The Perspectives of Others:

Raising Perspective Awareness and Enabling Empathic Consideration of Domesticated Non-human Animals in Selected Works of Fiction

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A Thesis Presented to The Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

JULY 2020

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http://www.duo.uio.no/

Print: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of the connection between fiction literature and the ethics of the human treatment of the domesticated non-human animals who live their lives in constant relation to human society. The fiction literature which the thesis examines is "A Report to an Academy" by Franz Kafka, *The Lives of Animals* by J. M. Coetzee, *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift and *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* by Karen Joy Fowler. Through the discussion of these texts, I aim to demonstrate the importance and contribution of the thesis' key concepts of form, discourse, world view, perspective and the concept of entangled empathy, in relation to the non-human oriented ethical potential of fiction literature. I hope to demonstrate the benefits of looking at empathic engagement in human-animal relations for the purpose of identifying the proper ethical course of action through the lens of entangled empathy. I believe the concept of entangled empathy to be ethically instructive in the case of human relations to the non-human sentient world, suggesting how human animals could approach, and reconsider, our relations to the world of non-human animals. By reading literature that provide alternative perspectives from which to explore the concept of species, humanity and animality, as readers we can discover our capabilities for extending notions of kinship and empathic engagement to the non-human animals.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Jakob Lothe. Thank you for agreeing to supervise my thesis, and for all the feedback I have received throughout the last year on this thesis project. Your kind supervision has been greatly appreciated.

Second, a special thanks to my partner Ivar. Thank you for all the support, and for always believing in me.

Lastly, to my beloved companion through almost fourteen years, my dog Rambo, for teaching me about the intrinsic and undeniable worth of alternate ways in which to exist in this world, and without whom this thesis would not have been quite so passionately pursued.

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Introduction

> In addressing you on the subject of animals […] I will pay you the honor of skipping a recital of the horrors of their lives and deaths. …I will take it that you concede me the rhetorical power to evoke these horrors and bring them home to you with adequate force, and leave it at that, reminding you only that the horrors I here omit are nevertheless at the center of this lecture. (Coetzee 19)

Literature, as a general field, has always engaged itself in moral and ethical concerns, in shaping our sense of right and wrong, truth and fictions. One of the earliest examples of literary texts which sought to communicate ethical lessons and insight were the fables, most famously Aesop's fables, which are short didactic stories often involving anthropomorphised animal characters. These fables were of immense importance for the development of literature which centred around ethics, or on the subject of animals. Of the four texts discussed in this thesis only one of them, Franz Kafka's "A Report to an Academy", can be described as clearly inspired by the fable form, although the chapter dedicated the sage horses in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* also bears certain similarities to the fable form. In addition to Kafka and Swift, the thesis will examine two additional novels – *The Lives of Animals* by J.M. Coetzee and *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* by Karen Joy Fowler. The common denominator between the four chosen texts is that they are all examples of literature which in some way engages itself topically on the relationship between humans and non-human animals, as well as explicitly or indirectly calling for ethical reflection and/or empathic engagement concerning interspecies relations.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the connection between fiction literature and the ethics of how non-human domesticated animals are living their lives and being treated in a dominantly human world. By doing so, the aim is to illustrate how literary texts can make ethically natured arguments concerning the treatment, and consideration, of non-human animals and how we human beings should coexist with them in an ethically informed manner. The texts chosen make such arguments through attempts to blur the species dichotomy, through addressing the issue of human animality, through emphasizing forms of kinship across the species divide, as well as through examining how humans and non-human domesticated animals currently coexist.

Two central constituent elements of this thesis are *moral considerations* of non-human animals and *the importance of difference* between human and non-human animals. These two points are addressed through how the selected literary works prompt their readers, in different

manners, to consider and reflect upon the ethics of interspecies relations, and how species defines us and our relations to beings belonging to the opposite side of the species divide. The thesis will focus on how differences between human and non-human animals are ethically relevant, and it aims to illustrate how literary works representing difference in a way that establishes subjective worth and individuality of non-human animals has ethically transformative potential for the readers regarding their relations to the world of non-human animals.

Human-Animal Studies

Situating this thesis within a theoretical field is not that straightforward, but not because it is difficult to define its theoretical roots or because there are few suitable options. Rather, the problem is that there are many fields within which it could be situated: animal studies, critical animal studies, human-animal studies, humanimal studies, species studies, post-humanism and even ecocritical studies. I have chosen to situate the thesis within the literary theory field of "human-animal studies" as defined by Michael Lundblad. I hasten to add that this field of study is not isolated, but exists with many dynamic connections to "Humanimal studies, critical animal studies, animal rights, animal welfare [and] ecocriticism" (Lundblad 3). Although one might easily position a thesis such as this within the field of animal studies, Lundblad argues that the category of animal studies is no longer productive, as "…it has come to include such a wide range of work that can often be at odds with (if not explicitly opposed to) each other", and therefore proposes to drop the term (Lundblad 1).

Concurring with Lundblad, I find that this thesis fits best within the frame of human-animal studies as "Human-animal studies seems more closely aligned with an emphasis on advocacy, on better relationships and physical interactions, or better treatment of nonhuman animals" (Lundblad 4). To position the thesis within the field of human-animal studies, whose primary focus is to investigate "Interactions, co-constructions, and material relationships between human and nonhuman animals or constructions of animals as animals", creates a productive frame which brings focus to, and clarifies, the central aspects of what is important throughout this discussion (Lundblad 3). Lundblad characterizes literary human-animal studies as particularly concerned with "Texts and discourses with images, representations, or constructions of animals and relationships between human and nonhuman animals" (Lundblad 3). The texts selected for this thesis fit Lundblad's categorization agreeably, as the stories all

centre on relationships between humans and non-human animals, the representation of animal life and experience, the process of becoming human, and how humanizing processes inevitably affect both sides of the species dichotomy.

Choice of literature

The works discussed in this thesis are chosen because they can be understood as attempting to extend our moral considerations across species divides through provoking ethical reflection, sympathy and/or empathy. The character with which the reader is encouraged to empathize is of human or non-human origin. In the case of Fowler's novel, the central and non-human character Fern has her natural animality denied through her adoptive parents' anthropocentric quest to nurture her "humanity", which Fern's human adoptive father has theorized and attempts to prove through the scientific experiment Fern is brought up within. In "A Report", Kafka's ape Rotpeter has also suffered an involuntary loss of his animality and has seemingly turned himself into a fully "human" animal. In the novels of Coetzee and Swift on the other hand, the protagonists have not suffered a loss of their animality, but instead have lost their previously held perceptions of their own human identities. Common between all four protagonists is that their loss of species identity is inflicted upon them as a result of the species dichotomy they live under, and the effects of being a non-human or hybrid being in a world that is anthropocentric to the degree of being hostile to those that are not human enough.

The literary works to be discussed are not chosen because they belong to a certain period in time, a specific genre or sub-genre, or because they are all part of a particular authorship or literary tradition. The works are chosen because they have several crucial thematic similarities, and because I interpret them to engage with the same central question. The four works have in common that they are all blurring boundaries and normative perceptions by presenting skewed/alternative perspectives on the topics of animality, humanity and species. The use of perspective, and the play between similarity and difference, proximity and distance, is effective in conjuring up a philosophical "mindscape" for the readers, suited to receive and challenge normative perceptions about the relation between humans and non-human animals. Through exploring these aspects of the texts, the inherent connection between the issue of the denied or repressed human animality and the issue of humans living and coexisting with non-human animals becomes clearer. The crucial question

this thesis therefore interprets the four works to engage in, albeit in four different manners, is: how can we accept to live together with animals when we fail to accept our own animality? How can we coexist with non-human animals in a respectful and ethical manner when as a society we refuse, or are unable, to live with the presence of human animality? To accept our closeness and kinship to other animals and recognizing them as part of our community of sentient empathic beings similarly experiencing life, and towards which we have clear ethical responsibilities, is the solution this thesis proposes to the question asked.

An issue towards this solution then presents itself. Except for pets, the lives of animals, even domesticated ones, are so far removed from human society that we may never be able to empathically engage with real animals in our everyday lives. John Berger's influential collection of essays titled "Why Look at Animals" suggests that imperialist ideology, industrialization and capitalism have caused animals to disappear from our everyday surroundings, resulting in the marginalizing, abusive and inhumane treatment of animals in industrialized farming, zoological gardens and so on. Berger notes that

> Public zoos came into existence at the beginning of the period which was to see the disappearance of animals from daily life. The zoo to which people go to meet animals, to observe them, to see them, is, in fact, a monument to the impossibility of such encounters. Modern zoos are an epitaph to a relationship which was as old as man. […] Everywhere animals disappear. In zoos they constitute the living monument to their own disappearance. (Berger 30-36)

It therefore seems suitable that this thesis has chosen to explore the relation between human and non-human beings, and the empathetic connection humans have the possibility of making towards non-human beings, through literary works. Literature has often been the favoured medium of the voices of the forgotten, the marginalized, and the suppressed, and this thesis will explore literary texts which engage in issues relating to non-human beings who exist not only outside our very language, but sometimes even outside our comprehension. Literature can provide us with the opportunity to let the animal experience be seen, in a metaphorically speaking manner. It can provide the opportunity to speak up for this group of beings who cannot do so for themselves. These aspects are clearly linked to ideas of animal rights advocacy and welfare, typical for literary discussions situated within Human-Animal studies, as previously mentioned.

By appealing to our sense of empathy and recognition of similar ways of being in the world, and by applying language to those who have none easily recognizable to us, we provide opportunities of ethically transformative potential to those left without voice or

language in the human world. Language is human culture, and language creates memory, history and identity. By narrating non-human animals in our language, we can deliver the alienated and languageless beings into an existence we can more accessibly comprehend and engage ourselves in. We render the animal readable by translating it into our human culture. However, this process is difficult and full of ethical queries. In the process of translation, elements are often lost, sometimes due to a lack of equivalents in terms or concepts, and sometimes due to not knowing or paying attention to what is being communicated. To speak on behalf of those who can never make their own mind fully known is not really achievable. The feasible option one is left with is some form of mimesis, of art imitating life. This translated imitation will need to balance between foreignizing or domesticating the animal experience for its human audience, since all texts are, needless to say, made for human audiences. I will come back to this issue, discussing it in greater detail in the chapter on Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*.

All encounters between individuals may fail in producing an empathic response, whether it occurs face to face with an actual animal, or through facing the representation of an animal through the pages of a literary work. This thesis argues that it is still valuable to provide the opportunity to have such an encounter, regardless of the lack of guarantee for ethically transformative connections being made.

Central terms and concepts

Before the thesis begins discussing the selected literary works, I will clarify the terms and concepts which are central to the discussion. At the heart of the thesis is the exploration of the connection between literature and the ethical choices and moral lives of human beings, specifically in relation to non-human beings. By choosing to write about this subject, I am proposing that there may be something of value in this link. I hope that the discussion can improve our perception of ethical responsibilities towards non-human animals, especially domesticated animals who live their lives in close and constant relation to human beings.

