the story, the narrator's perspective on the heath loses the pathological despair typical of the protagonists, and becomes a quietly interested eye instead.

Looking over Venn's shoulder, the narrator sees a heath that is no longer a lonely, lifeless monotony, but a stretch of land housing vast and exotic communities. "Though these shaggy hills were apparently so solitary," the narrator notes,

several keen round eyes were always ready on such a wintry morning as this to converge upon a passer by. Feathered species sojourned here in hiding which would have created wonder if found elsewhere. . . . A traveller who should walk and observe any of these visitants, as Venn observed them now, could feel himself in direct communication with regions unknown to man.⁶²⁴

Venn makes eye contact with a mallard he discovers along his path, an encounter that improbably connects Venn's itinerant movements across the heath with the far vaster migrations of the bird, whose "amplitude of northern knowledge" includes "[g]lacial catastrophes, snowstorm episodes, glittering auroral effects, Polaris in the zenith, Franklin underfoot,—the category of his commonplaces was wonderful."⁶²⁵ This surprising interaction brings with it another perspective on Egdon Heath—that of the bird. The mallard recognizes in this terrain a relatively welcome, inviting habitat for the winter, rather than the bleak and savage monotony embraced by Clym and decried by Eustacia: "But the bird, like many other philosophers, seemed as he looked at the reddleman to think that a present moment of comfortable reality was worth a decade of memories."⁶²⁶

Venn's ability to see himself embedded in the specific—and interspecific—relationships that constitute the world around him is lost on educated characters trained in

wider, more abstract views. Clym's education in philosophical systems enables him to comprehend and take a view of the heath as a whole, but it makes him less sensitive to the myriad creatures who come together to create this ecosystem. The creatures on the heath observe Clym, but he never seems to notice them in return. As he moves along the footpaths that thread over the barrows, the living things underfoot scamper out of the way and eye him from a distance: "He was indeed walking with a will, over the furze, as straight as a line, as if his life depended on it. . . . The evening films began to make nebulous pictures of the valleys, but the high lands still were raked by the declining rays of the winter sun, which glanced on Clym as he walked forward, eyed by every rabbit and fieldfare around, a long shadow advancing in front of him."⁶²⁷

Clym's infatuation with Eustacia Vye only compounds his abstracted inattention. Eustacia's hatred of the landscape fuels her own habitual oversight of the world around her. She travels over the rolling hills clutching her grandfather's telescope, a tool whose practical use is less important than its status as a symbol of her determination to fix her attentions elsewhere:

The solitary figure who walked this beat took no notice of the windy tune still played on the dead heath-bells. She did not turn her head to look at a group of dark creatures further on, who fled from her presence as she skirted a ravine where they fed. They were about a score of the small wild ponies known as heathcroppers. They roamed at large on the undulations of Egdon, but in numbers too few to detract much from the solitude.

The pedestrian noticed nothing just now . . . She was in a desponding reverie.⁶²⁸

When Clym falls for Eustacia, they share equally in this obliviousness, absorbing each other's interest and attention in a way that distracts from the doings of the nonhuman community around them:

A timid animal world had come to life for the season. Little tadpoles and efts began to bubble up through the water, and to race along beneath it: toads made noises like very

young ducks, and advanced to the margins in twos and threes: overhead, bumblebees flew hither and thither in the thickening light, their drone coming and going like the sound of a gong.

On an evening such as this Yeobright descended into the Blooms-End valley from beside that very pool, where he had been standing with another person quite silently and quite long enough to hear all this puny stir of the resurrection in nature; yet he had not heard it.⁶²⁹

Clym's misdirected attention is, at such moments, almost an ethical shortcoming, a damnable inability to observe something worth both his and the narrator's attention. What the pond contains is, in fact, a redemptive feature of life on the heath that Clym misses, a "stir of the resurrection," however "puny" it may appear.

It is tempting to describe Clym's problem metaphorically and idiomatically as a sort of nearsightedness, a form of myopia. But as his subsequent history reveals, Clym's problem is not nearsightedness, but farsightedness. He shares with Eustacia a fascination with distant prospects, both literal and metaphorical, that obscure the important and meaningful occurrences all around him. Clym's love of abstract ideals and future progress almost literally blinds him. Training for his supposed vocation as a schoolteacher, Clym strains his eyes with reading day and night until "[o]ne morning, after a severer strain than usual," his eyes ache and stream tears.⁶³⁰ A surgeon warns him that his eyes should not be "strained upon any definite object," but Clym soon discovers himself capable of focusing on that narrow circle of things closest to him, which enables him to earn some money as a furze-cutter: "His sight, like the wings in *Rasselas*, though useless to him for his grand purpose, sufficed for this strait."⁶³¹

What follows is a brief interlude, a period of unexpected fulfillment in Clym's increasingly unsatisfying life. Reduced to equality with the heath-folk—human and otherwise—Clym trains his eyes and efforts on the lowly things around him, and

experiences a happiness out of all proportion to his newly “microscopic” existence.⁶³² He becomes one with the landscape in more than a poetic and rhetorical sense, as all divisions between his figure and the ground dissolve. As “a brown spot in the midst of an expanse of olive-green gorse, and nothing more,” he feels newly integrated into what Aldo Leopold would later call the “land-community,” experiencing a consolatory fellowship with the many minute lives he never took seriously before.⁶³³ He suddenly sees, and belongs to, the collective that has actually encircled him his whole life:

His familiars were creeping and winged things, and they seemed to enroll him in their band. Bees hummed around his ears with an intimate air, and tugged at the heath and furze-flowers at his side in such numbers as to weigh them down to the sod. The strange amber-coloured butterflies which Egdon produced, and which were never seen elsewhere, quivered in the breath of his lips, alighted upon his bowed back, and sported with the glittering point of his hook as he flourished it up and down. Tribes of emerald-green grasshoppers leaped over his feet, falling awkwardly on their backs, heads, or hips, like unskillful acrobats, as chance might rule; or engaged themselves in noisy flirtations under the fern-fronds with silent ones of homely hue. Huge flies, ignorant of ladders and wire-netting, and quite in a savage state, buzzed about him without knowing that he was a man. In and out of the fern-brakes snakes glided in their most brilliant blue and yellow guise, it being the season immediately following the shedding of their old skins, when their colours are brightest. Litters of young rabbits came out from their forms to sun themselves upon hillocks, the hot beams blazing through the delicate tissue of each thin-fleshed ear, and firing it to a blood-red transparency in which the veins could be seen.⁶³⁴

In his revision for the Wessex edition, Hardy adds wistfully: “Not one of them feared him.”⁶³⁵

The same smallness of vision that mitigates Clym’s misery, the text suggests, might have had a similar effect on Eustacia. When Eustacia’s desperation reaches a suicidal pitch, her infatuated servant Charley tries to protect her from herself. His first move is to hide her grandfather’s pistols. Then he goes a step further, and takes it upon himself to revive her and restore her mental health: “Having once really succoured her, and possibly preserved her from the rashest of acts, he mentally assumed in addition a

guardian's responsibility for her welfare."⁶³⁶ His nursing, however, takes a highly eccentric form:

[H]e busily endeavoured to provide her with pleasant distractions, bringing home curious objects which he found in the heath, such as white trumpet-shaped mosses, red-headed lichens, stone arrow-heads used by the old tribes on Egdon, and faceted crystals from the hollows of flints. These he deposited on the premises in such positions that she should see them as if by accident.⁶³⁷

These bizarre, boyish efforts to cheer Eustacia are not as bizarre and boyish as they seem. Charley tries to heal Eustacia by placing the heath before her again, reintroducing her to it not as the sprawling perspective she usually sees, but as a collection of interesting objects, showing her the animate and inanimate things hidden by her hateful abstraction, deflating her despair by showing her what really exists "in the heath." His tactics thereby mirror the myopia that cures Clym's despair. He fragments the monstrous abstraction into component parts that might enable her to grow attached to the heath not as a horrifying whole, but as a collection of lives and objects inherently worthy of interest and affection. Charley's efforts fail, however, when Eustacia adopts her old approach to the landscape and literally overlooks them. When she finally rouses herself to go outside, she does so with her eye pressed to her telescope and trained on distant views, "look[ing] through her grandfather's spy-glass she as she had been in the habit of doing before her marriage."⁶³⁸

In her telescopic misanthropy, Eustacia misses an opportunity to reconnect to the community bracketed off and homogenized into the idea of landscape. Clym is luckier. His communion with the land community is real, however brief, and it becomes evident in an almost bodily reincorporation into the scenery. Clym's new fellowship with the land, like Diggory's, colors his figure and changes his appearance in the eyes of those around him. When Mrs. Yeobright undertakes her fatal journey across the heath to make

peace with her son and his wife, she spots a furze-cutter whom she only belatedly recognizes as her son. On first seeing him, she is struck by his inseparability from the land:

He appeared of a russet hue, not more distinguishable from the scene around him than the green caterpillar from the leaf it feeds on. ... The silent being who thus occupied himself seemed to be of no more account in life than an insect. He appeared as a mere parasite of the heath, fretting its surface in his daily labour as a moth frets a garment, entirely engrossed with its products, having no more knowledge of anything in the world but fern, furze, heath, lichens, and moss.⁶³⁹

Every character who lives in mutualistic relations with the land is similarly dehumanized and—insofar as they become a bodily part of the country—countrified. The most obvious example, Diggory Venn, exists in an odd state of inhumanity as part-animal, part-ghost, and part-landscape. Like the other creatures who populate the heath, the appearance of Venn and his horses defies the purported isolation and solitude of the setting. They are characters hidden within what is supposed to be scenery, persons concealed in what is treated as an uninhabited place: in Hardy's cumbersome epithet, Diggory and his animals are "Those Who Are Found Where There Is Said to Be Nobody."⁶⁴⁰ In this they resemble the many nonhumans living, loving, and dying in the heath, like the locusts clinging to the underside of the gorse. Even when "all visible animation disappeared from the landscape," Hardy's narrator reminds us, "the intermittent husky notes of the male grasshoppers from every tuft of furze were enough to show that amid the prostration of the larger animal species an unseen insect world was busy in the fulness of life."⁶⁴¹

Because of their close relationship to their setting, Diggory and the other heath-folk are often seen only partially, obscured by their connection to the scenery. When Venn confronts Wildeve and challenges him to the famous dice game on the darkened

heath, for example, he emerges with terrifying swiftness from the scenic background, eerily rising “from behind a neighbouring bush.”⁶⁴² The minor chorus of heath folk who live and work on the landscape—Timothy Fairway, Humphrey, Olly Dowden, Sam, Grandfer and Christian Cantle, and the Nunsuches—show a similar druidical entanglement with the terrain, each of them entering the text “so involved in furze by his method of carrying the faggots that he appeared like a bush on legs.”⁶⁴³

This phenomenon also marks Thomasin as Clym’s happier cousin. Thomasin has a “sweet and honest country face,” and “in her movements, in her gaze, she reminded the beholder of the feathered creatures who lived around her home.”⁶⁴⁴ In the course of preparing for her cousin’s arrival, she immerses herself in sundry animal and vegetal matter. She “plung[es] her naked arms into the soft brown fern” cushioning the family’s apple store, as “[t]he pigeons were flying about her head with the greatest unconcern.”⁶⁴⁵ Apples retrieved, she hastens outside to a conical pit full of holly shrubs, diving beneath “the general level of the ground” and “up into the fork of one of the bushes” until she is embowered “amid the glistening green and scarlet masses of the tree.”⁶⁴⁶ Thomasin’s mode of blending with the landscape is, in fact, among the weirder relationships between character and scenery in the text. Her harmonious interaction with the land is so pronounced that her bodily outline almost disappears, and it becomes possible to look through her body at the scenery behind it. She possesses what the narrator describes as “[a]n ingenuous transparent life.”⁶⁴⁷ When sunlight hits her, it nearly threatens to erase her, as it falls “so directly upon her brown hair and transparent tissues that it almost seemed to shine through her.”⁶⁴⁸

Like Diggory Venn, the man she finally marries, Thomasin has a close but uncomplicated relation to the land; the land community accommodates her as she accommodates it. She shows none of her cousin's tendency to muse over Nature, Fate, or the insidious Character of the Heath. Her prosaic, matter-of-fact understanding of the heath is explicitly opposed to the attitude of Clym and Eustacia:

To her there were not, as to Eustacia, demons in the air, and malice in every bush and bough. The drops which lashed her face were not scorpions, but prosy rain; Egdon in the mass was no monster whatever, but impersonal open ground. Her fears of the place were rational, her dislikes of its worst moods reasonable. At this time it was in her view a windy wet place, in which a person might experience much discomfort, lose the path without care and possibly catch cold.⁶⁴⁹

If this approach to the land lacks some of the lofty pleasures of classical tragedy, it also lacks their attendant miseries. Even in moments of unhappiness, discomfort, and death, characters capable of this perspective experience sympathies and joys inaccessible to their abstracted fellows. Thus, in an extraordinary recapitulation of Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Mrs. Yeobright stops on her unpleasant errand to Clym and Eustacia's cottage and looks cheerfully at a bunch of worms writhing in the muck:

Occasionally she came to a spot where independent worlds of ephemerons were passing their time in mad carousal, some in the air, some on the hot ground and vegetation, some in the tepid and stringy water of a nearly dried pool. All the shallower ponds had decreased to a vaporous mud, amid which the maggoty shapes of innumerable obscene creatures could be distinctly seen, heaving and wallowing with enjoyment. Being a woman not disinclined to philosophize she sometimes sat down under her umbrella to rest and to watch their happiness, for a certain hopefulness as to the result of her visit gave ease to her mind, and, between her important thoughts, left it free to dwell on any infinitesimal matter which caught her eyes.⁶⁵⁰

Although the narrator attributes her attention to her ease and hope, she engages in the same thoughtful observation in her last conscious moments, during that interval of profound disappointment before she succumbs to a fatal combination of heatstroke, snakebite, and heartbreak. In those moments she observes and meditates on "a little patch

of shepherd's thyme," "a colony of ants," and "a heron . . . come dripping wet from some pool in the valleys," which lead not only to meditations on her own broken condition and her relationship to these fellow heathland inhabitants, but also, in their various ways, to "great . . . relief" and "more thorough rest."⁶⁵¹