Empathy

For parts of the discussion, empathy will be a central term through which the relation between human and non-human beings is being understood. Empathy can potentially provide humans with a way to connect with those beings who cannot articulate their experience of life in

language we can understand. Before explaining the role of empathy further in this thesis, I will clarify how empathy is understood and what it here refers to. Empathy is a difficult and somewhat vague term and is often used interchangeably with the term sympathy. This thesis separates the two terms and understands empathy as distinctly and significantly different in nature from sympathy. Having sympathy for another being is a position of distance where one retains all previous attitudes, values etc. Even though one may seek to help the receiver of one's sympathy, the emotional involvement does not necessarily increase as a result of this effort. In contrast, empathy is a position of connection with its receiver, also at an emotional level. Empathic connection can be a strong catalyst for ethical action and consideration. The definitions of empathy and sympathy that this thesis utilizes are coined by Lori Gruen, who describes sympathy as a state in which

> There is usually no feeling with the other. Rather, the sympathizer identifies the unpleasant or unfortunate event as unpleasant or unfortunate for the individual experiencing it, but does not experience it herself. Sympathy involves maintaining one's own attitudes and adding to them a concern for another. Sympathy for another is felt from the outside, the third-person perspective. I can feel sympathy for another's plight, even pity, but remain rather removed from that plight. (Gruen 44)

A negative effect from understanding the experience of someone from this outside perspective is that it may result in pity or condescension. By understanding someone's plight, but not how that plight is experienced in that specific someone's context and circumstance, vital information of how to best help that individual is lost, and the best course of action may therefore remain undiscovered. In contrast to this, Gruen states that empathy

> … recognizes connection with and understanding of the circumstances of the other… […] It provides an important reference point from which to assess the features of a situation and to ask appropriate questions. Empathetic attunement or perception is directed toward the wellbeing of another. (Gruen 45)

Empathy with non-human embodied and sentient beings can provide insight into their existence, thus also improving the understanding of what the ethical course of action for that particular being might be. However, our empathic feelings alone are not sufficient for "correct" ethical action towards non-human animals. A reflective kind of empathy which combines our pre-existing scientific knowledge of the non-human species with personal knowledge about the particular individual in question seems to be a good way to go about empathy as a guide for ethical action. The scholars cited in this thesis' discussions of empathy all point towards similar types of empathic engagement such as this as ideal. It is an

engagement that differs from unreflective types of empathy which have been the source of much scholarly critique, especially when related to ethical matters (Currie 47-62). However, it is relevant to note that these studies, which are exclusively focused on humans as both producers and receivers of empathetic engagements, do not necessarily directly translate to scenarios where humans empathize with non-human animals instead of other human beings. Even if we succeed in achieving a reflective kind of empathetic connection, there are numerous ways in which empathic engagement can fail to improve the lives of the non-human animals we empathically engage with, although this will not be examined in great detail in this thesis.

Entangled empathy

Gruen points out that much of the critique towards empathy's role in ethics (in-group biases and proximity effects), is critique against a specific sort of unreflective empathy, which is different from her own specific concept of *entangled empathy*. In contrast to unreflective empathy, entangled empathy "…directs our attention to the things that need moral response, can provide context and understanding about what the right response would be, and, […] can provide us with a more accurate picture of who we are and what our responsibilities to others might be" (Gruen 56). Unlike Thomas Nagel, who argues for the impossibility of empathically or otherwise thinking oneself into the experience of other beings, in his philosophical essay titled "What Is It Like To Be A Bat?", Gruen draws the line at sentience/non-sentience concerning the usefulness of empathy to understand the experience of non-human beings (Nagel 435–450). Although "It isn't possible to be in *empathetic* relation to ecosystems or organisms that exist in ways that I can't imagine, beyond metaphor or projection, what it is like to be like", she believes that the appropriate response to the *sentient* part of the world is empathy (Gruen 70-71). Her concept of entangled empathy is uniquely tailored to the relation we have with the sentient world and is therefore a well-suited term to this thesis which focuses on the relation between human and non-human sentient beings. Entangled empathy "…is a way for oneself to perceive and to connect with a specific other in their particular circumstance, and to recognize and assess one's place in reference to the other. This is a central skill for being in ethical relations" (Gruen 67). Although there have been many discussions connecting non-human animals, ethics and empathy, Gruen argues that understanding these discussions through the lens of entangled empathy will result in positive changes to the solutions we come up with, as entangled empathy emphasises the importance of the individual experience and needs of non-human beings:

> Entangled empathy with other animals involves reflecting on proximity and distance. To do it well we have to try to understand the individual's species-typical behaviours and her individual personality over time. Very often this is not easy to do without expertise and observation. Many, perhaps most, current discussions of what we owe animals fail to attend to the particularity of individual animal lives and the very different sorts of relationships we are in with them. (Gruen 67)

I acknowledge that there are all kinds of different ways in which attempts at empathic engagement can go wrong or fail (I will not discuss this in great detail), and that an incorrect empathic response is always a possibility, but I believe this must be accepted as a reasonable risk if one seeks to invoke empathic responses. The ways in which such attempts can be productive is the aspect of empathy on which this thesis focuses. Simply inhabiting that perspective of Other through one's sympathetic imagination can be informative, educational, ethically powerful and influential to one's world view. The possibility of empathic failure should not discourage exploring the specifically ethical potential of literary works. Through investigating suited literary works and keeping in mind the limitations and challenges which one is bound to face while doing so, this thesis will proceed to explore the topic.

Fiction literature

Although all four works discussed in this thesis are works of fiction, the aspect of the texts being fiction or non-fiction is not the decisive factor for inducing empathy in readers. If it is not decisive whether the literature is fiction or not, then why have I chosen to focus on these texts? First, most literature written about animal subjects are at least partly fiction if the text attempts to speak on behalf of the animal or articulate its experience of living in the world, as no one can know the truthful extent of their thoughts and wishes. Second, reading fiction in relation to animals is useful, because it can simulate experience (body, senses, feeling) for which we do not have real possibilities of ever experiencing ourselves. A literary work can be designed to purposefully provoke certain reflections, feelings and perspectives in the reader, because it has the artistic freedom to do so. Based on reflective and deeply involved lenses like entangled empathy, through which we can try to understand the animal, we can make claims we find likely to be in the best interest of the animal on the animal's behalf. Non-fiction cannot do this, as it has strict ethical responsibility to hold itself as close to truth and reality as possible. The works by Kafka and Swift both include, among other things, talking animals, and must therefore clearly be considered as fictional works. Regarding Coetzee and Fowler, the line between fiction and non-fiction is more blurred. Both texts could have been

stories of non-fiction, and in fact, they both approximate to being non-fiction literature (the thesis will return to this aspect in the respective chapters on Coetzee and Fowler).

What all four works have in common, apart from their narrative fiction form, is that they aim to subvert perspectives and to change one's world view, which is (especially in Coetzee's opinion) the root of our moral thinking and ethical lives/choices. In *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*, the non-human animal character is placed in the unusual context of being close family and a literal sister. In *Gulliver's Travels*, the animal is the superior being and acts as a mentor for the human protagonist. In "A Report", the animal is an academic humanoid, articulating the experience of being non-human in the human world and even outsmarting his academic audience as he does this. *The Lives of Animals* is somewhat different from the other three works, as there is no non-human character in the story, apart from references made by the protagonist to Kafka's ape Rotpeter. Coetzee does not place an animal character in an unexpected role with the explicit intention to broaden our insights into animal life or experience, but rather invites us to inhabit the world view of protagonist Costello. Costello's world view, which is dominated by the horror of how we human animals treat non-human animals, seems to have more in common with how one would imagine an animal to view our human world than with the normative world perception dominant in human society. This illustrates how the animal perspective is also central to Coetzee's story.

Narrative empathy

The study of empathy in relation to literary theory does not comprise an especially substantial body of work. In 2006 Suzanne Keen theorizes that this was caused by

> The disdain of Bertolt Brecht for empathy (and his advocacy of so-called alienation effects), the embrace of difficulty by modernist poets, and the dominance of New Criticism, which taught students to avoid the affective fallacy all interfered with the integration of empathy into literary theory until recently. (Keen 210)

Additionally, empathic effects are hard to observe and measure in scientific studies. Only in the last 10-15 years has utilization of fMRI imagining of the human brain while reading opened the possibility for actual neuroscientific investigation (Keen 207). Even today, few studies concerning the link between empathy and literature have been made, and few or none have come up with any clear evidence for how this link comes about. There are simply too many variables which muddle the findings in such studies, and they therefore are of little use to make generalizing or prescriptive claims about the nature of the relation between empathy

and literature. This does not mean, however, that there is doubt about the link between empathy and reading literary texts. Writers, readers, philosophers and literary theorists have long pointed to the empathic experience which reading can provide, but "It is one thing to discover […] that high empathizers report empathic reading experiences, and quite another to show that empathic reading experiences can contribute to changing a reader's disposition, motivations, and attitudes" (Keen 214). If one were to assume that empathic reading experiences *could* change our perspectives and world view as readers, then the next logical step for a study on the topic would be to identify the narrative techniques involved in achieving this.

Keen argues that "The generic and formal choices made by authors in crafting fictional worlds play a role in inviting (or retarding) readers' empathic responses" (215). In the field of literary theory related to the topic,

> Narrative theorists, novel critics, and reading specialists have already singled out a small set of narrative techniques—such as the use of first person narration and the interior representation of characters' consciousness and emotional states—as devices supporting character identification, contributing to empathetic experiences, opening readers' minds to others, changing attitudes, and even predisposing readers to altruism. (Keen 213)

For some readers, "…the author's use of the formulaic conventions of a thriller or a romance novel would increase empathetic resonance, while for other readers (perhaps better educated and attuned to literary effects) unusual or striking representations promote foregrounding and open the way to empathetic reading" (Keen 215). In other words, an issue arises as the generic and formal choices made by the author will not be suitable for all readers in increasing their empathic engagement. There is no universally applicable toolbox of narrative techniques which will resonate with every reader simultaneously. In addition to this, Keen identifies a second issue relating to the topic. The issue relates to what she terms "empathic inaccuracy", which

> …describes a potential effect of narrative empathy: a strong conviction of empathy that incorrectly identifies the feeling of a literary persona. Empathic inaccuracy occurs when a reader responds empathically to a fictional character at cross-purposes with an author's intentions. (Keen 222)

This issue can potentially also become a defining characteristic of some studies of empathy and literature, as the field of "…literary studies privileges against-the-grain interpretations of fiction that may be founded on deliberate acts of role taking that subvert the authors' apparent

intentions and increase empathic inaccuracy" (Keen 222). As a field of study, empathy in relation to literature can also become problematic in the sense that it can be taken to represent "…the western imagination's imposition of its own values on cultures and peoples that it scarcely knows, but presumes to feel with, in a cultural imperialism of emotions" (Keen 223). Studies of literature which focuses on empathy can therefore come to be seen as without credibility to fields such as postcolonial studies or feminist studies if the studies rely on a perception of human emotions as something universal. Again, I believe reflective sorts of empathy like Gruen's entangled empathy can effectively sidestep much of these issues, as individuality and context are the fundamental components of that sort of empathic engagement.

Before any of the literary works of this thesis are discussed, I want to explain my view on narrative techniques connected to narrative empathy. Despite the fact that it might be understood as suitable, this thesis does not devote parts of the discussion of each individual work to these texts' potential for induction of narrative empathy. As this thesis discusses aspects of the selected text's narratives such as form, perspective or sympathetic imagination, the term narrative empathy is not connected to the discussion. Because it remains so very difficult to say anything of certainty or of substance on the connection between empathy and narrative technique, I choose to instead work under the presupposition that the connection simply exists. The thesis is written under the assumption that there *is* a link between literature and empathy, and that empathic reading experiences *can* change our perceptions and world views. This is done without nominating the various techniques of narrative examined in this thesis discussion as empathetic, because to do so "…without attention to the full range of techniques that may be contributing to empathetic effects renders the study of narrative empathy an impressionistic endeavor at best" (Keen 225). I agree with Keen in her position here on the imprecision of discussing empathic narrative techniques at this point in time, and her statement that it remains to be seen whether "…novel reading [is] a significant enough feature of the environment of literate people to play a critical role in their prosocial developments […]. …the leap between reading and empathizing can fall short, impeded by the inattention, indifference, or personal distress" (Keen 213). However, I would argue that, perhaps because this thesis focuses on a more nuanced form of empathic activity than the type of empathy Keen refers to, there is something of greater value in the link between empathy and literature than she seems to suggest. Keen argues that

> No specific set of narrative techniques has yet been verified to over-ride the resistance to empathizing often displayed by members of an in-group regarding the emotional states of others marked out as different by their age, race, gender, weight, disabilities, and so forth. (Keen 214)

To make Keen's statement more suited to the thesis topic, 'species' can also be imagined to be included in the list of markers. What Keen here describes is what is often referred to by critics of empathy as the issue of proximity effects. I perceive Keen to refer to a sort of empathy which is easily affected by the effects of proximity, but this is not the sort of empathy this thesis involves itself with. This thesis proposes that there is one type of empathy, defined as reflective empathy, which is not as easily prone to these proximity effects. The definition of the concept which this thesis will refer to is by Elisa Aaltola:

> Reflective empathy consists, first, of perceiving or feeling the emotions and subjectivity of another […]. Second, it spurs from intentionally reflecting on them on the basis of our own emotions, attitudes, beliefs, intentions and other aspects of our mental repertoire. The important thing to note here is that we do not simply let those emotions, attitudes and beliefs affect the contents of empathy (which they always will, to some extent, as the experiences of others are coloured by those of our own and are interpreted in light of what we feel, what we know and how we perceive), but we participate in this process *reflectively*, paying attention to what we know of or feel with another and what sort of mental contents of our own impact our judgement or experience. In short, we empathize and then adopt a metaperspective into the process of empathy. (Aaltola, *Varieties of Empathy* 131)

I therefore choose to refer to Keen's described form of empathy as a type of unreflective empathy, which stands in contrast to Aaltola's reflective empathy, and Gruen's entangled empathy which is a specific expression of such reflective empathy. These are the types of empathy this thesis discussion will engage itself with.