With their intimate relationships to the nonhuman world, these characters offer a vision of relief, satisfaction, and rest alien to the tortured philosophical world of late Hardy. Moreover, their perspectives introduce into Hardy's fiction a vision of the landscape that has, over time, revealed itself as more modern, more accurate, and more ecological than the dismal broodings over Nature and Society that preoccupy Clym, Eustacia, and Hardy himself. In one of those historical twists whose irony would have delighted Hardy, ecologists now recognize the heathlands of Dorset and other southern counties as entirely artificial, man-made environments. By studying historical pollen counts embedded and preserved in English bogs, paleobotanists in the 1950s obtained conclusive evidence that vast tracts of woodland originally covered the southern portions of Britain, receding only after the concerted efforts of human settlers.⁶⁵² Early slash-and-burn agriculture helped to create and expand clearings in this wood, which—through a combination of farming, burning, and leaching—left vast expanses of acidic, nutrient-poor soil. Heather, gorse, broom, and holly naturally colonize such terrain, creating a heathland biome. But left to its own devices, lowland heaths make for highly unstable, short-lived terrain. Initially scrubby, tender plants grow tall and woody with age. More importantly, the predominance of heather and gorse rapidly gives way to bracken, birch, and evergreen seedlings, which grow taller and faster, shading out their scrubbier cousins. In a century or less, the average untended heath returns to woodland.⁶⁵³

In his descriptions of Egdon Heath, Hardy offers a beautifully detailed account of the dynamics between humans and nonhumans necessary to stave off this process and maintain an active, thriving heathland for millennia. Clym Yeobright and the other furze-cutters keep the gorse from growing tall and woody. Olly Dowden performs the same service for the heather, which she bundles into besoms. Humphrey the turf-cutter chops great rectangles of matted roots from the soil for fuel-burning and house construction, effectively clearing patchwork portions of the land and allowing heather and gorse to begin the colonizing process over again. The bonfires built to celebrate the winter also scorch portions of the earth, leaving it free of tree seedlings; additionally, they create a regular danger of the kind of wildfire that would level an even larger portion of the landscape. The heathcroppers play an especially important role in maintaining the fragile identity of the heath, as the ponies' teeth and hooves simultaneously chop and trample the nascent forest back into the earth.⁶⁵⁴

Egdon Heath, like the other heaths of southern England, is a marvel of ecological interconnection, the unique product of an interspecies community engaged in a stable but complex network of historically specific relationships. Hardy gets all the details correct, but he still cannot see the heath for what it is. The “intelligible facts regarding landscape” that Hardy derives from the Domesday Book suggest a history of turbary—that is, turf-cutting, “Turbaria Bruaria”—dating back eight-hundred years or more, but Hardy highlights only the permanence of the heath, rather than the equal permanence of the socioeconomic practice that his historical research actually describes.⁶⁵⁵ His sense of the distinction between Nature and Society, character and landscape, is already too pronounced for him to see that turf-cutting and the heath exist in dynamic equilibrium;

the socioeconomic practice creates the landscape, renews it, and finally proves indistinguishable from it.

It should come as no surprise, then, that most of the heath landscape vanished with the patterns of social life that maintained it. When he noted that the extent of heathland in Dorset in the mid-nineteenth century closely approximated its extent in 1086, Hardy was correct—but again, he drew a mistaken conclusion from that fact, reading a timeless permanence into the heathland that was never there. The Domesday Book describes around sixty-thousand acres of Dorset heaths, a figure very similar to the fifty-six-thousand acres in the county in 1896, when the Wessex Novels Edition of *The Return of the Native* was in production. But statistics from the early part of the nineteenth century suggest the heathland had expanded substantially between 1086 and the dawn of the nineteenth century, as there was far more heathland—almost seventy-six-thousand acres—in 1811 than in 1896. Over Hardy’s lifetime, then, heathland was vanishing at an astonishing pace. It disappeared at a rate averaging somewhere between .6 and .8 acres per day, as the heath literally lost ground to agriculture, urban development, and forest.⁶⁵⁶

“Here, at least, are intelligible facts regarding landscape,” as Hardy says. But these “far-reaching proofs” are “productive of” something very different from “genuine satisfaction.” What the heath was it had not always been. It arose and spread in conjunction with a certain form of human civilization, and it has proven just as fragile as that distinct set of social arrangements.

Neither Nature nor Society turns out to be the monolithic structure Hardy assumed. His comic rustics are, in other words, surprisingly accurate in their vision. They see a world without the clear divisions between humans and nonhumans, Society and

Nature, and character and landscape that would become increasingly rigid and domineering elements of Hardy's style. Here is Diggory Venn, seeing Eustacia's silhouette joined with the landscape in a union she herself never understood:

The scene was strangely homogeneous. The vale, the upland, the barrow, and the figure above it, all of these amounted only to unity. Looking at this or that member of the group was not observing a complete thing, but a fraction of a thing.

The form was so much like an organic part of the entire motionless structure that to see it move would have impressed the mind as a strange phenomenon. Immobility being the chief characteristic of that whole which the person formed portion of, the discontinuance of immobility in any quarter suggested confusion.

Yet that is what happened.⁶⁵⁷

Through these eyes it is possible to glimpse—however briefly—an alternative future for the English novel and twentieth-century literary practice, a vision of a social form thoughtfully trained on the outward rather than the inward, a new blossoming of narrative dedicated to tracing the “strangely homogeneous” world of interconnections uniting humans and nonhumans alike. For Hardy to break away from this intuition of interrelationship—for him to personify the nonhuman world as an alienated Nature turning her majestic force towards the oppression of human beings—would suggest confusion, perhaps even tragedy.

Yet that is what happened.

CONCLUSION.**Interpreting Animal Absence**

One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise.

—Aldo Leopold⁶⁵⁸

In 1914, a young D. H. Lawrence agreed, at his publisher's suggestions, to write a study of Thomas Hardy. No part of this work would be published until 1932, at which point Lawrence had been dead two years.⁶⁵⁹ Nevertheless, his commentary on Hardy shows how the Victorian novelist had prepared the ground for a psychologized approach to Nature, one that reflected a budding modernist commitment to the human interior. Through Lawrence's eyes, Hardy appears like a great explorer of both Nature *and* human nature, a fearless spelunker into the depths of a subconscious indistinguishable from the bowels of the earth itself.

Hardy's great theme, Lawrence writes, "is nothing more metaphysical than the division of a man against himself."⁶⁶⁰ Man, as Lawrence summarizes it, "is a member of the community, and must, upon his honour, in no way move to disintegrate the community either in its moral or its practical form [. . . but] the convention of the community is a prison to his natural, individual desire, a desire that compels him, whether he feel justified or not, to break the bounds of the community."⁶⁶¹ Lawrence recognizes and takes up the conflict between Nature and Society that defines Hardy's fiction after *The Return of the Native*—Hardy's "first tragic and important novel," in Lawrence's assessment.⁶⁶² Yet the younger novelist sees this conflict as purely internal,

one whose solution lies in increased self-knowledge. Lawrence admires Egdon Heath, but only as Clym and Eustacia see it, as a tragic, oppositional, and deeply personified Nature: “What is the real stuff of tragedy in the book? It is the Heath. It is the primitive, primal earth, where the instinctive life heaves up. There, in the deep, rude stirring of instincts, there was the reality that worked the tragedy. Close to the body of things, there can be heard that stir that makes us and destroys us.”⁶⁶³ Nature embodies and endows psychology, which—if it is honest with itself—obeys the instinctive, bodily truths of Nature. Clym, Lawrence insists, “was born out of passionate Egdon to live as a passionate being whose strong feelings moved him ever further into being.”⁶⁶⁴

Lawrence’s reading—and, to a great extent, Lawrence’s other writing—shows how Hardy’s representation of the nonhuman world helped shape the highly psychologized approach to Nature that predominated after the novel’s “inward turning” at the end of the nineteenth century.⁶⁶⁵ Hardy’s late works aggregate the nonhuman world together into a monstrously active, alien Nature that is alluring and terrifying by turns. Nature exists as something at once outside human Society and inextricable from it, thrusting itself upon human individuals when they least expect it, altering fates with its irresistibly compelling sensual force. Hardy’s characters experience Nature, in other words, in terms strikingly compatible with twentieth-century accounts of consciousness that emphasize the irrational impulses that suddenly seize and overwhelm the conscious mind. Tess and Jude, for example, work to mediate between the inexorable appetites of Nature and the formal morality of Society in a structure that presages Freud’s accounts of the ego, with its struggles to balance the ethical imperatives of the superego against the animalistic desires of the id.⁶⁶⁶ Or, to restate the case in later cognitive discourse, Hardy’s

Nature resembles the “reptilian brain” of sociobiology, that concatenation of desires and fears described either as the secret heart of all human intention or as the animal inside, the beast that the cerebral cortex, our best and most human self, must work to correct and logically overcome.⁶⁶⁷

Hardy’s vision of Nature thus works, for later readers, as a perfect symbol for the unarticulated and disavowed instincts hidden beneath socially acceptable understandings of human identity. Subsequent attempts to reclaim the Nature from which Hardy felt so alienated thus achieve only internal versions of reconciliation, restoring to the Self something of itself, rather than its forgotten external relations to very different kinds of beings. These different kinds of beings, in turn, become important primarily as symbolic reflections of the lost self. Animals become significant insofar as they symbolize the animality in all human beings; wild nature becomes a powerful symbol of the wilderness inside us all.

Thus, rather than exploring and understanding their ethical connections with nonhuman life, Hardy’s descendants conceive of struggling to exploring themselves as an ethical act. External nature becomes another way of discovering internal natural drives. In *Women in Love* (1920), for example, Rupert Birkin teaches Ursula Brangwen how her young students ought to draw catkins. Soon, however, his lesson in botanical illustration has turned into sex ed: “‘Give them some crayons, won’t you?’ he said, ‘so that they can make the gynaecious flowers red, and the androgynous yellow.’”⁶⁶⁸ The whole purpose of learning to see and draw flowers, he insists, is to show, with heightened clarity, how the pendulous yellow parts of the male catkin and the receptive female parts interact. Acquainting children with Nature means asking them to visualize a process of

insemination that they would never actually witness in nature—they must show the male catkins spraying their pollen into the female ones. This is, Rupert insists, the central and essential fact of the plant: “You must mark in these things obviously. It’s the fact you want to emphasise, not a subjective impression to record. What’s the fact?—red little spiky stigmas of the female flower, dangling yellow male catkin, yellow pollen flying from one to the other.”⁶⁶⁹ (We have come a long way from the Gradgrindian fact.) Birkin’s choice to make insemination the central “fact” of the flower is, of course, a subjective choice of emphasis, but he no longer acknowledges the distinction between this subjective emphasis on plant sex and the objective details of the plant. If Nature still involves relations, those relations are always sexual, and overwhelmingly anthropomorphic; Nature is the awesome and underexplored “fact” of human sex writ large.

Even when the emphasis is on horror rather than desire, solipsism remains a key feature of this modernist reading of Nature. In *Heart of Darkness* (1899), the imagined voyage into the uncharted, uncivilized jungle reverses and folds in on itself like a Möbius strip as it reveals the uncharted, uncivilized interior of the Western psyche. The heart of darkness is the center of the African jungle, but it is, equally, the heart of Western civilization. Marlow’s voyage leads him very quickly from Nature to humanity, as he meditates on “all the mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men.”⁶⁷⁰ He begins to see England as the imperial outpost it once was, rather than the metropole it is; “here” becomes “the very end of the world.”⁶⁷¹ The trip upriver in Africa becomes a dreamy, allegorical trip inwards and homewards. Kurtz’s final utterance—“The horror! The horror!”—refers to his encounter with the

jungle, “a moment of triumph for the wilderness,” but just as aptly to the civilized life embodied in the idealistic fiancée waiting for him back home.⁶⁷² “The last word he pronounced,” Marlow tells her, “was—your name.”⁶⁷³ The allure of Nature, then, is the allure of human sensuality, and the horror of Nature is the horror hidden inside the human soul. Hardy’s anthropomorphous Nature becomes the looking-glass that enables his modernist successors to see more of themselves, but only by placing a barrier before them that occludes their vision of the world beyond.

As modernism succeeded realism and promoted this more inward course, nonhuman characters became permissible only in those modes of writing that never claimed to engage with anything real. Animal characters remained commonplace in children’s literature, including didactic natural histories intended for the nursery.⁶⁷⁴ Scientific writing was free to examine plant and animal life, provided it kept those examinations strictly separate from the social imagination. When, at the turn of the nineteenth century, a number of writers achieved commercial success with accounts of animal life that claimed to blend empirical observation of the natural world with social and ethical respect for individual animal subjects, they met with a hefty dose of critical censure. While literary writers were free to see, in Nature at large, an anthropomorphic reflection of their own lives, naturalists heaped disdain on anyone who dared to depict individual animals in terms that felt excessively anthropomorphic. John Burroughs penned an article on “Real and Sham Natural History” (1903) in the *Atlantic*, and Theodore Roosevelt—at the time a sitting president—publically voiced disapproval for those who wrote stories in which animals appeared too closely related to human beings.⁶⁷⁵

The heightened focus on human beings in serious literature after the nineteenth century is legible in the emergence, after 1900, of a new subgenre of horror. Excluded from those literary forms devoted to serious social and ethical contemplation, the fact of humanity's ecological embeddedness finds a new outlet as a terrifying return of the repressed. In an echo of the early Victorian novel's confused depiction of working-class rebellion, the nonhuman elements of the community become visible as violent and hostile conspiracies—what the critic and bibliographer S. T. Joshi identifies as “the supernatural trope of animals hostile to or revolting against human beings.”⁶⁷⁶ These stories feature narrators and protagonists confronted with a series of disturbing and violent acts whose perpetrator seems not to exist. As the stories develop, one or two characters become convinced that animals are responsible for the inexplicable events, but no one will believe them.⁶⁷⁷

In one of the earliest and most influential examples of the form, Arthur Machen's “The Terror” (1917), the narrator reports on a pattern of unexplained events that appear to be spreading across England. Because the official narratives of the government and the newspapers refuse to acknowledge or confirm these events, however, the narrator cannot analyze them on a wider scale. Instead, he confines his attentions to a single community, the locals and visitors to the sleepy town of Meirion on the Welsh coast. The shortcomings of supposedly reliable, realistic narrative accounts thus become an important frame for understanding in Machen's story. Individuals cannot see or acknowledge what is happening around them because they lack narrative models for understanding and relating the events. “[W]e have grown of late to such a reverence for the printed word and such a reliance on it,” the narrator writes, that local storytellers have

lost the ability to report on their individual experiences and convey them to others accurately: “the old faculty of disseminating news by word of mouth has become atrophied. Forbid the Press to mention the fact that Jones has been murdered, and it is remarkable how few people will hear of it, and of those who hear how few will credit the story they have heard.”⁶⁷⁸

Because there is no formal means to narrate or conceptualize what is going on around them, the people of Meirion experience “a terror without shape . . . a new form of terror.”⁶⁷⁹ At first, locals assume the deaths are accidents. They blame the rugged landscape for the dead bodies they find at the bottoms of cliffs and abandoned mine shafts, or drowned on beaches and in bogs. After the local medical practitioner, Dr. Lewis, discovers an entire family lying by the roadside with “[t]heir skulls . . . battered in as if by some heavy iron instrument; their faces . . . beaten into a pulp,” however, this theory is no longer tenable.⁶⁸⁰ Blame shifts, instead, to “a concealed madman in the countryside.”⁶⁸¹ In this sparsely populated area, however, this explanation, too, becomes untenable.

The next proposal comes from an avid reader, Mr. Remnant, who looks to individual psychology to solve the problem. He pontificates “about ‘personality’” and the possibility a Jekyll-and-Hyde-like “double personality” lurking inside someone well-known in the town—the killer, he imagines, is unknown even to himself, “a secret murderer, ravening for blood, remorseless as a wild beast.”⁶⁸² All the metaphors of psychological animality, however, do not clue the township into the agency of the animals around them. Even when horses are connected with the dead family on the highway, no one is capable of seeing the horses as themselves responsible; instead, they

assume some magical, otherworldly force is driving the horses to stampede. The horses look “as if terror itself was driving them . . . And this wild stampede of the farm horses was held by some to be evidence of the extraordinary and unheard-of character of the dreadful agency that was at work.”⁶⁸³ More instances of animal attacks trickle in, but in each case, locals attribute the violence to some unknown, external force driving the poor animals wild. Their appearance as significant actors or agents in the narrative is impossible to see; instead, the deaths continue to be attributed to “the secret agency, whatever it was, that had accomplished so much evil.”⁶⁸⁴

Several characters stare directly at the swarming animals responsible for the attacks, but remain stupefied, incapable of understanding what lies before them. Often, they interpret the animals as static backgrounds—trees, clouds—that move, vibrate, or glow unaccountably. As he sits on his lawn discussing the attacks with Mr. Remnant, Dr. Lewis is awestruck to observe “the growth of a new, unknown tree in his garden.”⁶⁸⁵ He feels a “strange fluttering vibration in the air,” and gazes in baffled incomprehension “at a dark and spreading tree which his own experience informed him was not there. . . . And as he gazed he saw that what at first appeared the dense blackness of foliage was fretted and starred with wonderful appearances of light and colors.”⁶⁸⁶ The sight prompts something like temporary insanity, as the basic conceptual categories that Lewis applies to the world in front of him clash against what he actually sees. He is like “a mathematician . . . suddenly confronted with a two-sided triangle;” the experience threatens to transform him into “a raging madman.”⁶⁸⁷ Another witness describes seeing an attack as something like an unprecedented atmospheric effect:

I was turning to go when one of the fellows called out, ‘I say! What’s this?’ He pointed up, and we saw what looked like a black cloud coming from the south at a

tremendous rate. I saw at once it wasn't a cloud; it came with a swirl and a rush quite different from any cloud I've ever seen. But for a second I couldn't make out exactly what it was. It altered its shape and turned into a great crescent, and wheeled and veered about as if it was looking for something.⁶⁸⁸

No one ever advances an official theory about the origins and cause of the terror.

But the narrator and Dr. Lewis independently arrive at the same conclusion: that "it is likely enough that the true agents of the terror went quite unnoticed."⁶⁸⁹ Those agents, they insist, were animals: "The secret of the Terror might be condensed into a sentence: the animals had revolted against men."⁶⁹⁰ The moving cloud is a swarm of pigeons, seeking airplanes to destroy. The growing, spreading tree in Dr. Lewis's yard is an enormous congregation of moths swarming onto a relatively spare conifer in the garden; the glimmering fire running through the tree is the reflected shine of their eyes as they shift, move, and climb on top of each other.

Even looking directly at their eyes, however, the doctor is unable to see them. Thinking over his blindness, he reflects that "we should never begin to understand the real significance of life until we beg[i]n to study just those aspects of it which we now dismiss and overlook as utterly inexplicable, and therefore, unimportant."⁶⁹¹ Humans have foolishly failed to grasp the reality of other animals, he insists: "Of course, we know nothing really about moths; rather, we know nothing of moth reality. For all I know there may be hundreds of books which treat of moth and nothing but moth. But these are scientific books, and science only deals with surfaces; it has nothing to do with realities—it is impertinent if it attempts to do with realities."⁶⁹²

Anticipating Rancière by almost a century (see Chapter One, above), the two men conclude that the failure is, finally, an aesthetic one, because it is aesthetic theory that conditions who and what they can see and recognize. "I added that sometimes the world

was incapable of seeing, much less believing, that which was before its own eyes,” the narrator writes.⁶⁹³ He cites as an example the failure of eighteenth-century engravers to truly capture or understand the Gothic cathedrals that stood before them. “Exactly,” Dr. Lewis responds, “because Gothic was outside the aesthetic theory (and therefore vision) of the time. You can’t believe what you don’t see: rather, you can’t see what you don’t believe. It was so during the time of the Terror.”⁶⁹⁴

In the realm of literary history, we still cannot see the nonhuman clearly. This blurred vision exists, as Machen suggests, at the interface of aesthetics and ethics, as the basic categories we use to parse and interpret literature—character and scenery; persons, places, and things—impose on that literature ethical and ontological assumptions that cannot sufficiently recognize or account for its rich dealings with other kinds of life. Equating realist character with human persons makes it impossible to recognize animal characters, or to notice how and why they enter and exit the literary record. Treating scenery and places as important only as potential determinants of character and plot overlooks how novelists construct scenery in relation to narrative, and what kinds of entities are concealed—frozen in place, so to speak—by such constructions. What we are left with is a set of unaccountable *things* in the literary record, animals like Gyp or landscapes like Egdon Heath that fascinate because they unsettle the basic concepts we use to make sense of texts and of the world. Thing theory champions the thing as a way of naming and seeing entities that defy easy categorization as subjects or objects, social or natural.⁶⁹⁵ Things name those phenomena that show us the inadequacy of these categories without exactly offering a definitive or portable method of moving beyond them. Like Dr. Lewis staring at his growing, spreading tree, we can recognize something

unaccountable staring in our faces, but we still cannot quite account for it. Its exact nature and relationships remain an unsolved mystery.

Scholars working in posthumanism, animal studies, and ecocriticism have proposed a variety of new terms and concepts intended to resolve these mysteries. They propose to reopen historical investigations into the nonhuman through a proliferating number of conceptual and methodological approaches. Some champion the need to investigate the pet, or domestication; others prefer the cyborg, systems theory, and the companion species. Some turn to Deleuze and Guattari on faciality and becoming-animal, or to Emmanuel Levinas's writings on the animal face. Many rely on Derrida's deconstruction of the animal as signifier, as *animot*. An increasing number of scholars are championing the importance of rethinking culture through the new framework of the Anthropocene.

Yet under the circumstances, I have tried to argue, it makes more sense to renew our commitment to the detective work of literary history. "It is one of the cases," Sherlock Holmes might say,

where the art of the reasoner should be used rather for the sifting of fresh details than for the acquiring of fresh evidence. The tragedy has been so uncommon, so complete, and of such personal importance to so many people that we are suffering from a plethora of surmise, conjecture, and hypothesis. The difficulty is to detach the framework of fact—of absolute, undeniable fact—from the embellishments of theorists and reporters. Then, having established ourselves upon this sound basis, it is our duty to see what inferences may be drawn, and which are the special points upon which the whole mystery turns.⁶⁹⁶

In the literary record—as in "Silver Blaze" (1892), the Holmes story from which this methodological suggestion is drawn—the problem is one of reading and interpreting a conspicuous absence of animals. Conan Doyle's story, in fact, eerily recapitulates many of the important moments in the literary history of animals I have traced in these pages,

and it produces a suggestive model for the literary critic's work of reconstructing the fate of animals by attending more closely to the circumstances of their disappearance.

Silver Blaze, a prize racehorse, is an animal whose greatest claim to fame is his disturbing disappearance. His trainer, John Straker, has been murdered, and the horse has gone missing on the eve of a major race where he is the clear favorite. The story is, in short, deeply invested in nonhuman animals, but it is equally invested in thinking through the history of their literary representation. The story takes place on a heath in western England—improbably far from fruitful pasturage for racehorses—where the missing horse is prized as “the favourite for the Wessex Cup.”⁶⁹⁷ Conan Doyle soon compounds this nod to Hardy with a series of events that seem to actively engage with and respond to the realist tradition that has moved, over the course of the century, away from its expansive interest in the social significance of animals.

By the time Holmes arrives on the scene Colonel Ross, the owner of Silver Blaze, has already called in the services of an official police detective, Inspector Gregory. Despite the fact that Gregory wields the cultural authority of the nation, he has reached a dead end, because he has paid inadequate attention to animal life. In a famous exchange with the inspector, Holmes advises him, as a starting point, to note the epidemic of lameness currently afflicting a small herd of sheep on Colonel Ross's property. Their exchange accentuates the difference between Holmes's careful observation of the animals around them and the inspector's hasty assumption of their insignificance:

“You consider that to be important?” [Inspector Gregory] asked.

“Exceedingly so.”

“Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?”

“To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time.”

“The dog did nothing in the night-time.”

“That was the curious incident,” remarked Sherlock Holmes.⁶⁹⁸

Because Holmes favors a rigorous empiricism that does not prematurely sort the world into relevant and irrelevant entities, he observes the animal absence that his fellow investigator thoughtlessly overlooks. In order to crack the case, Holmes must pick up, in a sense, where Eliot left off in *Adam Bede*: he must engage in an extensive, deliberate inquiry into “the significance of the silence of the dog.”⁶⁹⁹ The animal’s absence, he realizes, constitutes a significant presence in the story. It reveals, in particular, a key social relationship between the animal and the perpetrator: “Obviously the midnight visitor was someone whom the dog knew well.”⁷⁰⁰

Holmes thus effectively rediscovers the existence of interspecies social relations that others have overlooked. He finds Silver Blaze, too, by realizing that the thoroughbred participates in, and values, the society of other animals, human and nonhuman. “The horse is a very gregarious creature,” he reminds Watson.⁷⁰¹ Realizing that the horse found itself, at one point, alone on the heath, Holmes scans the terrain from the horse’s perspective, and realizes that Silver Blaze would have made his way towards the neighboring stables, the only sign of habitation in sight. He soon discovers Silver Blaze, who has been taken in and disguised by one of Colonel Ross’s rivals.

Reconstituting the scene of the crime using the interspecies relationships others have overlooked, Holmes concludes that the thief was Silver Blaze’s murdered trainer, John Straker. Straker intended not to steal the horse but simply to turn a profit by laming Silver Blaze and betting against the favorite. Things went awry, however, when Silver Blaze exhibited that stunning ability to detect impending danger that made Harold such a helpful companion in *Sybil*. As the trainer struck a light and prepared the scalpel to nick the horse’s tendon, “the creature, frightened at the sudden glare, and with the strange

instinct of animals feeling that some mischief was intended, had lashed out, and the steel shoe had struck Straker full on the forehead.”⁷⁰² Silver Blaze thus foils his trainer’s nefarious plot, but accidentally kills him in the process.

Holmes only reveals this information after Silver Blaze has won his race. The scene of the revelation echoes the conversation between Deronda and Grandcourt in the latter’s stables. Whereas Grandcourt mocks Deronda for his supposedly excessive respect for the horses around them, Holmes mocks Watson and Colonel Ross for their excessive insensitivity to the same animals. Holmes reveals the cause of Straker’s death when he, Watson, and Colonel Ross stand “alone”—that is, in the presence of Silver Blaze, who stands in the background, just behind his owner. Thanking Holmes for Silver Blaze’s safe return, the Colonel remarks:

“My dear sir, you have done wonders. The horse looks very fit and well. It never went better in its life. I owe you a thousand apologies for having doubted your ability. You have done me a great service by recovering my horse. You would do me a greater still if you could lay your hands on the murderer of John Straker.”

“I have done so,” said Holmes quietly.

The Colonel and I stared at him in amazement. “You have got him! Where is he, then?”

“He is here.”

“Here! Where?”

“In my company at the present moment.”

The Colonel flushed angrily. “I quite recognize that I am under obligations to you, Mr. Holmes,” said he, “but I must regard what you have just said as either a very bad joke or an insult.”

Sherlock Holmes laughed. “I assure you that I have not associated you with the crime, Colonel,” said he; “the real murderer is standing immediately behind you!”

He stepped past and laid his hand upon the glossy neck of the thoroughbred.⁷⁰³

Like a late iteration of Diggory Venn, Holmes exercises a careful, nonjudgmental kind of observation that allows him to see “Those who are found where there is said to be Nobody.”⁷⁰⁴ It is a rare and difficult skill by the end of the nineteenth century, when comprehensive theories of Nature join forces with a heightened interest in psychology to

suggest that the true locus of value lies in individual human beings. Indeed, in its uncanny echoes of the literary history of realist animals I have traced here, “Silver Blaze” suggests that the detective story emerges, in part, as a corrective revision of the novel’s ethical and empirical narrowing, a reminder of the kinds of information and relationships a more impartial observer might discover.