Finally, it is important to make it clear that this thesis is not meant to be a study of all the ways in which literary works can promote empathy, or a study of narrative techniques which promote empathy. Rather, I aim to show how the four selected works specifically promote empathic engagement and reflection on the ethics of human-animal relations in its readers. The thesis is a study of a selection of literary texts ethically engaged in human-animal relations. In the context of non-human animals, the concept of reflective empathy

> …means focusing attention on whether one is projecting or, say, resonating, what sorts of factors may remain hidden with the type of empathy one has chosen and how interference or embodied engagement could add to the situation. One may also become aware of how much one projects humanizing notions onto animals or how emotionally detached one seeks to remain, how given emotions (say, a belief in species hierarchies or, at the other end of the spectrum, species equality) bears an effect on how much (or little) importance one is willing to give to the contents of empathy. (Aaltola, *Varieties of Empathy* 133)

In other words, the thesis's focus is not on narrative techniques which promote empathy in readers; instead, the focus is placed on how literary texts can bring awareness to readers about their own processes of empathizing, which "…may prompt the cultivation of one's ability and willingness to empathize with other animals in a more varied, honest, extended, well-grounded way and enable the noting and eradication of various, often culturally produced prejudices that disable empathy towards pigs, bees and goats" (Aaltola, *Varieties of Empathy* 133).

Being Other

Throughout the thesis, I vary between two uses of the word "other". While one use of the word refers to the regular "other", the other variant is capitalized and spelled "Other". Although there are many ways in which capitalized Other is used as a conceptual term within the fields of philosophy, psychology, ethics, colonialism, gender and feminist studies, I am not referring to any of these specific conceptual uses of the term when choosing to capitalize the word. By capitalizing the word, I mean to put emphasis on the term being different from its normative use. When choosing the capitalized Other, I am referring to seeing "the other", a single being or a group of beings, as intrinsically different from and alien to oneself.

For this understanding of Other, a certain distance is required between self and Other to induce perceptions of the Other being alienated and intrinsically different from oneself. The reader does not perceive the perspective of Other to be easily accessible or effortless to imagine. Therefore, empathic engagement becomes central. Being Other means being someone so different that we need to gain insight into their lives by actively imagining the world from their perspective. Through literary works, empathic engagement and the narrative imagination can help us achieve this.

As all four works discussed in this thesis relate to the term Other in different ways, it becomes an important part of the discussion. Protagonists Rotpeter, Gulliver and Rosemary are all cast in the role of being Other, while Costello illustrates how inhabiting the perspective of Other, specifically an animal's perspective, can alter our world views and ethical actions. Through their individual experiences with the concept of Other, the characters become alienated and marginalized by the societies they live in. Being Other means being outside the normative society which defines itself as being distinct and different from, or opposite to, that of the Other.

For this thesis, the concept of Other is specifically related to being a non-human animal, also including Rosemary's hybrid self which includes a significant part of non-human animal culture stemming from her ape sister. By emphasising the alternate use of other/Other, I attempt to bring awareness to the existence of alternative perspectives which the reader can inhabit through his sympathetic imagination, which can be educational, informative, and ethically influential to his world view.

Non-human animals are in most ways widely accepted as comparable, and in some ways even parallel, to human animals in terms of species capacities and ways in which we experience life on earth as sentient beings. I therefore argue that the differences between human and non-human animals are of degree, and not of kind. It is therefore interesting that despite such similarities, non-human animals are nevertheless deeply established as Other to human animals in human society. The duality of the similarity and difference in this relationship provides a space for reflecting upon human-animal relations. It is also suited for reflecting upon the meaning of what it is to be human or to be animal in a human world, a world which is built upon a denial of human animality and understanding of the non-human animal as Other to human animals.

Narrative ethics

As this thesis seeks to explore the connection between fiction literature and the ethics of how non-human domesticated animals are living their lives and being treated in a dominantly human world, it is linked to narrative ethics: I will show how literary fiction texts can create ethically informed arguments concerning the treatment and consideration of non-human animals, as well as how we human animals can best coexist with non-human animals in an ethically informed manner. Yet although narrative ethics is a relevant term in this discussion, the thesis is not focused on exploring narrative ethics specifically. There is a difference between literary ethics and narrative ethics as defined by James Phelan. While literary ethics is "…broadly concerned with the relation between literature and moral values", "…narrative ethics is specifically concerned with the intersection between various formal aspects of narrative and moral values" (Phelan, "Narrative Ethics", paragraph 9). This thesis seeks to do both and therefore is not clearly aligned with either of these two areas of ethical studies, but rather combines them. The aspect of narrative ethics which this thesis does engage with is the manner in which

> Narrative ethics explores the intersections between the domain of stories and storytelling and that of moral values. Narrative ethics regards moral values as an integral part of stories and storytelling because narratives themselves implicitly or explicitly ask the question, "How should one think, judge, and act—as author, narrator, character, or audience—for the greater good?". (Phelan, "Narrative Ethics", paragraph 1)

Phelan specifies four areas of narrative ethics that can be the focus of studies: "…(1) the ethics of the told; (2) the ethics of the telling; (3) the ethics of writing/producing; and (4) the ethics of reading/reception" (Phelan, "Narrative Ethics", paragraph 2). For this thesis, it is mostly the ethics of reading/reception which receives attention, but not exclusively. Phelan explains that this area of narrative ethics contains

> Questions about the ethics of reading/reception [that] focus on issues about audiences and the consequences of their engagements with narratives. [...] What, if any, are the ethical obligations of the audience to the narrative itself, to its materials, and to its author? What, if any, are the consequences of an audience's success or failure in meeting those obligations? Does reading narrative help one become a better, more ethically sound, person? (Phelan, "Narrative Ethics", paragraph 6)

The thesis discusses in particular the effects reading a narrative potentially has upon the ethical perspectives of the reader, as well as the potential consequences for the reader in succeeding or failing to meet the ethical obligations of the text. Despite this connection to narrative ethics, I argue that the thesis also engages itself equally in a general relation between literature and moral values. Thus it connects to both areas of study at various points throughout the discussion.

While the terms introduced so far are particularly relevant to the problem I will discuss in the thesis, I also need to briefly identify and introduce some more general literary terms that I use in the following discussion.

Narrative and narrative distance

My understanding of narrative is linked to, and aided by, definitions given by Mieke Bal and Ernst van Alphen. For Bal, storytelling is "the presentation in whatever medium of a focalized series of events" (Bal 37). She identifies two properties of storytelling that make its ethical aspects more specific: "It concerns others, and it is always, at least in part, fictional" (37). All elements of Bal's definition prove relevant to the following discussion, which, as I have said already, concentrates on fictional texts. Emphasizing narrative's temporal dimension, Van Alphen finds that "narrative can be seen as an existential response to the world and to the experience of that world" (Van Alphen 68). Narrative, he observes, has functioned as "the

medium of identity" (68). One reason why I find this definition of narrative helpful is that the phrase "existential response" can be linked not only to the implied author but also to the narrator and even, particularly if the author uses a first-person narrator, to one or more characters who may also be engaged in acts of narration.

As regards narrative distance, I agree with Jakob Lothe that "if narrative fiction is unusually flexible and can present events and conflicts with great intensity, it constitutes itself through a series of distancing means" (Lothe 35). Most narrative fiction involves both a temporal distance (a distance between the act of narration and the events that are narrated) and a spatial distance (a distance between the narrative situation and the place where the events unfold). However, I am particularly interested in variants of *attitudinal* distance, that is, the different levels of insight, judgements and values linked to, and represented by, the implied author, the narrator, the character and the reader. Thus, when I refer to "distance" I usually mean attitudinal distance. Such distance is essential to create literary (and rhetorical) effects such as irony.

Perspective and voice

I have noted above that being Other means being someone so different that we need to gain insight into their lives by imagining the world from their perspective. In narrative theory, "perspective" is often linked to, and contrasted with "voice". As Gérard Genette was the first to observe, while perspective replies to the question: who sees?, voice replies to the question: who tells? (quoted from Lothe 41). It is important that, as Genette emphasizes, the narrative perspective can vary even though the voice remains constant. Perspective operates in close contact with narrative distance, and it is one of the ways in which the implied author can create narrative empathy.

I would like to add that, as I use perspective in this thesis, the term is a good example of a narrative term that is also relevant to the thematics of a literary text, and especially the ethical questions which the text can invite, and even force, the reader to reflect on. As I have implied above, I do not think that reading literature necessarily makes us better persons. But I do believe that reading and reflecting on the texts to be discussed in the following chapters can improve what Hanna Meretoja calls our "perspective awareness" (Meretoja 136). The ethical dimension of such awareness bears a relation to narrative fiction's aesthetic aspect as well as its possible human rights aspect.

Implied author and narrator

The last term which is relevant to clarify before I start discussing my chosen texts is that of the implied author. To clarify the relevance of the term, I use Wolf Schmid's explanation in *The Living Handbook of Narratology*:

> The concept of implied author refers to the author-image evoked by a work and constituted by the stylistic, ideological, and aesthetic properties for which indexical signs can be found in the text. Thus, the implied author has an objective and a subjective side: it is grounded in the indexes of the text, but these indexes are perceived and evaluated differently by each individual reader. We have the implied author in mind when we say that each and every cultural product contains an image of its maker. (Schmid, "Implied Author", paragraph 1)

When I refer to the implied author I am thinking of just such an "image" grounded in what Schmid calls "the indexes of the text". I will also sometimes refer to the text's author, by which I mean the historical person who wrote the text. By referring to author *or* implied author, the thesis acknowledges the difference between the image of the author evoked by the text and the historical author himself or herself. The implied author needs to be distinguished from the narrator, the narrative agent in the text. As Schmid observes,

> The implied author is not an intentional creation of the concrete author and differs categorically in this respect from the narrator, who is always an implicitly, or even explicitly, represented entity. The implied author belongs to a different level of the work; the implied author stands for the principle behind the fabrication of a narrator and the represented world in its entirety, the principle behind the composition of the work [...]. The implied author has no voice of its own, no text. Its word is the entire text with all its levels. Its position is defined by both ideological and aesthetic norms. (Schmid, "Implied Author", paragraph 19)

This means that the implied author is open to being read in different manners, to be understood differently by different readers. The implied author is always partly created in the mind of the reader through processes of observation and interpretation of the text. This thesis therefore gives an *interpretation* of the implied author, and not the implied author as such, as that would be an authority the thesis cannot claim. I also interpret the text's narrator, but, as Schmid says, this entity is represented in the text in a manner the implied author is not. As Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan puts it, the narrator is "The agent which at the very least engages in some activity serving the needs of narration" (Rimmon-Kenan 88–89). As I link the phrase "needs of narration" to the activity of the implied author, I consider the narrator as an instrument, a narrative tool, in the service of the implied author. This point applies both to a first-person narrator, who typically combines the functions of narrator and character since he

or she is engaged in the plot, and a third-person narrator, who is outside the plot (though by no means neutral in relation to it).