In the literature that “Silver Blaze” recapitulates, animals are represented by a series of conspicuous absences, inconspicuous absences, and unacknowledged presences. Like Inspector Gregory, even critics invested in rediscovering those animals have a hard time of it, because we inherit a set of terms saturated with ontological and aesthetic commitments that make the significance of nonhuman beings hard to see and even harder to interpret. Rather than compounding our current “plethora of surmise, conjecture, and hypothesis” with the additional “embellishments of theorists,” it may be most prudent and most useful to follow Holmes’s lead, retracing and resifting the available facts of literary history with an eye attentive to clues about animal disappearances in order to return them, if we can, to their proper place. This project has been an experimental foray in this direction, an attempt to see “what inferences may be drawn” from the evidence of the literary record itself, prior to the imposition of theoretical models and conceptual preoccupations extrinsic to it. The result is this reconstituted narrative of the Victorian realist novel. I hope it shows the importance of interspecies relationships to the development of the novel’s aesthetics, and of the need to rethink aesthetics if we are ever to arrive at a clearer, more conscientious ethical understanding.

NOTES.

¹ George Levine, "The Heartbeat of the Squirrel," in *Realism, Ethics and Secularism: Essays on Victorian Literature and Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 250. For another recent reading of realist sympathy as a cognitive, rather than affective structure—a reading that is, I think, in line with Levine's—see Rae Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2012).

² George Eliot, "The Natural History of German Life," in *Selected Essays, Poems, and Other Writings*, eds. A. S. Byatt and Nicholas Warren (New York: Penguin, 1990), 110.

³ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁵ Raymond Williams, *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (London: Hogarth Press, 1984), 16.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 156.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁹ See Caroline Levine, "Narrative Networks: *Bleak House* and the Affordances of Form," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 42, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 517-523; and Gage McWeeny, "The Sociology of the Novel: George Eliot's Strangers," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 42, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 538-545.

¹⁰ Henry James, Preface to the New York Edition of *Roderick Hudson*, in *Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, and the Prefaces to the New York Edition*, ed. Leon Edel and Mark Wilson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1041.

¹¹ George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (New York: Penguin, 1996), chap. 15, 141.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ These forms of analysis are pervasive. But for important studies investigating class in the novel, see Williams, *The Country and the City*; Rosemarie Bodenheimer, *The Politics of Story in Victorian Social Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1988); Catherine Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form, 1832-1867* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1985); and Joseph Childers, *Novel Possibilities: Fiction and the Formation of Early Victorian Culture* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1995). Classic studies of gender in the Victorian novel include Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2000); Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977); and Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988). Classic studies of race and empire in relation to the novel include Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993); and Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1988).

¹⁴ Alex Woloch, *The One Vs. The Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2003), 14.

¹⁵ On the changing historical strategies by which texts concisely imply deep interiority, see, for example, Deidre Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998). On the relationship between literary characters and ontological or ethical characters and identities, see Susan Manning, *Poetics of Character: Transatlantic Encounters 1700-1900* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013); Andrea K. Henderson, *Romantic Identities: Varieties of Subjectivity, 1774-1830* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996); and S. Pearl Brilmyer, "'The Natural History of My Inward Self': Sensing Character in George Eliot's *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*," *PMLA* 129, vol. 1 (Jan. 2014): 35-51. On character and cognition, see Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State Univ. Press, 2006); Blakey Vermeule, *Why Do We Care About Literary Characters?* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2011); Kay Young, *Imagining Minds: The Neuro-Aesthetics of Austen, Eliot, and Hardy* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State Univ. Press, 2010); and Alan Palmer, *Fictional Minds* (Lincoln, NE: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2008). For an excellent selection of recent work on character, see "Character," ed. Rita Felski, spec. issue of *New Literary History* 42, no. 2 (Spring 2011).

¹⁶ Woloch, *The One Vs. The Many*, 14. See Chapter 3 for an extensive discussion of this consensus on literary character.

¹⁷ I discuss this problem at length in Chapter 3. See especially George Levine, "The Heartbeat of the Squirrel," 245-260; and Ivan Kreilkamp, "Dying Like a Dog in *Great Expectations*," in *Victorian Animal Dreams: Representations of Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture*, ed. Deborah Denenholz Morse and Martin A. Danahay (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 81-94.

¹⁸ For the social history of animals in Victorian Britain, see especially Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1987); and James Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1980).

¹⁹ For examples of the longstanding critical interest in Darwin's influence on the novel, see Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, second ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and George Levine, *Darwin and the Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988). For a recent examination of zookeeping and the novel, see Kurt Koenigsberger, *The Novel and the Menagerie: Totality, Englishness, and Empire* (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 2007). For an investigation of novelistic sympathy as a function of the rise of petkeeping, see Ivan Kreilkamp, "Petted Things: *Wuthering Heights* and the Animal," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 87-110.

²⁰ Paul Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer have proposed the term "Anthropocene" as an official way of recognizing this shift. See Paul Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, "The 'Anthropocene,'" *International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme Newsletter* 41 (May 2000): 17-18.

²¹ Boris Worm et al, "Impacts of Biodiversity Loss on Ocean Ecosystem Service," *Science* 314, no. 5800 (3 Nov. 2006): 787-790.

²² Estimated rates vary widely, and they often reflect the political proclivities of the sources providing them. Current estimates suggest that species are vanishing at a rate of about 100 species per million per year; see S. L. Pimm et al, "The biodiversity of species and their rates of extinction, distribution, and protection," *Science* 344, no. 6187 (30 May 2014). Current estimates of total species on earth come to about 8.7 million; see Camilo Mora et al, "How Many Species Are There on Earth and in the Ocean?," *PLoS Biology* (31 Aug. 2011). Thus, approximately 870 species go extinct every year.

²³ For a full table of U.S. totals from 1950 to the present, see The Humane Society of the United States, "Farm Animal Statistics: Slaughter Totals,"

http://www.humanesociety.org/news/resources/research/stats_slaughter_totals.html.

²⁴ For a detailed assessment of the environmental impacts of modern agriculture, see the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options" (2006),

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a0701e/a0701e00.htm>

²⁵ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (Winter 2009): 197-222.

²⁶ Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2010), 116.

²⁷ Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 108-9.

²⁸ Charles Darwin, *Notebook M*: [Metaphysics on morals and speculations on expression (1838)], 84e. Accessible through the *Complete Works of Charles Darwin Online*, ed.

John van Wyhe: http://darwin-online.org.uk/EditorialIntroductions/vanWyhe_notebooks.html

²⁹ For more on the importance of horses in Victorian society and culture, see Gina M. Dorré, *Victorian Fiction and the Cult of the Horse* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Kathryn Miele [Yeniyurt], "Horse-Sense: Understanding the Working Horse in Victorian London," *Victorian Literature and Culture* vol. 37, no. 1 (2009): 129-140; and John Stokes, "Encapsulation": Horse-Drawn Journeys in Late-Victorian Literature," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 15, no. 2 (August 2010): 239-53.

³⁰ Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 12.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

³² The subgenre receives its earliest description as "the social novel" of the 1830s to 1850s in Louis Cazamian's 1903 work *The Social Novel in England, 1830-1850* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973). Arnold Kettle coined the term "social-problem novel" in his article on "The Early Victorian Social-Problem Novel," in *The Pelican Guide to English Literature*, vol. 6, ed. Boris Ford (New York: Penguin, 1958), 169-87. The term "Condition-of-England novels" arises from Thomas Carlyle's use of the term "Condition-of-England debate" in *Chartism* (1839) to describe the political furor over the People's Charter, which demanded voting and other basic rights for working-class men. The phrase "industrial novels" originates in 1958 with Raymond Williams, *Culture & Society, 1780-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), ch. 5. For recent surveys of the form that go into greater depth than is possible here, see Joseph W. Childers, "Industrial Culture and the Victorian Novel," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. Dierdre David (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press,

2001), 77-96; and James Richard Simmons, Jr., "Industrial and 'Condition of England' Novels," in *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 336-52.

³³ The most well-known industrial novels include Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil; or the Two Nations* (1845); Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) and *North and South* (1855); Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet* (1850); Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854); and sometimes Charlotte Brontë's historical novel *Shirley* (1849) and the later George Eliot novel *Felix Holt, The Radical* (1866). Earlier and less canonical examples include Frances Trollope's *Michael Armstrong, Factory Boy* (1840) and Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna's *Helen Fleetwood* (1841), among others.

³⁴ Williams, *Culture & Society*, 88.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

³⁶ Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction*, xii.

³⁷ Bodenheimer, *The Politics of Story*, 5.

³⁸ Dierdre David, *Fictions of Resolution in Three Victorian Novels: North and South, Our Mutual Friend, Daniel Deronda* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), x. The major studies mentioned here roughly coincide—not accidentally—with the rise of New Historicism and its insistent call for attention to minor, marginal, and nonliterary texts.

³⁹ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2011), 13.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴² Latour, *Politics of Nature*, 108-9.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁴⁴ Williams, *Culture & Society*, 90.

⁴⁵ Charles Kingsley, *Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet* (London: Cassell, 1967), 81. Hereafter abbreviated *AL*.

⁴⁶ Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2000), 241.

⁴⁷ Frances Trollope, *The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy* (London: Henry Colburn, 1840), 139.

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 175.

⁴⁹ Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 241.

⁵⁰ Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil; or The Two Nations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 115.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁵² Kingsley, *AL*, 258-9.

⁵³ For a detailed history of how human rights came to seem "self-evident," see Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: Norton, 2007).

⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Modern Library, 2001), 1129. Although he acknowledges the existence of other "gregarious" species, Aristotle goes on to say that man is "more of a political animal" than any other creature.

⁵⁵ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 157.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 156.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 102.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 101; 136.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 140.

⁶⁰ Giorgio Agamben has traced the tradition of outlawry using some of the same sources I draw on here. But Agamben's argument insists that some kind of liminal, formal humanity remains for the outlaw; he believes this formal humanity relates both to sovereignty and the rise of biopower. As should be clear, I am far more interested in what happens when outlawry is equated with animality than I am with the lingering existence of some human status. See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), esp. 105-111.

⁶¹ Locke, *Two Treatises*, 177.

⁶² William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1765-9), book 4, chap. 24, 315.

⁶³ Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Rechtsalterthümer*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Dieterichschen, 1881), 40. Translation is mine.

⁶⁴ Hannah Arendt, "The Perplexities of the Rights of Man," in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. Peter Baehr (New York: Penguin, 2000), 31.

⁶⁵ Declaration of Independence (1776); Declaration of Human and Civic Rights of 26 August 1789 (1789).

⁶⁶ Declaration of Human and Civic Rights of 26 August 1789.

⁶⁷ Declaration of Independence.

⁶⁸ General Assembly of the United Nations, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), Preamble; Art. 1.

⁶⁹ Arendt, "Perplexities," 41.

⁷⁰ One answer to this question lies in the developing role of the "humanities" over the course of the nineteenth century as the process of inculcating a humanity closely associated with the notion of "culture." I briefly take up this thread at the end of the chapter, although a full exploration of this development lies beyond the scope of this investigation. In any event, it leaves intact the problem of empirically observable versus latent humanity: who is to say but that every animal might be "human," if only taught in the proper way?

⁷¹ For a brief discussion of the impact of the discovery of great apes on the human in literature, see Amanda Hodgson, "Defining the Species: Apes, Savages and Humans in Scientific and Literary Writing of the 1860s," *Journal of Victorian Culture* vol. 4, no. 2 (1999): 228-51. For classic interpretations of the reciprocal relationships between Darwin and Victorian literature, see Beer, *Darwin's Plots*; and Levine, *Darwin and the Novelists*. For a recent account of the cultural uproar surrounding Paul du Chaillu's demonstrations of the existence of gorillas in the early 1860s, see Monte Reel, *Between Man and Beast: An Unlikely Explorer, the Evolution Debates, and the African Adventure that Took the Victorian World by Storm* (New York: Doubleday, 2013).

⁷² Trollope, *Michael Armstrong*, iii.

⁷³ David, *Fictions of Resolution*, 6.

⁷⁴ Trollope, *Michael Armstrong*, iii.

⁷⁵ Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 30.

⁷⁶ Gaskell, *North and South*, 175.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 409. The embedded quotation comes from William Wordsworth, "The Cumberland Beggar."

⁷⁸ Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 453.

⁷⁹ Ian Watt, "From *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding*," in *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*, ed. Michael McKeon (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 378.

⁸⁰ Watt, *Rise of the Novel*, 371-4.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 369-71; 374-5.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 365.

⁸³ Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*, Fifteenth Anniversary Ed. (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 410, 415, and *passim*.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁸⁵ George Levine, "The Heartbeat of the Squirrel," 250. The use of "social novel" extends to the Victorian era, if not earlier: Eliot uses it in "The Natural History of German Life," 110. As a scholarly term applying especially to this period, the phrase dates at least to Cazamian. Tellingly for the purposes of this analysis, Cazamian's work focuses on the set of texts that we now call the industrial novels.

⁸⁶ Williams, *The Country and the City*, 166.

⁸⁷ Williams, *The Country and the City*, 156.

⁸⁸ George Levine, "George Eliot's Hypothesis of Reality," in *Realism, Ethics and Secularism*, 27.

⁸⁹ For a helpful history and analysis of such claims, see Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁹⁰ Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism*, 4-11. Nicholas Dames describes sympathy as "[a] knowledge won by way of the emotions, and a beauty won by way of knowledge . . . the keyword of the peculiarly Victorian kind of realism." See Nicholas Dames, "Realism and Theories of the Novel," in *The Oxford History of the Novel in English, Vol. 3: The Nineteenth-Century Novel 1820-1880*, eds. John Kucich and Jenny Bourne Taylor (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 305.

⁹¹ Indeed, the ethical damage that occurs when workers are displayed as excessively virtuous comes under fire in Eliot's famous essay on realism. See Eliot, "Natural History," 108-11.

⁹² Jessica Straley, "Of Beasts and Boys: Kingsley, Spencer, and the Theory of Recapitulation," *Victorian Studies* vol. 49, no. 4 (Summer 2007): 596-7. Other readings of Kingsley as attempting to synthesize evolution and theology occur in Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, 120-9; and Hodgson, "Defining the Species," 235.

⁹³ Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, ch. 4.

⁹⁴ Alan Rauch, "The Tailor Transformed: Kingsley's *Alton Locke* and the Notion of Change," *Studies in the Novel* vol. 25, no. 2 (Summer 1993), 209. For a less judgmental reading of the dream as an urbanized attempt at a Romantic vision of healing through "nature," see Gallagher, *Industrial Reformation*, 100-101.

⁹⁵ Rauch, "The Tailor Transformed," 210.

⁹⁶ Kingsley, *AL*, 340.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ For a full exploration of the symbolism of mylodons and edentates in Victorian Britain, see Alan Rauch, "The Sins of Sloths: The Moral Status of Fossil Megatheria in Victorian Culture," in *Victorian Animal Dreams: Representations of Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture*, 215-228.

¹⁰⁰ Kingsley, *AL*, 342.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 343. Rauch points out that even Locke's sloth-death has begun to show signs of a Christian humanity, as he tries to keep the falling tree from crushing his cousin. See Rauch, "Sins of Sloths," 222-3.

¹⁰⁵ Kingsley, *AL*, 345.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 353.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 354.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 365.

¹¹⁰ For events informing Kingsley's early conservatism and his own reflection on his subsequent political shifts, see J. M. I. Klaver, *The Apostle of the Flesh: A Critical Life of Charles Kingsley* (Boston: Brill, 2006), 18-19.

¹¹¹ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 20.

¹¹² Ibid., 60.

¹¹³ Ibid., 32.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Kingsley, *AL*, 365.

¹¹⁶ Burke, *Reflections*, 7-8.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 61.

¹¹⁸ See Piers J. Hale, "Darwin's Other Bulldog: Charles Kingsley and the Popularisation of Evolution in Victorian England," *Science & Education* 21, no. 7 (July 2012): 977-1013.

¹¹⁹ Contemporary reviewers responded somewhat incredulously. See "Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet; An Autobiography" [Review], *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 68, no. 421 (Nov. 1850): 592-610.

¹²⁰ See Kingsley, *AL*, 84-91.

¹²¹ Ibid., 95-6.

¹²² Ibid., 167.

¹²³ Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?," *The Philosophical Review* 83, no. 4 (October 1974): 438.

¹²⁴ Kingsley, *AL*, 366.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ John Stuart Mill, "Nature," in *Three Essays on Religion*, third ed. (London: Longman, Greens and co., 1885), 62.

¹²⁷ Kingsley, *AL*, 366.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ This vision of the reconciliation of opposites in Christ owes much to F. D. Maurice's theological teachings. For a rather judgmental reading of Kingsley's thought as a poor and derivative imitation of the ideas of Maurice, see Patrick Brantlinger, *The Spirit of Reform: British Literature and Politics, 1832-1867* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1977), 133-41.

¹³¹ Kingsley, *AL*, 363.

¹³² Kingsley, *AL*, 382.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ George Eliot, "Address to Working Men, by Felix Holt," Appendix B in *Felix Holt: The Radical* (New York: Penguin, 1995), 496.

¹³⁵ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*, ed. Stefan Collini (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 82.

¹³⁶ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 62.

¹³⁷ Biology, of course, has its own definitional difficulties. "Species" is a notoriously arbitrary designation, so even assuming a clear connection between biological species and political privileges simply displaces those difficulties onto biology. See Richard A. Richards, *The Species Problem: A Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and John S. Wilkins, *Species: A History of the Idea* (Berkeley: University of California, 2009).

¹³⁸ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 31.

¹³⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), chapter 9.

¹⁴⁰ Gustav Flaubert, "Animals," *Dictionary of Received Ideas*, trans. Jacques Barzun (New York: New Directions, 1968), 15.

¹⁴¹ Although "animal melodrama" appears as a term in many accounts of nineteenth-century theater, it is poorly defined, and the plays in question remain virtually unread. This is, to my knowledge, the first in-depth examination of these works as a significant and aesthetically cohesive group.

¹⁴² Carlo appears to be the first animal actor prominently billed as a star attraction in English drama, and he became famous on the strength of that claim. But sporadic appearances of dogs onstage occur much earlier in English theater, and demonstrations of horsemanship also provide an important precursor to nineteenth-century quadruped drama. On early animal performances, see Louis B. Wright, "Animal Actors on the English Stage before 1642," *PMLA* 42, no. 3 (Sept. 1927): 656-669. For a brief history of nineteenth-century dog drama, see Jan Bondeson, *Amazing Dogs: A Cabinet of Canine Curiosities* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 2011), chap. 5. For a polemical argument that onstage animals denigrated and dehumanized all modern acting, see Michael Dobson, "A Dog at All Things: The Transformation of the Onstage Canine, 1550-1850," "On Animals," ed. Alan Read, spec. issue of *Performance Research* 5, no. 2 (2000): 116-124. For a history of equestrian spectacles leading up to the rise of quadruped drama in the nineteenth century, see A. H. Saxon, *Enter Foot and Horse: A History of Hippodrama in England and France* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1968),

chaps. 1-2. For a wider context on nineteenth-century animal exhibitions occurring outside the confines of the theater, see Richard Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1978), chap. 22.

¹⁴³ P. P., "On the Frivolity of the English People," *The Scourge, or, Monthly Expositor of Imposture and Folly, 1811-1813* 5 (May 1813): 417-418.

¹⁴⁴ On artistic hybrids interpreted as signs of sociopolitical disorder, see Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), 10-14, 48-62; and Elaine Hadley, *Melodramatic Tactics: Theatricalized Dissent in the English Marketplace, 1800-1885* (Palo Alto: Stanford Univ. Press, 1995), 63-66.

¹⁴⁵ For a full history of illegitimate theater and the controversies surrounding it, see Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, chaps. 1-2.

¹⁴⁶ See Frederic Reynolds, *The Caravan; or, The Driver and His Dog. A Grand Serio Comic Romance, in Two Acts* (London: G. & J. Robinson, 1803). For common conventions of illegitimate productions in the nineteenth century, see Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, chap. 3.

¹⁴⁷ On this trope and its literary manifestations, see Laura Brown, *Homeless Dogs and Melancholy Apes: Humans and Other Animals in the Modern Literary Imagination* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 2010), 131-132. On the rising popularity of canine anecdotes in general, see also Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 85-88.

¹⁴⁸ See Eliza Fenwick, *The Life of the Famous Dog Carlo* (London: Tabart and Co., 1809).

¹⁴⁹ For an in-depth look at early modern animal performances, see Erica Fudge, *Perceiving Animals: Humans and Beasts in Early Modern English Culture* (Champaign, Ill.: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2002), chap. 1. For animal performances among other forms of low entertainment in the nineteenth century, see Altick, *Shows of London*, chap. 22; and Ricky Jay, *Learned Pigs and Fireproof Women: Unique, Eccentric and Amazing Entertainers: Stone Eaters, Mind Readers, Poison Resisters, Daredevils, Singing Mice, etc., etc., etc., etc.* (New York: Villard, 1987), chap. 2.

¹⁵⁰ On the history of the circus, see Helen Stoddart, *Rings of Desire: Circus History and Representation* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2000), chaps. 1 and 4.

¹⁵¹ See Sylvester Scrutiny [Samuel de Wilde], [The Monster Melo-drama], *Satirist, or Monthly Meteor* 1 (4 Dec. 1807), 225. Image available at: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=82531001&objectId=1470542&partId=1

¹⁵² On the various uses of animals onstage, see Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of Early Nineteenth Century Drama 1800-1850*, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1930) 1:25-26; Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, 69-72; Saxon, *Enter Foot and Horse*, 7-8.

¹⁵³ For the history of hippodrama, see Saxon, *Enter Foot and Horse*.

¹⁵⁴ See Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, 24-36. See also Saxon, *Enter Foot and Horse*, for the long history of exchange that enabled the rise of hippodrama. For histories focusing on the economics and aesthetics peculiar to the circus, see Brenda Assael, *The Circus and Victorian Society* (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press, 2005); and Stoddart, *Rings of Desire*.

¹⁵⁵ On the controversy surrounding Timour the Tartar, see Saxon, *Enter Foot and Horse*, 37-39; Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, 99-100.

- ¹⁵⁶ George Colman the Younger, "The Quadrupeds of Quedlinburgh; or, The Rovers of Weimar," 15 Jul. 1811, MS, Larpent 1685, Huntington Lib., San Marino, Calif., 3.
- ¹⁵⁷ William Barrymore, "Murder Will Out; or, The Dog of Montargis," 17 Sep. 1814, MS, Larpent 1826, Huntington Lib., San Marino, Calif., 22. The melodramas cited often exist only in hastily scribbled manuscript form. I have normalized variant spellings of character names and capitalized them to make reading and parsing these works easier.
- ¹⁵⁸ William Roberts, "Magdalena and Her Faithful Dog," 21 Dec. 1816, MS, Larpent 1948, Huntington Lib., San Marino, Calif., 61.
- ¹⁵⁹ "The Pride of Kildare or the Dog of the Quarry," 4 Nov. 1843, MS, Lord Chamberlain's Plays Vol. CVI, Add MS 42970, British Lib., London, 78; 71; 80.
- ¹⁶⁰ See Saxon, *Enter Foot and Horse*, 82.
- ¹⁶¹ On the rise and fall of Chune's career, see Altick, *Shows of London*, 310-317; and Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 225-228.
- ¹⁶² See [J. Barber], "The Elephants of the Pagoda (The Rajah of Nagpore or the Sacred Elephants of the Pagoda)," 23 Jan. 1846, MS, Lord Chamberlain's Plays Vol. CXXVIII, Add MS 42991, British Lib., London.
- ¹⁶³ "Literary and Scientific Intelligence," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 1, no. 4 (Jul. 1817): 421-422.
- ¹⁶⁴ "Varieties," *Theatrical Journal* 1, no. 5 (Jan. 1840): 51.
- ¹⁶⁵ J.E., "Theatres, Their Use and Abuse," *Theatrical Journal* 5, no. 241 (Jul. 1844): 235.
- ¹⁶⁶ [Murray John Fisher], "The World of London," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 51, no. 319 (May 1842): 643.
- ¹⁶⁷ Gilbert B. Cross, *Next Week—East Lynne: Domestic Drama in Performance, 1820-1874* (Lewisburg: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1977), 93.
- ¹⁶⁸ Frank Rahill, *The World of Melodrama* (University Park: Penn State Univ. Press, 1967), 140.
- ¹⁶⁹ Saxon, *Enter Foot and Horse*, 28-29.
- ¹⁷⁰ For more on *The Taylor* as a precursor to hippodrama, see Saxon, *Enter Foot and Horse*, 30-31.
- ¹⁷¹ For more limping see, for example, T. G. Blake, "The Old Toll House (The Old Toll House or the Carrier and His Dog)," 6 May 1845, MS, Lord Chamberlain's Plays Vol. CXX, Add MS 42984, British Lib., London, 1014. For dogs carrying bundles and baskets, see, e.g., Blake, "The Old Toll House," 1011; "The Dog of the Pyreneans (The Dog of the Pyrenees)," 10 Dec. 1845, MS, Lord Chamberlain's Plays Vol. CXXVI, Add MS 42990, British Lib., London, 476b; and William Barrymore, Jr. [and R. J. Raymond], "The Conscript; or the Veteran and His Dog," 12 Nov. 1830, MS, Lord Chamberlain's Plays Vol. XL, Add MS 42904, British Lib., London, 570b. On the pervasiveness of "taking the seize," see Bondeson, *Amazing Dogs*, 75.
- ¹⁷² Michael Peterson, "The Animal Apparatus: From a Theory of Animal Acting to an Ethics of Animal Acts," in "Animals and Performance," ed. Una Chaudhuri, spec. issue of *TDR: The Drama Review* 51, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 36.
- ¹⁷³ Dobson, "A Dog at All Things," 123.
- ¹⁷⁴ Martin Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1983), 10.

¹⁷⁵ I can find no exceptions to this pattern among individualized animal characters. There are, however, records of theaters staging *Uncle Tom's Cabin* using live bloodhounds to add excitement to chase scenes, which suggests that when animals were featured primarily for spectacular purposes, rather than as their own characters, they did not necessarily serve a providential order. For more on these bloodhounds, and an interesting case study on animals and race onstage, see Sharon Aronofsky Weltman, Introduction, *Sweeney Todd: The String of Pearls or the Fiend of Fleet Street* by George Dibdin Pitt, transcribed from British Lib. Manuscript and Playbill, spec. issue of *Nineteenth-Century Theatre and Film* 38, no. 1 (June 2011): 14-22.

¹⁷⁶ Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and The Mode of Excess*, with a New Preface (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1995), 11-12.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁷⁸ For a Victorian discussion of this tradition, see Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex, Part I*, ed. Paul H. Barrett and R. B. Freeman (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1989), 89-96. For its importance in philosophy, see Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, 18-51.

¹⁷⁹ Weltman has found an interesting example of a canine character from the novella *The String of Pearls* (1847) replaced by a deaf-mute black servant in the stage adaptation. See Weltman, Introduction, 12-13. But I am arguing that any associations between animal figures and mute figures must be attentive to the dramatic differences between them, which I try to explore in this section.

¹⁸⁰ Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination*, 56.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁸⁵ Meisel, *Realizations*, 38-51.

¹⁸⁶ Hadley, *Melodramatic Tactics*, passim.

¹⁸⁷ Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, 79-117.

¹⁸⁸ Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination*, 212 n.1.

¹⁸⁹ "Dhu Blanche (Dhu Blanche or the Highwayman and his Dog)," 19 May 1845, MS, Lord Chamberlain's Plays Vol. CXXI, Add MS 42985, British Lib., London, 389b.

¹⁹⁰ On the ubiquity of black-and-white Newfoundlands in Victorian culture and their designation as Landseers, see Bondeson, *Amazing Dogs*, 172-177.