Lastly, I wish to clarify an aspect of the implied author which is especially relevant to the works examined in the thesis by Kafka, Swift and particularly Coetzee. It is not unusual for authors to treat their works of fiction literature as experimental mindscapes for extreme world views, beliefs and ways of experiencing life which they wish to put to the test. The implied author in the two works by Swift and Coetzee in particular provides the reader with some very provocative perspectives on the relation between human and non-human animals, as well as on the concept of humanity. I do not consider these perspectives as belonging to the historical author, but to the implied author.

Before moving on to the first chapter of the thesis' discussion of the literary works, I will briefly recapitulate the thesis's problem statement. The purpose of the thesis is to explore the connection between fiction literature and the ethics of the human treatment of the domesticated non-human animals who live their lives in constant relation to human society. The four selected literary works which will be discussed are all examples of texts which in some way engage themselves topically on the effects of the species dichotomy between human and non-human animals. By looking at these texts, I aim to show how such literary works can successfully make ethically natured arguments about the lives of non-human animals, whose lives are at the mercy of the ethical considerations and choices of human society. I will argue that all four selected texts make interesting and thought-provoking arguments about the relation between human and non-human animals, including how human society could increasingly accommodate non-human animal lives in a more ethically informed manner.

The thesis is organized with four chapters and a conclusion. Each of the four chapters is dedicated to one of the four literary works which the thesis examines. The first chapter discusses Kafka's "A Report to an Academy", with an emphasis on its representation of how processes of humanization and domestication impact the lives of non-human animals, and the sacrifice of animality demanded by a purely anthropocentric human society. Considering Kafka's short story as highly original and remarkably relevant, I find that "A Report" may suggest a "way out" which does not require humanization of non-human Others as the only plausible solution.

The second chapter is a discussion of Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*, a text which engages with the thesis topic with an emphasis on the importance of world view in personal ethical development, also highlighting the importance of the connection between form and

content. The chapter will argue that, as Coetzee presents his view as a sophisticated narrative, the dominant use of standard philosophical discourse in the discussion of animal ethics is potentially limiting. The reason is, I claim, that this discourse tends to limit our reflections on animal ethics in ways which prevent us from achieving the kind of profound ethical insight and changed attitude needed to improve our treatment of non-human animal lives.

The third chapter, a discussion of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, focuses on the use of perspective in relation to ethical thinking, and the importance of perspective in how we perceive other species and ourselves in relation to them. Inhabiting alternate perspectives can be significant for our ethical thinking in that it may contribute to the formation of what Meretoja calls "perspective awareness". By creating awareness of alternative perspectives as well as, and in addition to, the perspective we already inhabit, *Gulliver's Travels* prompts critical reflection on what it means to be human or non-human in Gulliver's world.

The fourth and final chapter will discuss Fowler's *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*. Central to this chapter is the focus on how the novel illustrates a human-animal relationship through a form of empathic engagement which Gruen describes as entangled empathy. As discussed in this introduction, I believe the concept of entangled empathy to be ethically instructive in the case of human relations to the non-human sentient world, suggesting how human animals could approach, and reconsider, our relations to the world of non-human animals. Concluding the thesis, I bring together, and build on, points and conclusions made in the four previous chapters.

1 Humanizing the Animal in Kafka's "A Report to an Academy"

Franz Kafka's short story "A Report to an Academy" is his first narrative told from the perspective of an animal, and is the story which possibly has attracted the most interest, out of all his animal tales, among those from various academic fields interested in questions related to Animal Studies. "A Report" is a story about the capture and transformation of the narrator protagonist Red Peter (translated, from German *Rotpeter*) from his previous life as non-human ape to his current life as human ape. The story's narrative is a speech performed by Rotpeter himself, reporting on his arduous journey towards humanity to a scientific academy whose members ironically remain silent throughout the story.

Kafka signals through the evident fictional form of the narrative an expectation and need for readers to interpret the text. As with Kafka's other works, the short story "A Report" is no exception in that it has inspired a variety of interpretations. Given the vast secondary literature on the topic of Kafka and his animal tales, the use of this literature in this chapter is necessarily highly selective. I will only briefly mention two influential readings of "A Report" which have affected the way in which the story is commonly read. As Kafka, who was Jewish, first published the story in a Zionist magazine, it comes as no surprise that it has "…traditionally been interpreted as an allegorical account of the attempt of Jews to assimilate into Western society" (Goodbody 18). Other interpretations similar to this one tends to read the story as a satire on colonial subjects or about self-alienation from society in general. The second manner in which the story is commonly read is as a satirical critique of humans and human society seen through the eyes of the Other – here represented by Rotpeter as a non-human animal outsider. Both interpretations relate to a thematics of being in a state of subjugation and otherness, alienation, perceivably inescapable assimilation, and the potential personal sacrifice related to being integrated in and belonging to a human society. These aspects can be understood as common ground in most of the readings of "A Report", including the reading presented in this chapter.

1.1 Animal victimhood

Kafka's text acknowledges and bears witness to animal victimhood by means of Rotpeter's speech to the academy. I am inclined to read the speech as a testament to the sacrifice of animal life involved in becoming human. Rotpeter as a first-person narrator cannot help but appear deceived, or intentionally deceiving to the reader, as he fails to recognize or admit the unjustness of the brutality he suffers from his human captors. During his time aboard the captors' ship, he is held in a painfully small cage which he describes to the academy:

> The whole construction was too low for me to stand up in and too narrow to sit down in. So I had to squat with my knees bent and trembling all the time, and also, since probably for a time I wished to see no one, and to stay in the dark, my face was turned toward the locker while the bars of my cage cut into my flesh behind. (Kafka 197)

The captive animal who is suffering a "severe wound" at his hip, is forced to crouch down, putting additional strain on his body. The scene leaves a horrific imprint on the reader's mindscape of this torturous and undeniably inhumane manner in which Rotpeter is treated (Kafka 196). In spite of this, Rotpeter remains emotionally detached from his traumatic experience, and proceeds to explain, immediately after parting with this piece of information to his audience, that,

> Such a method of confining wild beasts is supposed to have its advantages during the first days of captivity, and out of my own experiences I cannot deny that from the human point of view this really is the case. But that did not occur to me then. (Kafka 197)

Rotpeter's ironic response becomes a subversive strategy to trigger the reader to reflect upon this passage. Rotpeter's exaggerated emotional detachment and reason, his sophisticated rhetoric and academic manners at this point become parodic of the notion that these qualities are unique and characterizing of human beings. Implicitly he also presents his barbaric treatment as a human feature, thereby rendering animals morally superior. Kafka exposes human cruelty through Rotpeter's speech, which the reader will recognize as likely true. The text therefore approximates to a deconstruction of the human/non-human animal dichotomy of human superiority in general, and perhaps in morally concerned matters especially. Irony and parody are favoured tools for subversive ends, and Kafka's text is laced with both techniques to the point of absurdity. A further example of this is presented when Rotpeter goes on to recall the relation to the captor he refers to as his "teacher", and how he was treated by him:

> …to the credit of my teacher, he was not angry; sometimes indeed he would hold his burning pipe against my fur, until it began to smolder in some place I could not easily reach, but then he would extinguish it with his own kind, enormous hand; he was not angry with me, he perceived that we were both fighting on the same side against the nature of apes and that I had the more difficult task. (Kafka 202)

Were this man his teacher, then Rotpeter has utterly failed to grasp the lesson taught. The treatment made by men aboard the ship towards Rotpeter is characterized by cruelty, neglect and indifference. They are at best indifferent to his existence and humoured by his attempts to communicate and connect with them. Prior to Rotpeter's transition into human society, his story illustrates to the reader how he is inhabiting designated roles as an ape in human society; the confined zoological object, and the schnapps-drinking performance animal. It is therefore ironic that his perceived "way out" of the situation, essentially is no different from what he is already doing:

> …I soon realized there were two alternatives before me: the Zoological Gardens or the variety stage. I did not hesitate. I said to myself: do your utmost to get onto the variety stage; the Zoological Gardens means only a new cage; once there, you are done for. (Kafka 203)

Rotpeter seems to operate under a false sense of agency of what he can achieve by humanizing himself. Whether he is deluded or simply desperate one cannot conclusively state. To the reader, his situation does not seem greatly improved by the incredible effort, pain and sacrifice involved in his humanizing process. Additionally, it once again becomes difficult not to perceive the implied narrator Rotpeter as deceived. First, he demonstrates an inability to recognize his failure in never proceeding any further than as a variety stage performer after he has become "human". Second, although Rotpeter states directly to the members of the academy that he is "…not appealing for any man's verdict, I am only imparting knowledge, I am only making a report", the fact that he nevertheless reports to a human scientific academy made up of human scientists indicates that he still somehow is responsible to this authority, and that humans indeed are the authority between human animals and non-human animals in human-animal relations (Kafka 204).

1.2 Species similarities

Part of the most important potential of Kafka's text in regard to its morally transformative potential lies in how, by transforming himself from ape to human, Rotpeter emphasizes to the reader through a juxtaposing effect the physical and moral closeness between the species.

By extension, this prompts the reader to question the legitimacy of human superiority over animals, especially concerning moral aspects. In his speech, Rotpeter expresses his view on humanizing himself: "I repeat: there was no attraction for me in imitating human beings; I imitated them because I needed a way out, and for no other reason" (Kafka 203). The success of his imitation presupposes a closeness both in physiology and cognitive abilities for the imitator to pass as human. Apes are often referred to as cousin to the human in terms of species likeness, and although non-human animal behaviour is widely accepted as comparable, or even parallel, to that of human animals, they are also deeply established in human society as Other to humans. This duality of similarity and difference makes for a splendid space of reflection upon human-animal relations, including what concepts of humanity and animality may entail.

An important thing to note on this aspect of similarity and difference is some scientific inaccuracies that make the reader suspect Kafka's text is predominantly focused on human matters. When Rotpeter is in his cage aboard the ship, he discovers a gap in it which he describes as "…not even wide enough to stick one's tail through…" (Kafka 197). Tails are a distinguishing physical feature of monkeys. Apes, including humans, do not have tails – only monkeys have tails. In addition to this, Rotpeter makes a reference at the beginning of his speech which brings to mind another physical feature also not present in chimpanzees:

> …to put it plainly: your life as apes, gentlemen, insofar as something of that kind lies behind you, cannot be farther removed from you than mine is from me. Yet everyone on earth feels a tickling at the *heels*; the small chimpanzee and the great *Achilles* alike. (Kafka 195-196, my emphasis)

Although Rotpeter describes it as "…so easy to imitate these people", he cannot pretend the presence of a tail or an Achilles tendon, neither of which is part of chimpanzee physiology (Kafka 201). The passage could also be understood as Kafka hinting at our animal heritage as the Achilles heel of humanity as a concept. Our animal origin is the weakest and most vulnerable aspect of the idea of human superiority – a concept whose intactness is reliant upon denying the existence of human animality.

Later in Rotpeter's story, his speech centres on the humanizing process he has subjected himself to:

> And so I learned things, gentlemen. Ah, one learns when one has to; one learns when one needs a way out; one learns at all costs. One stands over oneself with a whip; one flays oneself at the slightest opposition. My ape nature fled out of me, head over heels and away, so that my first teacher was almost himself turned into an ape by it, had soon to give up teaching and was taken away to a mental hospital. Fortunately he was soon let out again. (Kafka 203)

Kafka's 'Report' encourages the reader to question the process, as well as the structures, through which one becomes human, in light of the effects such humanizing processes have on both human and non-human animals. This particular part of the text is interesting in relation to the effect Kafka imagined that the existence of Rotpeter as a human ape may have had upon the humans he meets. First of all, the reader knows by now to suspect "teacher" and "teaching" to possibly mean something rather more sinister than what one initially would think. Rotpeter's last "teacher" abusively provided him with liquor and cigarette burns. The next teacher, his first teacher after his time aboard the ship, ends up in a mental hospital. This may be rooted in a confrontation of the proximity between ape and human which Rotpeter may have induced.

Such a confrontation could have world-shattering potential, as the human conception of itself and the world is built upon the denial of human animality, and of the animal as essentially Other and different to humans. Simply put, humans may be submitted to mental hospitals if they are no longer in their right mind or suffering insanity. The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'insane' as being "In a state of mind which prevents normal perception, behaviour, or social interaction" (OED). The reader may easily imagine how the teacher could come to recognize the similarities between himself and Rotpeter. Were he to revise his perceptions and treat the ape Rotpeter as an equal, human society around him would likely interpret this change as the teacher having a "state of mind which prevents normal perception, behaviour, or social interaction." Perceptions like sanity and insanity are dependent on shared normative behaviour and conceptions about the world. Attempting to defend an ape's right to be considered human, or insisting on your own "apeness", rendering yourself to an animal state, was problematic at the time the story was published, and still is, although to a lesser degree. The teacher's hypothetical acceptance of his proximity to the ape may even be more of an offense to society than Rotpeter's road to humanity, due to its degrading nature. From a human perspective, human traits in animals have overwhelmingly positive connotations, like intelligence, rationality, creativity, ingenuity and so on. Animal traits in humans are on the contrary heavily connoted with negative characteristics like being brute, violent, beastly, barbaric and uncivilized. A human who has "descended" into animality could, seen from this perspective, be in need of restoration to his or her previous state, and cognitive therapy at a psychiatric hospital would be the quintessential human solution to this problem.

1.3 Sacrificing animality

As previously mentioned, Kafka acknowledges, and bears witness to, animal victimhood through the tale of Rotpeter. The transformation from ape to human can be read as an allegory for human enlightenment through the loss of our animality. The seed of Rotpeter's transformation was his realization after being captured that his only way "out" was to "…stop being an ape" (Kafka 198). He differentiates between the concept of freedom and the "way out" he refers to, stating that

> …freedom was not what I wanted. Only a way out; right or left, or in any direction; I made no other demand; even should the way out prove to be an illusion; the demand was a small one, the disappointment could be no bigger. (Kafka 199)

The way out Rotpeter found for himself was the way of humanity. The moment he steps out from his preverbal existence as an ape animal into the world of human speech is a pivotal moment in his story:

> …I could not help it, because my senses were reeling, called a brief and unmistakable 'Hallo!' breaking into human speech, and with this outburst broke into the human community, and felt its echo: 'Listen, he's talking!' like a caress over the whole of my sweat-drenched body. (Kafka 203)

Now part of the human society in which experience is understood and mediated through language, he feels the need to explain his audience that "Of course what I felt then as an ape I can represent now only in human terms, and therefore I misrepresent it…", thus drawing attention to the difficulty of representing animal experience in human terms (Kafka 198). Axel Goodbody understands Kafka's use of irony as a potential key to getting around this issue:

> A fundamental issue which writers and critics have grappled with is whether and how we can represent animal lives in human language and culture without illusion or distortion, since language and culture inevitably project a world understood according to our scale, interests and desires. Irony has been acknowledged as playing a key role in addressing this problem, as a means of making readers critically aware of our discriminatory othering of animals. (Goodbody 9)

The irony in "A Report" is one of the means through which Kafka makes Rotpeter a parodic representation of humans, and a subversive image of the human seen through animal eyes. The narrative encourages the reader to investigate anthropocentrically submerged or denied aspects of the human-animal relation through its utilization of irony and parody. Kafka's

writing attacks anthropocentric perceptions, as well as anthropocentric pursuits enforcing a human-animal dichotomy which victimizes the animal on behalf of a constructed human superiority. By foregrounding our animality, Kafka prompts the reader to engage with, and to critically examine, normative perceptions of what it means to be human, as well as challenge the soundness of the common belief in a dichotomy between human animals and non-human animals.

Through his deconstruction of the idea of what it means to be human, and the idea of human superiority especially concerning animals, Kafka suggests a closer kinship across species than what is often acknowledged, which, I argue, implies a non-human animal right to greater moral consideration by human animals. Kafka's narrative sparks our narrative imagination and allows the reader to inhabit a perspective awareness outside the human – the animal body of Rotpeter. The duality of difference and similarity between humans and animals in "A Report" becomes a site for reflection upon human-animal relations, and for possibly renegotiating and reimagining what concepts of humanity and animality entail. Kafka's text exemplifies a particular kind of critical anthropomorphism which,

> …combining affect with critical awareness of irreducible difference, … can do justice to the agency of the non-human, and serve as a tool for questioning the complacency of dominant human self-conceptions. Anthropomorphic attentiveness to the other and imagination of their perspective may ultimately be the best means at our disposal to bring readers to act on behalf of animals' perceived needs and desires… (Goodbody 21)

Kafka's writing is a shining example of the role animal writers can have in negotiating change in our perception of the place of humans in the world. I am inclined to read the narrative of "A Report" as an attempt to extend our moral considerations across species divides through provoking ethical reflection and sympathy and/or empathy for the ape Rotpeter. Kafka's critical anthropomorphism subverts and deconstructs traditional and established notions which we as humans routinely rely on to make sense of the world, to understand our place in it, in order to maintain our sense of human superiority. By reflecting on these aspects of "A Report", we understand how the text illustrates the potential which lies in narrative fiction to make a substantial contribution to issues regarding human-animal relations.

1.4 Literary form as ethical statement

According to Martha Nussbaum, "…one's beliefs about the ethical truth shape one's view of literary forms, seen as ethical statements." (Nussbaum 18). In Kafka's "A Report", I am inclined to read Rotpeter's choice of formulating and conveying his report to the Academy as indicative of his ethical perspective, and therefore interesting to discuss in relation to this thesis. Rotpeter's report is essentially the story of how he came to be the human ape he is today. Through his telling he presents the reader with a view of life, and the telling itself and the

> …selection on genre, formal structures, sentences, vocabulary, of the whole manner of addressing the reader's sense of life—all this expresses a sense of life and of value, a sense of what matters and what does not, of what learning and communicating are, of life's relations and connections. Life is never simply *presented* by a text; it is always *represented as* something. (Nussbaum 5)

Although Rotpeter's choice of form is somewhat dictated by the norms of academic discourse, I argue that the way he is choosing to express himself within that constrictive form reflects his perception of what is important for knowing and understanding. I agree with Nussbaum's claim that "…any style makes, itself, a statement: that an abstract theoretical style makes, like any other style, a statement about what is important and what is not, about what faculties of the reader are important for knowing and what are not" (Nussbaum 5). In the case of Rotpeter, the telling of his view of life cannot possibly be conveyed through a constricting and dictating academic form without becoming untruthful or disguised. Additionally, Rotpeter is not sure the language which he is forced to express his story through can even adequately express what he thinks and feels about the situation he is in. By omitting the fear, anger, sadness and all the other powerful emotions he must have felt after entering the permanent company of human animals, he is making a statement to the reader about what is important and what is not. The reader must therefore wonder if Rotpeter is indifferent to whether the reader grasps the full truth of this story or not. Is Rotpeter indifferent because he does not believe us to be capable of grasping the full truth of his story? I am inclined to read Rotpeter's report as Rotpeter dismissing the importance of empathic engagement from his audience. Through his lived experiences with the human animals he has met, Rotpeter has concluded to dismiss empathy as a quality of importance to human society, and therefore proceeds with his choice of discourse accordingly. Although "A Report" is not explicitly focused on the concept of empathy, I believe this brief point illustrates that the text is not void

of engagement with the term, which thus becomes both interesting and relevant to the discussion of this remarkable narrative.

1.5 Conclusion

Kafka's "A Report to an Academy" is a short but impactful text, which is hard to avoid coming across when researching and exploring the topic of animals and ethics within the field of literature. Of the three other texts discussed in this essay, "A Report" plays a significant role in *The Lives of Animals* as well as *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*, two novels both published after "A Report".

There is a clear ethical dimension to Kafka's story, as discussed in this chapter, which makes it productive as a text through which this thesis can explore the connection between fiction literature and the ethics of how non-human domesticated animals are living their lives and being treated in a dominantly human world, as is central to the thesis statement. Kafka's narrative method enables the reader to inhabit a perspective outside oneself, namely the perspective of Rotpeter, the human ape which acts as parodic representation of the human as being seen through the eyes of the animal Other. By use of this parodic shift in perspective, Kafka's narrative encourages the reader to look closer. The unusual perspective becomes an invitation to investigate anthropocentrically submerged or denied aspects of the relationship between humans and non-human animals inhabiting the same world. If the reader accepts this invitation, it becomes clear that Kafka's writing seeks to critique anthropocentric views and perspectives, and further, to discourage anthropocentric pursuits which enforce a human-animal dichotomy. This dichotomy, the story suggests, brutally victimizes the animal on behalf of a constructed human superiority. We are therefore forced to revise not only our ideas of what it really means to be human but the solidity of our common belief in a natural and unchangeable dichotomy between human animals and non-human animals.

In addition to muddling our perception of what it means to be human, Kafka illustrates through his narrative how a literary text can make ethically informed arguments about the treatment, and consideration, of non-human animals. He chooses to do this especially by blurring the species dichotomy and emphasizing forms of kinship across the species divide. By deconstructing selected normative parts of what one would think being human entails, including the concept of human superiority in relation to animals, Kafka is implying a closer kinship across the species divide between apes and humans. Despite there being only two

species represented in the story, it does not seem out of order to understand this story's message to extend further than just these two species. By implying a significant degree of kinship, I understand Kafka to also imply an overlooked non-human animal right to greater moral consideration by human animals.

Through the human ape Rotpeter, the consistent theme of duality is set. Rotpeter has become human, but still lives in his ape body. His being is both animal and human, and therefore also a hybrid creature not belonging to either side of the species dichotomy. The duality of difference and similarity between humans and animals in "A Report" becomes a productive site for reflection upon human-animal relations, which provides opportunities for renegotiating and reimagining what concepts of humanity and animality may entail. By following Rotpeter's journey towards humanity, Kafka encourages his readers to question the processes and structures through which humanization occurs, and the effects they have upon both human and non-human animals. Although Rotpeter's speech is a testament to the sacrifice of animal life involved in becoming human from an animal perspective, Kafka suggests, as I hope to have shown, a closer kinship across species divides than some human animals are comfortable with entertaining the idea of. In light of this, perhaps our kinship with animals must force us to address the negative effects of humanizing processes also for human beings. By submitting ourselves to strict humanizing processes, we alienate not only the non-human animals, but parts of our own natural beings. A key question asked in this thesis is how humans can accept to live together with animals when we fail to accept our own animality. How can we coexist with non-human animals in a respectful and ethical manner when as a society we refuse, or are unable, to live with the presence of human animality? Kafka's response to this question is that we should accept our undeniable kinship to non-human animals, and therefore recognize them as part of our community of sentient empathic beings similarly experiencing life. Thus we have clear ethical responsibilities towards non-human animals. If we fail to accept this kinship, the very concept of humanity becomes as empty as Rotpeter's bottle of schnapps.

2 The Value of Literature and Impact of Form: Discourse and Worldview in Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*

> The symbolism of meat-eating is never neutral. To himself, the meat-eater seems to be eating life. To the vegetarian, he seems to be eating death. There is a kind of gestalt-shift between the two positions which makes it hard to change, and hard to raise questions on the matter at all without becoming embattled. (Midgley 27)

The genre of J.M. Coetzee's landmark book, *The Lives of Animals*, is a hybrid one, being part fiction and part academic lecture. The protagonist Elisabeth Costello, a renowned author, is invited to Appleton College to hold a lecture on a topic of her choice. Narrated from the perspective of her son John, her lecture, which is a discussion of human cruelty towards animals and animal rights, discomfits her audience by "…breaking with expected academic norms and provoke awkward, emotional exchanges" (Mascia-Lees and Sharpe 84). Costello's fictional audience, consisting of family members and scholars, are sometimes outraged, sometimes embarrassed, by her argumentation in favour of animal rights, as well as her scepticism about and downright hostility towards reason as a premise for the discussion of such matters.