¹⁹¹ "Dhu Blanche," 380b.

¹⁹² See T. G. Blake, "The Mirror of Fate or the Gnome of the Gold Mine and the Demon and His Dog," 22 Mar. 1844, MS, Lord Chamberlain's Plays Vol. CX, Add MS 42974, British Lib., London.

¹⁹³ Barrymore, "Murder Will Out," 42-43.

¹⁹⁴ Samuel Atkins, "Wonga of the Branded Hand; or the Dogs of the Forlorn Log-House," 2 Jul. 1844, MS, Lord Chamberlain's Plays Vol. CXII, Add MS 42976, British Lib., London, 778.

¹⁹⁵ W. T. Moncrieff, *Mount St. Bernard; or the Headsman, A Romantic Drama, in Three Acts* ([London]: Duncombe, [1834?]), 54.

¹⁹⁶ Moncrieff, *Mount St. Bernard*, 55.

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- ¹⁹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁹⁸ [Barber], "Elephants of the Pagoda," 300.
- ¹⁹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰⁰ Ibid., 313.
- ²⁰¹ Assael, *The Circus and Victorian Society*, 77. Also militating against any dismissal of the drama as a one-dimensionally imperialist text is the fact that Peter Prunella, the shoemaker who is briefly crowned Rajah, is clearly a comedic figure.
- ²⁰² [Barber], "Elephants of the Pagoda," 305.
- ²⁰³ Edward Mayhew, *Stage Effect: or, The Principles Which Command Dramatic Success in the Theatre* (London: G. Mitchell, 1840), 58.
- ²⁰⁴ Mayhew, *Stage Effect*, 60.
- ²⁰⁵ Bondeson, *Amazing Dogs*, 71.
- ²⁰⁶ [Wiljalba Frikeli], *Magic No Mystery: Conjuring Tricks with Cards, Balls, and Dice; Magic Writing, Performing Animals, &c. &c.*, ed. W. H. Cremer (London: Chatto & Windus, 1876), 308.
- ²⁰⁷ Joe Cowell, *Thirty Years Passed Among the Players in England and America: Interspersed with Anecdotes and Reminiscences of a Variety of Persons, Directly or Indirectly Connected with the Drama during the Theatrical Life of Joe Cowell, Comedian* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1844), 64.
- ²⁰⁸ Mayhew, *Stage Effect*, 58.
- ²⁰⁹ Ibid., 59.
- ²¹⁰ Ibid., 59-61. Mayhew is almost certainly underestimating animals' capacity for play—their ability to participate in a variety of conventional communal fictions bracketed off from the concerns of everyday life.
- ²¹¹ [W. J. Lawrence], "Realism on the Stage: How Far Permissible?," *Westminster Review* 135, no. 1 (Jan 1891): 283.
- ²¹² Bert O. States, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theatre* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1985), 29.
- ²¹³ Ibid., 32.
- ²¹⁴ Ibid., 33.
- ²¹⁵ Ibid., 34.
- ²¹⁶ Ibid., 33-34.
- ²¹⁷ For Brecht's dramatic theory, see Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001).
- ²¹⁸ Peterson, "The Animal Apparatus," 35.
- ²¹⁹ Ibid., 35n.3.
- ²²⁰ Barrymore, "Murder Will Out," 31.
- ²²¹ Barrymore, Jr. [and Raymond], "The Conscript," 600b-601.
- ²²² "The Miller's Dog," 30 Jul. 1849, MS, Lord Chamberlain's Plays Vol. CLVI, Add MS 43020, British Lib., London, 483b.
- ²²³ Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 37.
- ²²⁴ "sagacious, adj.," *OED Online*, Dec. 2014, Oxford Univ. Press, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/view/Entry/169717>.
- ²²⁵ "Performing Animals," *All the Year Round* 17, no. 405 (26 Jan. 1867): 105.
- ²²⁶ Ibid., 105-106.

²²⁷ “The Dog of the Pyreneans,” 485b.

²²⁸ Ibid., 485b-486.

²²⁹ On Clever Hans, see Erica Fudge, *Animal* (London: Reaktion, 2002), 113-116.

²³⁰ On Rin Tin Tin and *Lassie* as legacies of nineteenth-century theater, see Bondeson, *Amazing Dogs*, 82-86.

²³¹ Meisel, *Realizations*, 12-13.

²³² For a fuller exposition of this issue, see Chapter 1 of this project, “The Humanity of the Industrial Novelists.”

²³³ S. O. Beeton, ed., *Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield*, 2 vols. (London: Goubaud and Son, 1881), 1:429.

²³⁴ Disraeli, *Sybil*, 119.

²³⁵ See the hand-colored Etching by Charles Williams, “A Friendly Visit to the Dramatic Manufactory, or, Preparations for Next Season,” [London]: S. W. Fores, [1804]. The image is available here:

<http://images.library.yale.edu/walpoleweb/oneITEM.asp?pid=1w1pr10490&iid=1w1pr10490>

Other stage directions or conversations about performing dogs carrying baskets appear, for example, in “The Dog of the Pyreneans,” 467 and Barrymore [and Raymond], “The Conscript,” 571.

²³⁶ Disraeli, *Sybil*, 119-120.

²³⁷ Edgar Farman, “The Bloodhound,” *The Idler Illustrated Magazine* 14 (Aug. 1898-Jan. 1899), 663.

²³⁸ Disraeli, *Sybil*, 168.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 199.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 200.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 201.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 405.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 407.

²⁵⁰ See Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, 28.

²⁵¹ Disraeli, *Sybil*, 417.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ For readings of *Hard Times* in connection without the historical practices of the circus, see Paul Schlicke, *Dickens and Popular Entertainment* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1985), 145-64; and Stoddart, *Rings of Desire*, ch. 6. Some critics fail to see melodrama in *Hard Times* at all—see George J. Worth, *Dickensian Melodrama: A Reading of the Novels* (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1978), 130.

²⁵⁴ Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, 18; 305n.9.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 18.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 271.

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- ²⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁵⁸ Ibid., 279.
- ²⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁶⁰ Ibid., 281.
- ²⁶¹ Ibid.
- ²⁶² Ibid., 63.
- ²⁶³ Ibid., 282.
- ²⁶⁴ Charles Darwin, "To marry or not" – 2nd Note, [July 1838], MS Dar 210.8:2r, Cambridge Univ. Lib., Cambridge, UK. Accessible through the Darwin Correspondence Project: <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/darwins-notes-on-marriage>
- ²⁶⁵ Jane Welsh Carlyle to George Eliot, 20 February 1859, in the *George Eliot Letters*, ed. Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1954-78), 3:18. Emphasis in the original. Hereafter abbreviated to *GEL*.
- ²⁶⁶ Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 127.
- ²⁶⁷ Ibid., 129.
- ²⁶⁸ James Eli Adams, "Gyp's Tale: On Sympathy, Silence, and Realism in *Adam Bede*," *Dickens Studies Annual* 20 (1991): 228.
- ²⁶⁹ Brenda Ayres-Ricker, "Dogs in George Eliot's *Adam Bede*," *George Eliot-George Henry Lewes Newsletter* 18-19 (Sept. 1991): 23, 22.
- ²⁷⁰ "A New Novelist," *Saturday Review* (29 May 1858): 566.
- ²⁷¹ Dinah Birch, Introduction to *The Mill on the Floss* by George Eliot (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), xi.
- ²⁷² E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt, 1955), 45.
- ²⁷³ Ibid., 46-8.
- ²⁷⁴ Ibid., 43.
- ²⁷⁵ Ibid., 43-4.
- ²⁷⁶ Ibid., 44.
- ²⁷⁷ Ibid., 48.
- ²⁷⁸ W. J. Harvey, *Character and the Novel* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1965); Baruch Hochman, *Character in Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985).
- ²⁷⁹ M. H. Abrams, "Character and Characterization," in *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 7th edition (Boston: Thomson Learning, 1999), 32-33.
- ²⁸⁰ See especially Young, *Imagining Mind*; Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction*; and Vermeule, *Why Do We Care About Literary Characters?*.
- ²⁸¹ Woloch, *The One Vs. The Many*, 14.
- ²⁸² David Galef, *The Supporting Cast: A Study of Flat and Minor Characters* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1993), 21.
- ²⁸³ George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (New York: Penguin, 1985), chap. 1, 56. Hereafter abbreviated *AB*.
- ²⁸⁴ Ibid., chap. 11, 163.
- ²⁸⁵ Ibid., chap. 10, 151.
- ²⁸⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁸⁷ Ibid., chap. 21, 283.
- ²⁸⁸ Ibid., chap. 1, 56.
- ²⁸⁹ Ibid., chap. 11, 163.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., chap. 1, 56.

²⁹¹ Ibid., chap. 18, 249.

²⁹² Ibid., chap. 22, 294-295.

²⁹³ Ibid., chap. 24, 315.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., chap. 25, 320.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., chap. 10, 152.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., chap. 13, 182.

²⁹⁷ Gyp seems to have been inspired by a real dog named Gyp who belonged to travel companions she and Lewes met on one of their trips to the North Devon coast in 1856. See George Eliot, "Recollections of Ilfracombe, 1856," in *The Journals of George Eliot*, ed. Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 271. The name may have been a common one for dogs, as it also appears—as "Jip—short for Gipsy"—in *David Copperfield*. See Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, ed. Jeremy Tambling (New York: Penguin, 1996), chap. 26, 366. For more on gypsies in Victorian culture, see Deborah Epstein Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807-1930* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2006).

²⁹⁸ Eliot, *Adam Bede*, chap. 21, 281.

²⁹⁹ Daniel Dennett, "Conditions of Personhood," in *The Identities of Persons*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1976), 177-8.

³⁰⁰ For a Victorian refutation of these traits as uniquely human, see Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, chap. 3.

³⁰¹ On this knotting together, see David Wiggins, "The Person as Object of Science, as Subject of Experience, and as Locus of Value," in *Persons and Personality: A Contemporary Inquiry*, ed. Arthur Peacocke and Grant Gillett (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 56-74.

³⁰² Dennett, "Conditions of Personhood," 175.

³⁰³ Charles Taylor, "The Concept of a Person," in *Philosophical Papers, Vol. 1: Human Agency and Language* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), 101.

³⁰⁴ Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 19.

³⁰⁵ Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 2004), xvi.

³⁰⁶ Patrick Curry, *Ecological Ethics: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Polity, 2011), 72.

³⁰⁷ Environmental philosophy promises a less anthropomorphic approach to ethics, however. For a useful survey, see Curry, *Ecological Ethics*.

³⁰⁸ Susan McHugh, "Literary Animal Agents," *PMLA* 124, no. 2 (Mar. 2009): 491.

³⁰⁹ Ivan Kreilkamp, "Dying Like a Dog in *Great Expectations*," 84.

³¹⁰ See Ivan Kreilkamp, "Pitying the Sheep in *Far from the Madding Crowd*," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 42, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 474-81; also Kreilkamp, "Petted Things," 87-110.

³¹¹ George Levine, "The Heartbeat of the Squirrel," 250.

³¹² Ibid., 253-8.

³¹³ Folk etymology attributes the word *person* to "*per sonae*, that through which the sound comes," but this etymology is not endorsed by the *OED*. See Amélie Oksenberg

Rorty, "A Literary Postscript: Characters, Persons, Selves, Individuals," in *The Identities of Persons*, 309.

³¹⁴ See Richard Tur, "The 'Person' in Law," in *Persons and Personality*, 116-118.

³¹⁵ See Adrian Thatcher, "Christian Theism and the Concept of a Person," in *Persons and Personality*, 180-196.

³¹⁶ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011), book II, chap. XXVII, § 26, 346.

³¹⁷ Blackstone, *Commentaries*, book 1, chap. 1, 119.

³¹⁸ George F. Deiser, "The Juristic Person," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review and American Legal Register* 57, no. 3 (Dec. 1908): 131.

³¹⁹ Move to Amend, "We the People, Not We the Corporations | Move to Amend." *Move to Amend*, <https://movetoamend.org/>; Reclaim Democracy, "Corporate Personhood | An Introduction," *Reclaim Democracy*, <http://reclaimdemocracy.org/corporate-personhood/>.

³²⁰ Colin Dayan, *The Law Is A White Dog: How Legal Rituals Make and Unmake Persons* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2011), 25.

³²¹ F. W. Maitland, "Moral Personality and Legal Personality," *Journal of the Society of Comparative Legislation* 6, no. 2 (1905): 192.

³²² *Ibid.*, 193.

³²³ For more on philosophy and legal realism, see Felix S. Cohen, "Transcendental Nonsense and the Functional Approach," *Columbia Law Review* 35, no. 6 (June, 1935): 821-829.

³²⁴ John Dewey, "The Historic Background of Corporate Legal Personality," *The Yale Law Journal* 35, no. 6 (April 1926): 655.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 673. Despite no apparent familiarity with Dewey, Alexander Nékám comes to a similar conclusion in *The Personality Conception of the Legal Entity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1938), 39.

³²⁶ Bryant Smith, "Legal Personality," *The Yale Law Journal* 37, no. 3 (Jan. 1928): 283.

³²⁷ Dewey, "The Historic Background of Corporate Legal Personality," 661.

³²⁸ Smith, "Legal Personality," 296.

³²⁹ Christopher D. Stone, *Should Trees Have Standing?: Law, Morality, and the Environment*. 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010).

³³⁰ See Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis, MN: Univ. Minnesota Press, 2008).

³³¹ See Cary Wolfe, *Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame* (Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press, 2013); and Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis, MN: Univ. Minnesota Press, 2010).

³³² Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2010), 28-38.

³³³ Hannah Arendt, "The Perplexities of the Rights of Man," 31-45.

³³⁴ Elizabeth Fowler, *Literary Character: The Human Figure in Early English Writing* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2003).

³³⁵ See Barbara Johnson, *Persons and Things* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2010).

³³⁶ Oren Izenburg, *Being Numerous: Poetry and the Ground of Social Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2011), 4.

³³⁷ See, for example, Sharon Cameron, *Impersonality: Seven Essays* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007); Izenburg, *Being Numerous*; and Johnson, *Persons and Things*.