To understand Costello's willingness to discomfit her audience, to invoke embarrassment, awkwardness and outrage by speaking out against animal cruelty, it is rewarding to read her in light of feminist scholar Sara Ahmed's term "Feminist Killjoy", only in Costello's case, one would alter this term to "Vegetarian" or "Vegan Killjoy", a term first introduced by sociologist Richard Twine (Potts and Armstrong, in Gruen 399). During the dinner Costello is invited to, her son John sits in his seat, dreading the moment one of the scholars might ask his mother about her vegetarianism. She will then, he imagines, produce "The Plutarch Response", after which he alone will have to repair the damage. He recites this response for the reader:

> "You ask me why I refuse to eat flesh. I, for my part, am astonished that you can put in your mouth the corpse of a dead animal, astonished that you do not find it nasty to chew hacked flesh and swallow the *juices* of death-wounds." Plutarch is a real conversation-stopper: it is the word juices that does it. Producing Plutarch is like throwing down a gauntlet; after that, there is no knowing what will happen. (Coetzee 38)

In Ahmed's "Killjoy Manifesto", she too describes a table, and how the situation of "killing joy" here might arise:

> We begin with a table. Around this table, the family gathers, having polite conversations, where only certain things can be brought up. Someone says something you consider problematic. You are becoming tense; it is becoming tense. How hard to tell the difference between what is you and what is it! You respond, carefully, perhaps. You say why you think what they have said is problematic. You might be speaking quietly, but you are beginning to feel "wound up," recognising with frustration that you are being wound up by someone who is winding you up. In speaking up or speaking out, you upset the situation. That you have described what was said by another as a problem means you have created a problem. You become the problem you create. (Ahmed 1)

This offers an alternate view on the situation, a perspective we can imagine Costello to possess. Costello can certainly be understood as a "willful subject", such as Ahmed's "Killjoys", and it illuminates something which possibly is obscure or unclear for the reader of Coetzee's text, namely her willingness to cause unhappiness:

> To be willing to go against a social order, which is protected as a moral order, a happiness order is to be willing to cause unhappiness, even if unhappiness is not your cause. To be willing to cause unhappiness might be about how we live an individual life (not to choose "the right path" is readable as giving up the happiness that is presumed to follow that path). (Ahmed 2)

Costello does not comply to the requirements of putting on a show of happiness, for anybody's sake, not even her own family. Her unhappiness signifies her resistance to coming to terms with the injustices she speaks out against. It signifies a wilful resistance to compliance or submission to the normative script of how we as humans relate to non-human beings.

Nearing the end of the text, after Costello's poetry seminar, John asks, "Do you really believe, Mother, that poetry classes are going to close down the slaughterhouses?," to which she replies "No". John, an assistant professor in physics and astronomy, responds by asking, "Then why do it?" (Coetzee 58). Why do it, that is indeed the question, agrees Marjorie Garber, the only literary critic among Coetzee's four Princeton respondents published in *Lives*. Garber ends her critical response to *Lives* by elaborating:

> Poetry makes nothing happen, W. H. Auden once wrote. But is that true? And must it be true? What has poetry to offer, by way of solace, except analogy, except the art of language? In these two elegant lectures we thought John Coetzee was talking about animals. Could it be, however, that all along he was really asking, "What is the value of literature?" (Coetzee 84)

This chapter's discussion will continue where Garber's ended, considering *The Lives of Animals* as a text which on a thematic level incites readers to resist cruelty to animals, while on a formal level also inciting readers to resist and reconsider the conditions under which this appeal is made. Coetzee questions the matter of representation by presenting a tension between the importance of the subject matter, but equally also the importance of scepticism about the nature of how the matter is conveyed. The encouraged scepticism in furthered by the inbuilt resistance in the text to its political message, thus implying "…a critical reception on the readers' part, over and above the sympathy they may have for Costello's cause" (Pughe 377).

2.1 Metafictional strategy

To create this tension between thematic and formal levels, Coetzee utilizes a metafictional form, and he attempts to destabilize our normative perceptions by means of the subversiveness often inherent in metafiction. In *Lives*, Coetzee examines the relation between fiction and reality as he draws them closer by blurring their boundaries.

Coetzee gave "…the two parts of his text as the 1998 Tanner lectures at Princeton University, thereby imitating his fictional alter-ego, Elisabeth Costello, a celebrated Australian writer invited to speak at an American university" (Pughe 377). In addition, the resistance Costello receives from her fictional audience is partly mirrored in the "Reflections" by Coetzee's four Princeton respondents also published in *Lives*. While Garber shared her appreciation of Coetzee's aesthetics in her response, Peter Singer presented his defence of philosophy while paying no attention to Coetzee's metafictional strategy, while Wendy Doniger and Barbara Smuts fall into the biographical fallacy, responding as if Costello and Coetzee were the same person. This contributes to increasingly blurred boundaries between actual and fictional, between fiction and philosophy.

By undermining the conventional basis of existence, metafiction aims to unsettle and frustrate our assumptions about fiction and reality. The reader is then invited to revise her ideas about the philosophical position of what reality allegedly is. Writers opting for this narrative style aspire to draw attention to "…how the meanings and values of that world have been constructed and how, therefore, they can be challenged or changed" (Nicol 248). Metafiction draws attention to the structures of fiction in order to illuminate its constructedness and artificiality. It foregrounds its own nature as a fictional construct, often in

an ironic manner. While *Lives* is concerned with advocacy for animal rights on a thematic level, its metafictional form is conceivably equally important for its success as a work of ethical force.

"What is the value of literature?", asks Garber. "Why do it?", asks John. By reading *Lives*, one gathers that the ethical force of the sympathetic imagination which narrative fiction can rouse in its readers is at the heart of this question. But at the same time, Coetzee points to issues in ethical use of such literature, inciting in his readers a scepticism about the media of such art. This is a scepticism about the use of language and the issue of representation in matters relating to animals specifically. By means of the metafictional form, Coetzee seems to suggest a self-aware and self-reflective type of mimesis as the best option to deal with issues related to representing animals and animal experience in human language.

2.2 Kafka and the sympathetic imagination

In the first part of the book, titled 'The Philosophers and the Animals', Costello gives her radical speech at the college. Central to her speech is Franz Kafka's short story "A Report to an Academy", which centres on the ape Rotpeter's speech to his fictional academic audience. Costello opens the speech by stating that she identifies with Red Peter, noting that this comparison is not intended ironically: "It means what it says. I say what I mean. I am an old woman. I do not have the time any longer to say things I do not mean" (Coetzee 18). This remark could be seen in light of her emphasis on the "sympathetic imagination", a term which I will come back to. She continues the comparison between herself and Red Peter by bringing to mind a particular aspect of Kafka's ape:

> Red Peter was not an investigator of primate behavior but a branded, marked, wounded animal presenting himself as a speaking testimony to a gathering of scholars. I am not a philosopher of mind but an animal exhibiting, yet not exhibiting, to a gathering of scholars, a wound, which I cover up under my clothes but touch on in every word I speak. (Coetzee 26)

Red Peter, we know, has a literal wound stemming from the gunshot he suffered when he was captured. His metaphorical wound, which he covers up with human clothes and turns away from the audience, is his animality, represented by his fur and tail. Red Peter's animality touches every word he speaks, and he speaks only to conceal it, to preserve it, as his only "way out". Costello's metaphorical wound is her knowledge of the horrors of how animals are treated, and the horror of the human indifference to this suffering, a horror which leaves her

feeling alienated from a world she cannot come to terms with. When asked by Garrard, head of the college, whether her choice to become vegetarian came from a moral conviction, she bluntly answers, "No, I don't think so, […] It comes out of a desire to save my soul" (Coetzee 43). Perhaps this is what Costello most of all shares with Red Peter: an attempt to save one's soul, whatever she takes the concept of 'her soul' to signify. Surely it cannot be too closely related to Descartes's concept of soul, the man whom Costello has cast as the villain of her speech's narrative.

Further on in her speech, Costello compares German scientist Wolfgang Köhler's book *The Mentality of Apes*, written about his experiments on apes, with Kafka's ape story. As Kafka's story was published shortly after *The Mentality of Apes* in 1917, Costello hints that Kafka may have read it and responded to it: "…I would like to think he did [read it], and the chronology makes my speculation at least plausible" (Coetzee 27). Costello explains to her audience that

> Both Red Peter and Köhler's apes then underwent a period of training intended to humanize them. Red Peter passed his course with flying colors, though at a deep personal cost. Kafka's story deals with that cost: we learn what it consists of through the ironies and silences of the story. (Coetzee 27)

Central to Kafka's story, in Costello's view, is an imaginative engagement with animal experience. Costello utilizes Kafka's short story as an alternative to Köhler's scientific discourse. She uses Kafka's story to illustrate her faith in literature and in the artistic/sympathetic imagination. Kafka's sympathetic imagination becomes the remedy to Köhler's discourse. In her introduction to *Lives*, Amy Gutleben touches upon Costello's concept of the sympathetic imagination:

> Our sympathetic imaginations, she argues—to which poetry and fiction appeal more than does philosophy—should extend to other animals. The fictional form, in Coetzee's hands, therefore appears to have an ethical purpose: extending our sympathies to animals. If fiction does not so extend our sympathies, then neither will philosophy. If it does, then perhaps philosophy will follow. (Gutleben in Coetzee 4)

Costello's emphasis on the sympathetic imagination is continued in her poetry seminar, where she considers the sympathetic imagination as exclusively capable of empathizing with animals, in contrast to other forms of discourse. Costello's reading of Kafka illustrates her faith in literature and the sympathetic imagination. But in Kafka's text, Red Peter himself questions whether human language is even capable of rendering his "ape truth": "Of course

what I felt then as an ape I can represent now only in human terms, and therefore I misrepresent it…" (Kafka 198). This is Coetzee's irony at Costello's expense. Kafka's strategy of writing is to use a language that continually questions itself, "…figuring the truth by its failure, just as Red Peter can only imply the "ape truth" by disguising his true being in human speech" (Pughe 384). Costello does not seem to realize just how conscious Kafka's text actually is of the limits and problematic aspects of mimesis, and she therefore seems to somewhat misinterpret the text's perspectives on literature's ability to be close to actual life, and not just as a form of mimesis. Costello's reading of Kafka and of the poetry by Rilke and Hughes are, ultimately, fictions, reminding us ironically that the contact between human animals and non-human animals in the poetic imagination is always and essentially a matter of representation.

2.3 Critical mimesis

The scepticism incited in the readers by the implied author in *Lives* is largely a scepticism about unconscious, as in not self-aware, use of language and literature to represent animal experience. Although Costello acknowledges the difficulty of bringing something of the inchoate, like the incomprehensible experience of animal being, into the orderly world of speech, she does not seem to reflect much upon the possibly insurmountable inadequacies of language to do so at all. Costello puts all her faith in the power of the poets, observing that

> If I do not convince you, that is because my words, here, lack the power to bring home to you the wholeness, the unabstracted, unintellectual nature, of that animal being. That is why I urge you to read the poets who return the living, electric being to language; and if the poets do not move you, I urge you to walk, flank to flank, beside the beast that is prodded down the chute to his executioner. (Coetzee 65)

This statement also illustrates her faith in primitivist aesthetics and experience. Because art/literature is one of the most prominent aspects of *human* nature, art/literature about non-human animals must necessarily simultaneously challenge and reinforce the discourse of species. In Coetzee's narrative, this combination of challenge and reinforcement is ironic and inherently problematic.

The solution Coetzee seems to suggest is a sort of self-reflective and self-critical mimetic writing. Mimesis refers to the imitative representation of the real world in art and literature, and the metafictional form of *Lives* results in a questioning of the suitability of

mimesis as a tool to make sense of animal experience, of the lives of animals. Despite this, the self-critical form of mimesis may be our best option when it comes to the demanding task of representing animal experience. Perhaps this is what *Lives* attempts to do. In the text, Costello's perspective becomes a marked contrast to the self-conscious mimesis of Coetzee's aesthetics. The function of Coetzee's self-critical writing is to discuss, and to work towards,

> …exploring the ethical problem of how to speak for the animal other, avoiding, on the one hand, the anthropocentrism or ethnocentrism of "ecology managers" (Costello's own term […]) and, on the other, the dangers of aesthetic primitivism. (Pughe 389)

Coetzee fully recognizes the value of the ethical force of the sympathetic imagination which fiction texts can rouse in readers, and it is exactly because he values literature as an instrument of ethics that he chooses to write a metacritical text like *The Lives of Animals*. The book's function is, in addition to promoting animal rights, an attempt to draw attention to the value of, and limitations to, literature as a means of representing animal experience. The text admits the inadequacies of human language to "speak for the animal other" and to represent animal experience, as well as pointing to writing which exists outside of a human perspective, flowing only from some state of pure primitivist experience, as a myth. Coetzee suggests to us Kafka's form of continually self-questioning writing as a more appropriate strategy to fairly represent animal experience. If the quest of representing animals and animal experience within the system of human language and culture shall be pursued, self-aware and self-reflective mimetic art seems to be the most favourable manner in which to proceed.

2.4 The importance of form

One of the most important aspects of Coetzee's novel in relation to the topics of this thesis is its form. In *Lives*, Coetzee illustrates how form is directly connected to content, and how form can be used to shift our perspectives as readers of the text. Perhaps even more importantly, form can crucially influence *how* we think. This thesis argues that form is an essential reason why narrative fiction texts are often better suited than moral philosophy texts when it comes to informing and influencing how we choose to treat and co-exist with non-human animals. The discussion will come back to examine the details of this claim.

So far in this chapter, I have characterized *Lives* as a hybrid text, part fiction and part academic lecture. I have referred to the text as metafictional in its form, aiming to unsettle and

frustrate our convictions about fiction and reality. I have described it as a self-reflective mimetic piece of writing, and as writing which seeks to explore animal representation. While all of these descriptions can be seen as truthful, they illuminate the difficulty of categorizing Coetzee's text. Coetzee has created a text which purposefully defies obvious categorization or a clearly belonging to either the realm of philosophic or literary texts. Coetzee's intentional craft of such a text creates an emphasis to the reader on the hybridity of the text. I am inclined to read this emphasis as indicating that traditionally established concepts, forms and patterns are will prove insufficient and irrelevant to where Coetzee wishes to take us with his text. Our lines of thought must inhabit a different perspective, a perspective Coetzee does not believe standard philosophical argument can provide, in order to consider animal ethics in a manner he deems sufficient. By purposefully challenging established philosophical concepts and scholarly formulaic discussions of ethics through the form of his text, Coetzee seems to be wishing to shake his audience, including philosophers and literary scholars, out of comfortable complacency and routine. He illustrates the importance of the connection between form and content, especially related to ethics. Yet it is important to note that there is no *one* message or content to be communicated, as the text is open-ended and different interpretations can be made.

This opens up the issue of whether we can speak of any "content" of the text at all, as discussed by Flynn in Leist & Singer (317–336). As the content of *Lives* lends itself to many different readings, in contrast to most philosophical arguments, Flynn points out that "If fiction in general, and *Lives* in particular, opens itself up to a number of different readings, then there is no one, unproblematic version of its "content"", and she therefore holds that it would be a mistake to "…assume that it is a straightforward matter to lay out what *Lives* is about, to assume that we can talk of any "primary message" of Coetzee's" (Flynn, in Leist & Singer 320). However, to explore content, and especially the connection between form and content, there *must* be some perceptible content to discuss. All such investigation works under the presumption that there exists some content for us to hold on to. Despite the text's open-ended nature as interpretive entity, there are certain aspects we can assume from the formal features of *Lives* which attract our attention in relation to animal ethics towards certain ideas. While the first aspect is Coetzee's (and Costello's) rejection of standard moral philosophical argumentation, the second is the particular nature of Coetzee's ethical perspective.

Regarding Coetzee's rejection of standard philosophic argument, there is a part of the text which seems especially relevant to exemplify his perspective on the limitations philosophic inquiry can pose on our minds. After having lectured for some time about

Kafka's Rotpeter, Costello goes on to talk about Sultan, a real ape who she believes may have inspired Kafka to write his own ape story. Sultan is held captive and subjected to scientist Wolfgang Köhler's experiments, which resulted in his published book *The Mentality of Apes* (1917) about his time with Sultan. Costello talks of these experiments, invoking the scene where, one day, Köhler suddenly stops feeding Sultan and instead hangs a bunch of bananas high up inside Sultan's cage:

> Sultan knows: Now one is supposed to think. That is what the bananas up there is about. The bananas are there to make one think, to spur one to the limits of one's thinking. But what must one think? One thinks: Why is he starving me? One thinks: What have I done? Why has he stopped liking me? One thinks: Why does he not want these crates any more? But none of these is the right thought. Even a more complicated thought—for instance: What is wrong with him, what misconception does he have of me, that leads him to believe it is easier for me to reach a banana hanging from a wire than to pick up a banana from the floor?—is wrong. The right thought is: How does one use the crates to reach the bananas? (Coetzee 28)

Sultan solves the food-puzzle, but in vain, as the next day there is simply a new twist to be solved regarding how he shall acquire his food:

> At every turn, Sultan is driven to think the less interesting thought. From the purity of speculation (Why do men behave like this?) he is relentlessly propelled toward lower, practical, instrumental reason (How does one use this to get that?) and thus toward acceptance of himself as primarily an organism with an appetite that needs to be satisfied. […] …a carefully plotted psychological regimen conducts him *away* from ethics and metaphysics toward the humbler reaches of practical reason. (Coetzee 29)

I am inclined to interpret this segment about Sultan and Köhler as a comment on the manner in which standard philosophic inquiry leads us to think in certain terms. Köhler's method of inquiry ultimately leads Sultan to adapt a certain way of thinking, not because it was interesting or natural to Sultan, but because he was forced to do so. In the same manner, Coetzee may understand standard philosophical inquiries to lead us "…*away* from ethics and metaphysics toward the humbler reaches of practical reason". Being a chimpanzee, Sultan's world view would have been primarily socially oriented, and he therefore fittingly asks questions reflecting this type of world view. Similarly, our own world view leads us to ask certain questions which reveal our perspectives. Therefore, Coetzee can be understood as emphasizing the importance of world view in relation to ethical inquiries. World view is central to Coetzee's perspective on ethics. Our ethical actions stem from our world view, and it is our world view which needs to change, much more importantly then whether or not we wear leather shoes or belts (like Costello points out that she does). Focusing on the ethics of

isolated actions is too easy, too superficial, and too limited in relation to the animal question. In Coetzee's view, we are required to go much deeper than this in our consideration of human-animal relations for significant ethical change to occur.

The main way Coetzee attempts to stir the world view of his audience is through his invitation to share the perspective of Costello, with an emphasis on the word *invite*. Although Costello's is the perspective one could expect readers to most closely engage with, one might also choose to understand the story through her son John's critical and unsympathetic external perspective. Presupposing that the reader identifies with the perspective of Costello, there are consequentially matters she is encouraged, or discouraged, from agreeing to. Regarding conventional philosophic discourse, Costello demonstrates her disregard for it throughout her narrative, and the reader therefore becomes encouraged to examine the limitations she identifies in such discourse. The reader is also encouraged to question the arena in which animal ethics are to be discussed, as Costello's perspective does not understand standard philosophic discourse to be exclusively suited, or maybe even suitable at all, for the discussion of our relation to non-human animals. As Costello refuses to articulate principles and proscriptions to her audience, or to reduce the complexities of life morality to polemics and prescriptive philosophy, her speech makes an argument for her audience implying that, "…while showing that one *can* indeed argue about the treatment of animals, the book suggests the possibility (through Costello) that philosophical argument elicits the more narrow and less interesting thoughts on the subject of our treatment of animals" (Flynn, in Leist & Singer 329).

The sometimes prescriptive and dogmatic nature of (moral) philosophical argumentation, revolving around established, and therefore sometimes confining, truths and concepts, leads Coetzee (and Costello) to reject it. Coetzee recognizes the complexity of our moral lives in a way he finds that standard philosophical argumentation does not, which is also a reason why he refuses prescriptive ethics, and why Costello only is "resorting" to use of philosophical language (Coetzee 22). The view argued in *Lives* on standard philosophical argumentation is that it seems too limiting to develop the perspectives on ethics which Coetzee, through Costello, seeks for us to inhabit. In addition to bringing forth the limitations of language in relation to the animal issue, he is also illuminating how established concepts, ideas and philosophic discourse can act as limitations in our discussion of animal ethics.

For the discussion of animal ethics, a literary text such as *Lives* has special potential connected to its form. Because of its open-ended nature, and because there is no *one* content or argument to evaluate or debate, in contrast to many standard philosophical texts, we as

readers are required to do a different kind of interaction with the text. Flynn argues that the fact that we "…must do more than evaluate a standard philosophical argument is connected to the fact that we are invited to push past familiar philosophical concepts", and that this "…requires […] a thinking that involves an engagement with the characters of the story. This sort of engagement would not be necessary if new formulations of well-worn philosophical concepts were the crux of the intended message of the novella" (Flynn, in Leist & Singer 326). This means that as readers of literary texts like *Lives* we must bring more than our rational minds – we must also bring our emotions and our empathic engagement with the characters' lives in order to open ourselves to the changes in perspective and awareness which such literature can offer, and by extension also include these faculties in our involvement with the lives of animals.

2.5 Alternative animal ethics

The concept of ethics has been important in this discussion of Coetzee's work, and is indeed central to the thesis as a whole. In relation to Coetzee, his critique of philosophy as the preferred or most suited discipline for discussing animal ethics has been discussed, as well as how he raises the ethical issue of how to speak for a non-human animal other through literature, and his focus on ethics as something deeply and importantly tied to our world-views.

As her contribution to Leist and Singer's collection of essays on Coetzee's ethics as presented in his literary works, philosopher and moral psychologist Elisa Aaltola explores Coetzee's alternative animal ethics, specifically from the novels *Lives* and *Disgrace*. Aaltola's discussion is most illuminating and offers a distinctive discussion of the animal-related ethics of Coetzee's work. In particular, Aaltola discusses Costello's ethical stance on human-animal relations in *Lives* in great detail.

The first aspect of Aaltola's discussion that I will relate to my argument is her emphasis on the difference between domesticated and wild animals as ethically significant. Second, Aaltola sees Costello's perspective as contesting the belief in anthropocentric perspectives as sole sources from which meanings are derived, because Costello derives meaning from a perspective apart from true anthropocentrism. Lastly, I will elaborate on Aaltola's critique of Coetzee's text as lacking in representing animal subjectivity.