³³⁸ Levine, "George Eliot's Hypothesis of Reality," in *Realism, Ethics, and Secularism*, 27.

³³⁹ For a classic reading of the metonymic clutter of realism, see Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect," in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1989), 141-148. For an important reassessment of the meaning of the metonymic things of realism, see Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2006).

³⁴⁰ Woloch, *The One Vs. The Many*, 31.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 12; 27, emphasis in the original.

³⁴³ Eliot, *AB*, chap. 4, 87.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, chap. 51, 542.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, chap. 4, 85-86.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, chap. 4, 86.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ "gipsy | gypsy, n." *OED Online*, Dec. 2014, Oxford Univ. Press, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/view/Entry/78443>; George Eliot, "Janet's Repentance," in *Scenes of Clerical Life* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009), 209.

³⁴⁹ Eliot, *AB*, chap. 21, 284.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, chap. 21, 283.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, chap. 21, 284.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, chap. 21, 285.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, chap. 21, 287.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, chap. 21, 285.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, chap. 40, 463-464.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, chap. 40, 464.

³⁵⁸ [Charles Dickens], "Two Dog-Shows," *All the Year Round* 7, no. 171 (Aug. 2, 1862): 493-7. For a history of the shelter, see "Our History – Battersea Dogs & Cats Home," *Battersea Dogs and Cats Home*, accessed 14 Mar. 2014, http://www.battersea.org.uk/about_us/our_history/index.html.

³⁵⁹ See Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments*, chap. 3.

³⁶⁰ Eliot, *AB*, chap. 17, 225.

³⁶¹ Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), book 5, chap. 2, 314. Hereafter abbreviated *MOTF*.

³⁶² For this tradition of ladies and lapdogs, see Laura Brown, *Homeless Dogs and Melancholy Apes*, chap. 3. For an early example of it in Eliot's work, see the Countess Czerlaski and her spaniel Jet in "The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton," in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 26-33 and passim.

³⁶³ Nina Auerbach, "Dorothea's Lost Dog," in *Middlemarch in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Karen Chase (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006), 87-90.

³⁶⁴ Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (New York: Modern Library, 2002) chap. 12, 109.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, chap. 13, 117.

³⁶⁶ George Eliot to John Blackwood, 3 April 1860, *GEL* 3:285.

³⁶⁷ George Eliot, *MOTF*, book 1, chap. 4, 31.

³⁶⁸ See Francis T. Buckland, "The Gamekeeper's Museum," in *Curiosities of Natural History: Second Series* (New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1860), 109-204; and Richard Jefferies, "The Gamekeeper at Home: The Man Himself – His House, and Tools," in *Landscape with Figures: Selected Prose Writings*, ed. Richard Mabey (New York: Penguin, 2013), 42-3.

³⁶⁹ For an impressively thorough reading of the formal tensions of *The Mill on the Floss*, see Sally Shuttleworth, *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science: The Make-Believe of a Beginning* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), chap. 3. Other accounts that try to explain or account for the novel's formal "flaws" include F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1963), 39-47; George Levine, "Intelligence as Deception: *The Mill on the Floss*," in *George Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. George R. Creeger (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 107-23; Barbara Hardy, "The Mill on the Floss," in *Particularities: Readings in George Eliot* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio Univ. Press, 1983), 58-74; and Rosemary Ashton, *The Mill on the Floss: A Natural History* (Boston: Twayne, 1990), chaps. 3, 8.

³⁷⁰ The most famous version of this explanation comes from Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, 39-47. See also Ashton, *The Mill on the Floss*, 80-93.

³⁷¹ Eliot, *MOTF*, book 1, chap. 2, 13.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 11, 104; book 1, chap. 2, 14.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, book 3, chap. 3, 215.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 3, 16.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, book 2, chap. 5, 178.

³⁷⁶ See especially Nina Auerbach, "The Power of Hunger: Demonism and Maggie Tulliver," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 30, no. 2 (Sept. 1975): 150-71.

³⁷⁷ On this partiality, see Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, 39-45.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 5, 39.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, book 2, chap. 7, 186.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 7, 66.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 6, 47-8.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 5, 39-40.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 7, 69.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 6, 48.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 10, 99.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 4, 29.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 10, 99.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 9, 88.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 5, 39.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 9, 92.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 5, 39.

³⁹⁴ Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 4-5.

³⁹⁵ Eliot, *MOTF*, book 1, chap. 5, 39.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., book 1, chap. 6, 46-7.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., book 2, chap. 1, 152.

³⁹⁹ See, for example, Hardy, "The Mill on the Floss," 68-9; Ashton, *The Mill on the Floss*, chap. 5; Shuttleworth, *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science*, 60-3; Mary Jean Corbett, "'The Crossing o' Breeds' in *The Mill on the Floss*," in *Victorian Animal Dreams*, 121-44; and Elsie Michie, "Horses and Sexual/Social Dominance," in *Victorian Animal Dreams*, 145-66.

⁴⁰⁰ George Eliot, *The Journals of George Eliot*, ed. Margaret Harris and Judith Johnson (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 82.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² George Eliot to Charles Bray, 25 November 1859. *GEL*, 214.

⁴⁰³ Gordon S. Haight, *George Eliot: A Biography* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), 29; 304-5.

⁴⁰⁴ For a more detailed discussion of Wordsworthian themes in *The Mill on the Floss*, see Margaret Homans, "Eliot, Wordsworth, and the Scenes of the Sisters' Instruction," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 2 (Winter 1981): 223-41. Other critics who note Wordsworthian themes in the novel include Jonathan Arac, "Rhetoric and Realism in Nineteenth-Century Fiction: Hyperbole in *The Mill on the Floss*," *ELH* 46, no. 4 (Winter 1979): 673-92; and Ashton, *The Mill on the Floss*, chaps. 8, 9.

⁴⁰⁵ William Wordsworth, "Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," in *Selected Poetry*, ed. Stephen Gill and Duncan Wu (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), lines 67-70. References are to lines.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 73-6.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 76-7.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 84-6.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 117-22.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 138-40.

⁴¹¹ Wordsworth, "Ode ('There Was a Time')," *Selected Poetry*, lines 71-6. References are to lines.

⁴¹² Ibid., 191; 189.

⁴¹³ Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey," 15.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 26-28; 33-6.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., 109-112.

⁴¹⁶ Quoted in Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 53.

⁴¹⁷ Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 31.

⁴¹⁸ For a response to Bate see Paul H. Fry, "Green to the Very Door? The Natural Wordsworth," *Studies in Romanticism* 35, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 535-51. For other readings of Wordsworthian nature, see especially Marjorie Levinson, *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems: Four Essays* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986); Alan Liu, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Palo Alto: Stanford Univ. Press, 1989); and Christine Kenyon-Jones, "'Minute Obeisances': Beasts, Birds, and Wordsworth's Ecological Credentials," *Romanticism* 4, no. 1 (1998): 74-89.

- ⁴¹⁹ John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, ed. John M. Robson (New York: Penguin, 1989), 121.
- ⁴²⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴²¹ Ibid.
- ⁴²² Ibid.
- ⁴²³ Barbara Hardy makes a strong case for the masculine gendering of Eliot's early narrators, a gendering that fades over the course of Eliot's career. See Hardy, "The Reticent Narrator," in *Particularities*, 126-46.
- ⁴²⁴ Eliot, *MOTF*, book 1, chap. 5, 41.
- ⁴²⁵ William Wordsworth, "Preface," in *Lyrical Ballads; with Pastoral and Other Poems, in Two Volumes*, 3rd ed. (London: Longman and Rees, 1802), L.
- ⁴²⁶ For the decision to name the novel *The Mill on the Floss* despite this inaccuracy, see Haight, *George Eliot*, 319.
- ⁴²⁷ Eliot, *MOTF*, book 1, chap. 1, 7-8.
- ⁴²⁸ Ibid., book 1, chap. 1, 8-9.
- ⁴²⁹ Ibid., book 1, chap. 5, 42; 41.
- ⁴³⁰ George Lukács, "Narrate or Describe?," in *Writer and Critic and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. Arthur Kahn (London: Merlin Press, 1970), 127.
- ⁴³¹ Ibid., 134.
- ⁴³² Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2009), 32.
- ⁴³³ Lukács, "Narrate or Describe?," 133-4.
- ⁴³⁴ Eliot, *MOTF*, book 1, chap. 1, 7.
- ⁴³⁵ Ibid., book 1, chap. 1, 8.
- ⁴³⁶ Ibid., book 1, chap. 1, 8.
- ⁴³⁷ Ibid., book 1, chap. 2, 13.
- ⁴³⁸ Ibid., book 1, chap. 1, 7-8.
- ⁴³⁹ Ibid., book 1, chap. 1, 8.
- ⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., book 1, chap. 1, 8.
- ⁴⁴¹ Ibid., book 1, chap. 1, 9.
- ⁴⁴² Ibid., book 1, chap. 1, 8.
- ⁴⁴³ Ibid., book 1, chap. 2, 12.
- ⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., book 1, chap. 2, 12.
- ⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., book 1, chap. 2, 13; 12.
- ⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., book 6, chap. 2, 373.
- ⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., book 6, chap. 1, 370.
- ⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., book 6, chap. 7, 412.
- ⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., book 6, chap. 11, 449.
- ⁴⁵⁰ Auerbach, "The Power of Hunger," 161.
- ⁴⁵¹ Ibid., book 1, chap. 8, 79-84.
- ⁴⁵² Ibid., book 4, chap. 1, 299.
- ⁴⁵³ Ibid., book 4, chap. 3, 326-7.
- ⁴⁵⁴ See Arac, "Rhetoric and Realism," 676, 691n. 4; and "humble, *adj.*." *OED Online*, December 2014, Oxford Univ. Press, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/view/Entry/89298>.

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- ⁴⁵⁵ Eliot, *MOTF*, book 1, chap. 9, 86.
- ⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., book 1, chap. 11, 106.
- ⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., book 2, chap. 1, 147.
- ⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., book 3, chap. 3, 290-1.
- ⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., book 6, chap. 4, 393.
- ⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., book 6, chap. 10, 442.
- ⁴⁶¹ Ibid., book 1, chap. 10, 98.
- ⁴⁶² Ibid., book 3, chap. 1, 197.
- ⁴⁶³ Ibid., book 3, chap. 1, 198.
- ⁴⁶⁴ Shuttleworth, *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science*, 78; see also 54-6.
- ⁴⁶⁵ Eliot, *MOTF*, book 6, chap. 14, 476.
- ⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., book 6, chap. 14, 478.
- ⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., book 6, chap. 14, 475.
- ⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., book 7, chap. 1, 483.
- ⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., book 6, chap. 14, 479.
- ⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., book 7, chap. 2, 494.
- ⁴⁷¹ Ibid., book 7, chap. 2, 496.
- ⁴⁷² Ibid., book 7, chap. 2, 492.
- ⁴⁷³ Ibid., book 7, chap. 2, 496.
- ⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., book 7, chap. 1, 485.
- ⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., book 4, chap. 3, 329.
- ⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., book 7, chap. 1, 486.
- ⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., book 7, chap. 1, 489.
- ⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., book 7, chap. 3, 502.
- ⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., book 7, chap. 3, 503.
- ⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., book 7, chap. 3, 504.
- ⁴⁸¹ Ibid., book 7, chap. 3, 517.
- ⁴⁸² Ibid., book 7, chap. 3, 518.
- ⁴⁸³ Ibid., book 7, chap. 3, 520.
- ⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., book 7, chap. 3, 521.
- ⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., book 7, chap. 5, 522; 1.
- ⁴⁹¹ Ibid., book 1, chap. 1, 7.
- ⁴⁹² Ibid., book 7, chap. 5, 522.
- ⁴⁹³ James Buzard, *Disorienting Fiction: The Autoethnographic Work of Nineteenth-Century British Novels* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2005), 282 n. 4; 283.
- ⁴⁹⁴ Eliot, *Middlemarch*, chap. 12, 104.
- ⁴⁹⁵ Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, chap. 14, 131.
- ⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., chap. 3, 15.
- ⁴⁹⁷ Eliot, *MOTF*, book 4, chap. 1, 272; 271.
- ⁴⁹⁸ Eliot, *Middlemarch*, chap. 4, 35.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., chap. 4, 36.

⁵⁰⁰ Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, chap. 13, 120.

⁵⁰¹ Eliot, *Middlemarch*, chap. 65, 667.

⁵⁰² Ibid., chap. 20, 194.

⁵⁰³ Eliot, *MOTF*, book 7, chap. 2, 498.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., book 7, chap. 4, 505.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., book 7, chap. 4, 506.

⁵⁰⁶ Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, chap. 17, 168-9.

⁵⁰⁷ Eliot, *Middlemarch*, chap. 15, 141.

⁵⁰⁸ Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, chap. 35, 379.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., chap. 35, 380.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Quoted in Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (New York: Random House, 1971), 343.

⁵¹² For more on Hardy's decision to package and categorize his novels in relation to the idea of Wessex, see Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: A Biography Revisited* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004), 332-334, 436-438.

⁵¹³ Michael Irwin, *Reading Hardy's Landscapes* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 4.

⁵¹⁴ For Hardy and ecology, see Richard Kerridge, "Ecological Hardy," *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*, eds. Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace (Charlottesville, VA: Univ. of Virginia Press, 2001), 126-142; for posthumanist readings of Hardy, see Ivan Kreilkamp, "Pitying the Sheep in *Far From the Madding Crowd*"; William A. Cohen, "Faciality and Sensation in Hardy's *The Return of the Native*," *PMLA* 121, no. 2 (Mar. 2006): 437-452.

⁵¹⁵ Irwin, *Reading Hardy's Landscapes*, 160; Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, 229.

⁵¹⁶ Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, 226; 229.

⁵¹⁷ Examples include Beer, *Darwin's Plots*; Irwin, *Reading Hardy's Landscapes*; J. Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1970), 76-114; and Phillip Mallett, "Noticing Things: Hardy and the Nature of 'Nature,'" in *The Achievement of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Phillip Mallett (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 155-170.

⁵¹⁸ Recently, a melancholic strain of ecological thinking has emerged that superficially resembles Hardy's in its gloomy emphasis on embeddedness. But the so-called "dark ecology" of Timothy Morton and others reflects a melancholic recognition that human activity takes a heavy ethical toll on our species and other life forms; it is, finally, a terror of the unintentional agency of humanity, rather than Hardy's terror at the way embeddedness thwarts human intention. See Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*.

⁵¹⁹ See, for example, Irving Howe, "The Return of the Native," in *Thomas Hardy's The Return of the Native*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1987), 13-14; Robert Langbaum, *Thomas Hardy in Our Time* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 67; and Ian Gregor, *The Great Web: The Form of Hardy's Major Fiction* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1974), 110.

⁵²⁰ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), chap. 24, 116.

⁵²¹ Ibid., chap. 19, 96.

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- ⁵²² Ibid.
- ⁵²³ Ibid., chap. 23, 115.
- ⁵²⁴ Ibid., chap. 36, 191.
- ⁵²⁵ Ibid., chap. 24, 116.
- ⁵²⁶ Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), book 1, chap. 7, 38-39.
- ⁵²⁷ Hardy, *Tess*, chap. 30, 149.
- ⁵²⁸ Ibid., chap. 32, 159.
- ⁵²⁹ Ibid., chap. 12, 64.
- ⁵³⁰ Ibid., chap. 13, 67.
- ⁵³¹ Ibid., chap. 14, 71; chap. 13, 67.
- ⁵³² Ibid., chap. 39, 208.
- ⁵³³ Ibid., chap. 3, 15.
- ⁵³⁴ Ibid., chap. 51, 282.
- ⁵³⁵ Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, book 6, chap. 2, 328.
- ⁵³⁶ Ibid., book 6, chap. 3, 333. Jude picks a rather inopportune moment to become passive aggressive about his partner's sex drive.
- ⁵³⁷ Ibid., book 6, chap. 2, 328.
- ⁵³⁸ Ibid., book 6, chap. 10, 389.
- ⁵³⁹ Ibid., book 1, chap. 6, 33.
- ⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., book 6, chap. 11, 397.
- ⁵⁴¹ Hardy, *Tess*, chap. 10, 50.
- ⁵⁴² Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, book 1, chap. 2, 12.
- ⁵⁴³ Ibid., book 1, chap. 6, 34.
- ⁵⁴⁴ Hardy, *Tess*, chap. 41, 218-219.
- ⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., chap. 41, 219.
- ⁵⁴⁶ Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, book 4, chap. 2, 205.
- ⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., book 6, chap. 10, 389.
- ⁵⁴⁹ Hardy, *Tess*, chap. 11, 57.
- ⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., chap. 14, 75.
- ⁵⁵¹ Ibid., chap. 59, 314.
- ⁵⁵² Ibid., chap. 49, 267.
- ⁵⁵³ Ibid., chap. 49, 268.
- ⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., chap. 13, 67.
- ⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., chap. 14, 71.
- ⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., chap. 18, 95.
- ⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., chap. 19, 98.
- ⁵⁵⁸ The phrase "inward turning" comes from Leon Edel, *The Psychological Novel, 1900-1950* (New York: Lippincott, 1955), 25. Andrew Enstice has also observed this increasing focus on individuals, and decline of interest in external landscape, although he frames it in oddly optimistic terms. See Andrew Enstice, *Thomas Hardy: Landscapes of the Mind* (New York: St. Martin's, 1974), xi-xii.

- ⁵⁵⁹ See, for example, Gregor, *The Great Web*, 81-82; and, less vehemently, Merryn Williams, *Thomas Hardy and Rural England* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1972), chap. 5, 136-145.
- ⁵⁶⁰ See, for example, Avrom Fleishman, "The Buried Giant of Egdon Heath," in *Fiction and the Ways of Knowing: Essays on British Novels* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1978), 110-122; and Langbaum, *Thomas Hardy in Our Time*, 64.
- ⁵⁶¹ Langbaum, *Thomas Hardy in Our Time*, 100.
- ⁵⁶² Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), book 1, chap. 1, 10.
- ⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, 10.
- ⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 1, 10.
- ⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 1, 10.
- ⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, book 3, chap. 2, 172; Eliot, *Middlemarch*, chap. 12, 104.
- ⁵⁶⁷ Hardy, *Return of the Native*, book 1, chap. 1, 10.
- ⁵⁶⁸ Wordsworth does, of course, include bleak, scrubby, and severe terrain in some of his poetry—"The Thorn" comes to mind—but not as an emblem of the human relationship to the natural world. For more detail on the landscape conventions referred to here and their influence on Victorian realism, see Chapter 4 of this project.
- ⁵⁶⁹ Hardy, *Return of the Native*, book 1, chap. 1, 10.
- ⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 1, 11.
- ⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 1, 10.
- ⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 1, 11-12.
- ⁵⁷³ Hermann Lea, *Thomas Hardy's Wessex* (London: Macmillan, 1913), 67. See also Enstice, *Thomas Hardy: Landscapes of the Mind*, 81-84.
- ⁵⁷⁴ Hardy, *Return of the Native*, book 1, chap. 1, 9.
- ⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 2, 16.
- ⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 1, 9.
- ⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 1, 9.
- ⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 2, 14.
- ⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 3, 19.
- ⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, book 2, chap. 4, 124.
- ⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, book 4, chap. 4, 261.
- ⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 6, 55.
- ⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁸⁴ Satoshi Nishimura, "Thomas Hardy and the Language of the Inanimate," *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 43, no. 4 (Fall 2003): 911.
- ⁵⁸⁵ Hardy, *Return of the Native*, book 1, chap. 1, 9; book 1, chap. 1, 11.
- ⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 1, 11.
- ⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, book 1, chap. 1, 12.
- ⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, book 3, chap. 1, 165.
- ⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, book 3, chap. 4, 195; book 3, chap. 1, 168.
- ⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*, book 3, chap. 1, 168.
- ⁵⁹² *Ibid.*, book 2, chap. 1, 109.
- ⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*, book 3, chap. 2, 172.

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- ⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., book 3, chap. 2, 171.
- ⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., book 3, chap. 1, 168.
- ⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., book 3, chap. 2, 171.
- ⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., book 1, chap. 7, 68.
- ⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.
- ⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰⁰ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰¹ Ibid., book 1, chap. 7, 67.
- ⁶⁰² Ibid., book 1, chap. 7, 71.
- ⁶⁰³ Ibid., book 3, chap. 3, 183.
- ⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰⁶ Ibid., book 3, chap. 4, 196-197.
- ⁶⁰⁷ See, for example, Jean Brooks, "The Return of the Native: A Novel of Environment," in Bloom, *Thomas Hardy's Return of the Native*, 26; Williams, *Thomas Hardy and Rural England*, 142.
- ⁶⁰⁸ Hardy, *Return of the Native*, book 3, chap. 4, 197.
- ⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., book 3, chap. 5, 203-204.
- ⁶¹⁰ Ibid., book 5, chap. 2, 312.
- ⁶¹¹ Ibid., book 5, chap. 3, 313.
- ⁶¹² Ibid.
- ⁶¹³ Ibid., book 6, chap. 4, 388.
- ⁶¹⁴ J. Hillis Miller cites a number of such disavowals, but he takes them at face value. See Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire*, 76-114; and J. Hillis Miller, *Topographies* (Palo Alto: Stanford Univ. Press, 1995), 27.
- ⁶¹⁵ Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, book 6, chap. 3, 331.
- ⁶¹⁶ Ibid., book 6, chap. 3, 331.
- ⁶¹⁷ Miller, *Topographies*, 28.
- ⁶¹⁸ Hardy, *Return of the Native*, book 4, chap. 6, 278. Although Venn is a native of the heath, the land that permeates him probably originates in neighboring districts; productive red ochre pits would have existed in the Mendip Hills in Somerset to the north and in the South Devon cliffs southwest of Dorset.
- ⁶¹⁹ Hardy, *Return of the Native*, 392-393n. 13.
- ⁶²⁰ Ibid., book 1, chap. 2, 13.
- ⁶²¹ Ibid., book 1, chap. 8, 75.
- ⁶²² Ibid., book 1, chap. 9, 79.
- ⁶²³ Ibid., book 1, chap. 2, 14.
- ⁶²⁴ Ibid., book 1, chap. 10, 86.
- ⁶²⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶²⁶ Ibid.
- ⁶²⁷ Ibid., book 3, chap. 3, 178.
- ⁶²⁸ Ibid., book 1, chap. 6, 57.
- ⁶²⁹ Ibid., book 3, chap. 3, 187.
- ⁶³⁰ Ibid., book 4, chap. 2, 241.
- ⁶³¹ Ibid., book 4, chap. 2, 244.

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- ⁶³² Ibid.
- ⁶³³ Ibid., book 4, chap. 2, 244; Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac, with Essays on Conservation from Round River* (New York: Ballantine, 1970), 240.
- ⁶³⁴ Hardy, *Return of the Native*, book 4, chap. 2, 244-245.
- ⁶³⁵ On this addition, see Mallett, "Noticing Things," 158.
- ⁶³⁶ Hardy, *Return of the Native*, book 5, chap. 5, 325.
- ⁶³⁷ Ibid.
- ⁶³⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶³⁹ Ibid., book 4, chap. 5, 267.
- ⁶⁴⁰ Ibid., book 1, chap. 8, 72.
- ⁶⁴¹ Ibid., book 4, chap. 6, 278.
- ⁶⁴² Ibid., book 3, chap. 7, 223.
- ⁶⁴³ Ibid., book 1, chap. 3, 19.
- ⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., book 1, chap. 4, 40; book 3, chap. 6, 207.
- ⁶⁴⁵ Ibid., book 2, chap. 2, 110.
- ⁶⁴⁶ Ibid., book 2, chap. 2, 111.
- ⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., book 1, chap. 4, 41.
- ⁶⁴⁸ Ibid., book 2, chap. 2, 110.
- ⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., book 5, chap. 8, 349.
- ⁶⁵⁰ Ibid., book 4, chap. 5, 267.
- ⁶⁵¹ Ibid., book 4, chap. 5, 278.
- ⁶⁵² C. H. Gimingham, *An Introduction to Heathland Ecology* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1975) 14-17.
- ⁶⁵³ For an overview of heathland history and ecology in England, see Oliver Rackham, *The History of the Countryside* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1986), 282-304.
- ⁶⁵⁴ On cutting furze and heather, see Lee Chadwick, *In Search of Heathland* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1982), 22-24; and Chris Howkins, *Heathers and Heathlands* (Surrey: Chris Howkins, 2004), 24-27. On turfcutting, see Howkins, *Heathers and Heathlands*, 11-18. On fire, see Gimingham, *Introduction to Heathland Ecology*, 2, 15-17; and Howkins, *Heathers and Heathlands*, 39-42. On grazing and pasturage, see Howkins, *Heathers and Heathlands*, 28-38.
- ⁶⁵⁵ Hardy, *Return of the Native*, book 1, chap. 1, 11.
- ⁶⁵⁶ Rackham, *The History of the Countryside*, 302-304.
- ⁶⁵⁷ Hardy, *Return of the Native*, book 1, chap. 2, 17.
- ⁶⁵⁸ Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*, 197.
- ⁶⁵⁹ For the history of the text, see Bruce Steele, Introduction to *A Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays* by D. H. Lawrence (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), xvii-xl.
- ⁶⁶⁰ D. H. Lawrence, *A Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), 21.
- ⁶⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁶² Ibid., 23.
- ⁶⁶³ Ibid., 25.
- ⁶⁶⁴ Ibid., 26.
- ⁶⁶⁵ For an early analysis of this turn, see Edel, *The Psychological Novel*, 15-49.

⁶⁶⁶ See Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990).

⁶⁶⁷ For a scientific discussion of the divided brain, see Paul D. Maclean, *The Triune Brain in Evolution: Role in Paleocerebral Functions* (New York: Springer, 1990); for an influential popularization of the theory, see Carl Sagan, *The Dragons of Eden: Speculations on the Evolution of Human Intelligence* (New York: Ballantine, 1977).

⁶⁶⁸ D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* (New York: Penguin, 2007), chap. 3, 36.

⁶⁶⁹ Lawrence, *Women in Love*, chap. 3, 36.

⁶⁷⁰ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 2nd ed., ed. D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2003), 71.

⁶⁷¹ Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 70.

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*, 148; 153.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁶⁷⁴ On talking animals in children's literature, see Tess Cosslett, *Talking Animals in British Children's Fiction, 1786-1914* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006). On anthropomorphism and women's nature writing, see Barbara T. Gates, *Kindred Nature: Victorian and Edwardian Women Embrace the Living World* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1998).

⁶⁷⁵ On this subject—which came to be known as The Nature Fakers controversy—see Ralph H. Lutts, *The Nature Fakers: Wildlife, Science, and Sentiment* (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1990).

⁶⁷⁶ S. T. Joshi, headnote to "The Terror," Arthur Machen, *The White People and Other Weird Stories* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 372.

⁶⁷⁷ For a few other examples, see Daphne Du Maurier, "The Birds," in *Don't Look Now*, ed. Patrick McGrath (New York: New York Review of Books, 2008), 59-100; Robyn Williams, *2007: A True Story, Waiting to Happen* (Sydney: Hodder, 2001); John Jeremiah Sullivan, "Violence of the Lambs," *GQ*, February 2008; and James Patterson and Michael Ledwidge, *Zoo* (New York: Little, Brown, 2012).

⁶⁷⁸ Arthur Machen, "The Terror," in *The White People and Other Stories* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 274.

⁶⁷⁹ Machen, "The Terror," 281-282.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 284.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*, 286; 287.

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*, 294.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 317.

⁶⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 298.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 300.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 276.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 328-329.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 352.

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 345.

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*, 351.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, 346.

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid., 346.

⁶⁹⁵ See Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (Fall 2001): 1-21.

⁶⁹⁶ Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, "Silver Blaze," in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes and the Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (New York: Penguin, 2001), 278.

⁶⁹⁷ Doyle, "Silver Blaze," 277.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid., 296.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid., 299.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid., 291.

⁷⁰² Ibid., 301.

⁷⁰³ Ibid., 298.

⁷⁰⁴ Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, book 1, chap. 8, 72.

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