A common denominator of all four novels discussed in this thesis is their focus on human relations to *domesticated* non-human animals. Often, animals are discussed as a homogenous group to which ethics can be applied universally. Some literary works of fiction, non-fiction and philosophy make a point of the diversity of animals, like the significance of species, when discussing ethical matters. However, few texts make note of the difference, and relevance, of whether the animals in question are wild or domesticated, and the importance of how this relates to animal ethics. Aaltola is adamant in her opinion on the relevance of domestication, stating that

> If we are to start exploring our moral relation with other animals, it is surely those animals that we have the deepest effect on that ought to be given the priority. In fact, it strikes as deceitful to place all emphasis on the wild animals, who are relatively independent from us. […] Coetzee forces us to look at a reality we would rather not pay attention to. Even the ape Costello talks of is not a wild creature, but one tormented by humans. Via Costello, **Coetzee asks us to imagine not independent animal existence but the lives of animals under human rule.** (Aaltola, "Coetzee and Alternative Animal Ethics" 127-128, my emphasis)

The human unwillingness to explore the unveiled nature of our most intimate relations to non-human animals is reflected in our aversion to examine the lives of animals which are most clearly determined by their relation to our human society, namely the domesticated animals. Because their lives are so vulnerable and entirely in our hands, the ethical responsibility of humans towards these non-human animals is even greater than that towards wild animals.
A perhaps even stronger argument to underline the importance of giving priority to ethical consideration of domesticated animals is the skewed biomass distribution of mammals on earth, today heavily influenced by the radical ecological effects of humanity. A mere four percent of the world's mammals are wild animals. Humans make up approximately 46 percent, and the rest is made up of domesticated animals (Bar-On, Phillips and Milo).
To give priority to those four percent of all mammals as opposed to the fifty percent which are domesticated animals, seems hard to justify. In *Lives*, Coetzee illustrates the inclination towards wild animals in literature. For her second lecture, this time on the topic of poetry, Costello chooses to discuss Rilke's "The Panther" as well as "The Jaguar" and "Second Glance at a Jaguar" by Ted Hughes. Concerning Costello's choice, her unsympathetic son John thinks to himself, "Jaguar poems are all very well, […] but you won't get a bunch of Australians standing around a sheep, listening to its silly baa, writing poems about it" (Coetzee 55). On this matter, Aaltola states that "Most invitations to understand other animals concentrate on the wild animal. Poets pay heed to lions, deer and wolves, not the piglets born

in farrowing crates or the chicken cramped to battery cages…" (Aaltola, "Coetzee and Alternative Animal Ethics" 127). It is not only the poets who are guilty of this selective focus on sexy jaguars and panthers, as they are reflecting in their work an attitude which penetrates the whole of our human society. Global organizations working to better the conditions of non-human animals, like the World Wildlife Fund, typically advertise their cause with striking images of majestic pandas, polar bears, tigers, elephants and rhinoceroses, with the "piglets born in farrowing crates or the chicken cramped to battery cages" nowhere in sight.
The reminder of their lives and ongoing suffering is too offensive, unwanted, and almost taboo to bring into public discussion. Additionally, it is not at all clear whether there exists any general human consensus on the need for this situation to end. In fact, the state of our society suggests a disturbing degree of human contentment at the existence of these continual horrors, which is the horror referred to by Costello in her lecture. Such horrors are enabled by a "certain willed ignorance", as Costello provocatively puts it in regard to the responses of nearby neighbours to the horrors of the Nazi extermination camp Treblinka, which aims to remove oneself from ethical responsibility. Wilful ignorance relates to such horrors in a manner where "…while in a sense they might have known, in another sense they did not know, could not afford to know, for their own sake" (Coetzee 19). By refusing to partake in such wilful ignorance, Costello also steps out from the anthropocentric perspective, extending her moral consideration to the non-human animal lives which she recognizes as having intrinsic worth and the right to human moral consideration. The price she pays for refusing voluntary ignorance is to live in a world where she must always be at odds with the reality around her:

> Is it possible, I ask myself, that all of them are participants in a crime of stupefying proportions? Am I fantasizing it all? I must be mad! Yet every day I see the evidences. The very people I suspect produce the evidence, exhibit it, offer it to me. Corpses. Fragments of corpses that they have bought for money. It is as if I were to visit friends, and to make some polite remark about the lamp in their living room, and they were to say, 'Yes, it's nice, isn't it? Polish-Jewish skin it's made of, we find that's best, the skins of young Polish-Jewish virgins.' And then I go to the bathroom and the soap-wrapper says 'Treblinka—100% human stearate.'. (Coetzee 69)

Reality seems to Costello a bad dream, nightmarish and without escape or respite. Desperate, she questions why everyone else around her seems to have come to terms with it, and why she cannot do the same. Aaltola attributes this to Costello's fundamentally differing world view, which dictates her ethics and meanings in life. For Costello, "…The meaning is so vivid that it causes suffering and forces Costello to wish she could abandon it—however, at the same

time it is so integral to her being that rejecting it is an impossibility" (Aaltola, "Coetzee and Alternative Animal Ethics" 136). Costello's life therefore represents the possibility of alternative meanings, which challenges the anthropocentric norm.

Although Coetzee's novel is hallmark within fiction literature which relates to animal writing and animal rights, it is still open to critique. With a view to the stance this thesis takes in relation to animal ethics, the text is noticeably lacking in one aspect, specifically representation of the particularity and subjectivity of animal lives and experience. I therefore find myself agreeing with Aaltola's critique that even though Coetzee is not purely generalizing and omitting all details of animals mentioned, he could still

> …benefit from placing more attention on animal particularity. This applies not only because such particularity is crucial if we are to start viewing animals as independent beings with their own identities but also if imagination and identification are to take flight. We cannot identify with the faceless, generic being, and for the animal to truly step on the central stage, she needs to be given an identity. (Aaltola, "Coetzee and Alternative Animal Ethics" 140)

An animal is not simply an animal, and their species and their individual lives matter in an ethical context especially. Maintaining generic categories, according to Aaltola, "…impose anthropocentric attitudes on animals: generalizations erase identities and thus enable human beings to convert animals into property (an act that [Jacques] Derrida calls a "crime")" (Aaltola, "Coetzee and Alternative Animal Ethics" 140). A captive and domesticated ape like Rotpeter is not the same as a free wild chimpanzee living in the African jungles.
A traumatized dog adopted from an animal shelter is not the same as a dog adopted from a responsible breeder. They are specific individuals with individual life stories which shape their wants and needs in life. Ethics cannot be assumed to universally apply to all individuals of one species, and therefore species-based ethics is not ideal. In the chapter discussing Fowler's novel *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*, the importance of animal particularity will be further explored, especially in relation to Lori Gruen's work on empathic engagement with non-human animals. Gruen argues that "Paying attention to the particularities also help us keep in check condescending attitudes, culturally imperialistic judgements, and more pernicious forms of anthropocentrism" (Gruen 12).

2.6 Conclusion

We have seen that in *The Lives of Animals* Coetzee invites us to engage with the topic of non-human animals and the ethical issue of their lives. The animals Coetzee asks us to imagine are not wild animals with an independent existence, but the lives of animals in human society, the domesticated animals. Through protagonist Costello's lecture, the disturbing human unwillingness to explore the unveiled nature of our most intimate relations to our domesticated animals, whose lives are so clearly determined by their relation to our human society and who are entirely in our hands, is the topic of critique and condemnation. Despite the belief, which I share with Costello, that the ethical responsibility of human animals towards these non-human animals is even greater than that towards wild animals, the reminder of these animal lives and their continual suffering seems too offensive and almost taboo to bring into open discussion. In common with Ahmed's "Feminist Killjoys", we become the problem we speak of by going against the social order norm. The state of human society suggests a silent and disturbing degree of contentment at the existence of these continual horrors, which is the horror referred to by Costello in her lecture. It is therefore not at all clear whether there exists any general human consensus of the need for this situation to end, and the unsympathetic perspective of John is perhaps closest to the normative perceptions concerning the human-animal relation.

If John's perspective is the most natural and easy to inhabit for the reader, it is surely not from him the reader will find the perspectives which Coetzee wishes us to adopt. Rather, Coetzee as implied author invites us to inhabit, along with the text's inbuilt resistance against her perspective, the world view of Costello. Costello's world view, which is dominated by the horror of the human indifference towards our treatment of non-human animals, seemingly has more in common with how one would imagine an animal to view our human world than with the perspective of her son John, or the perspectives we imagine as normative or dominant in society. This illustrates how the animal perspective is also central to Coetzee's story, as we have seen it is to Kafka's. For Coetzee, our world view lies at the heart of our ethical choices and moral lives. Costello acts to exemplify for the reader what living in this world would feel like if one *did* radically alter one's world view by becoming opposed to the cruel human treatment of animals and opened one's eyes and emotions to the state of continuing horror which is their lives, the true lives of animals.

Our world view leads us to ask questions which reveal our perspectives. Coetzee is therefore identifying the acute importance of world view in relation to ethical inquiries, and

how we develop ethical standards. As our ethical actions are like apples falling from the tree of our world view, it is our world view which needs to change, much more importantly than whether or not we wear leather shoes, as Costello admits to doing. Coetzee sees much of the philosophical and ethical debate regarding animal ethics as focusing on the ethics of isolated actions, something which reduces the philosophical debate to the reaches of practical matters and inflexible prescriptive solutions. I read the ethical perspective presented in *Lives* as finding this type of discussion as too easy, too superficial, and too limited in relation to the animal question. For significant ethical change to occur, we are required to go much deeper than this in our consideration of human-animal relations. As previously mentioned, Coetzee proposes we do this by radically revising our world view. The problem is that Coetzee does not believe that standard philosophical argumentation to will suffice in helping us achieve this. Standard philosophy seems too limiting to develop the perspectives on ethics which Coetzee, through Costello, asks us to adopt in order to adequately consider animal ethics. By illuminating the inadequacy of our chosen normative discourse to reflect upon, and relate to, our relations to non-human animals, Coetzee points to poetry as a solution.

Literary works like *Lives* demand we bring more than our rational minds to the table. We must also empathically engage with the lives of the characters so as to open ourselves to the changes in perspective and awareness which such literature has the potential to offer us, and by extension also include these faculties in our involvement with the lives of animals.

The use and value of literature in relation to non-human animals and ethics, which is central to this thesis, is given an original and forceful response in *Lives*. I understand Coetzee to propose that poetry has the freedom to provide a mode of understanding which requires that we bring more than our rational minds to receive what is being communicated.

Through empathic engagement, our world views can become altered. Like Gruen's concept of entangled empathy, the right kind of literary work can produce similar effects as it too "…directs our attention to the things that need moral response, can provide context and understanding about what the right response would be, and, […] can provide us with a more accurate picture of who we are and what our responsibilities to other might be" (Gruen 56). Such empathic engagement has ethically transformative potential. Although the process Gruen describes requires an individual internal process triggered by genuine empathic engagement with a non-human Other, I propose that certain works of narrative fiction, like *Lives*, can produce a similar effect in its readers by guiding them through the process of entangled empathy through the narrative and empathic entanglement with its fictional characters. Entangled empathy "…is a way for oneself to perceive and to connect with a

specific other in their particular circumstance, and to recognize and assess one's place in reference to the other", and "This is a central skill for being in ethical relations" (Gruen 67). The very purpose of the state of entangled empathy is to inhabit alternative perspectives and possibly alter one's world view, which in Coetzee's opinion is the root of our moral thinking and actions. Similar to how reflective empathy makes us enter a process where "…we empathize and then adopt a metaperspective into the process of empathy" (Aaltola, *Varieties of Empathy* 131), Coetzee's *Lives* makes us think about the text in a way that prompts us to adopt a metaperspective on the process of how we reflect and philosophize on the topic of animal ethics.

3 Contrasting Perspectives in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*

Jonathan Swift's classic novel *Gulliver's Travels* can be understood as a relevant text within the field of literary Animal studies, and more specifically within Human-Animal studies. Swift's novel is particularly interesting because if offers the reader an astonishingly modern, relatively progressive, and (then) novel perspective on issues which literary Animal studies are now – more than two centuries later – engaged, specifically the issue of species boundaries and human animality. Satirists such as Swift have long targeted humanistic pretentions, but the newness of his ideas, the period during which he wrote, and his stimulating blurring and complication of our conceptions of human and non-human animal make *Gulliver's Travels* a particularly interesting choice with a view to this thesis's problem statement.

Gulliver's Travels has a well-established significance as political satire, with a vast scholarship devoted to the text. This chapter will discuss Part IV of *Gulliver's Travels* – "A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms" – within the context of Human-Animal studies, focusing on the representation of humanity and animality, as well as exploring how the text complicates and blurs the boundary and relationship between these two concepts. Throughout his journeys in the novel, Gulliver faces many different beings that he cannot make fully sense of. More than any other creature he meets, the Houyhnhnms resist being defined as either human or animal, as to Gulliver they are seemingly both and neither at the same time. This experience eventually leads him to radically revise and redefine his perception of self and family, friends and the extended human community. In this sense, the novel serves to highlight the permeability and constructedness of species boundaries and the human-non-human animal dichotomy, through subverting the normative roles of humans and animals.

This aspect of the novel is well recognized by critics of the novel. Building on and proceeding from their studies, this chapter will further explore the manner in which Swift's treatment of the species boundary confuses and complicates it, while also prompting reflection on the nature of being human and/or non-human animal. The chapter will discuss how Swift's emphasis on perspectival variation serves to acknowledge and illustrate to the reader the importance of perspective in how we perceive other species, as well as positioning ourselves in relation to others. By means of constant alteration and contrasting of perspectives, *Gulliver's Travels* provides a setting which favours critical reflection, inviting

the reader to imaginatively inhabit alternate perspectives and thus, in Meretoja's phrase, improving our "perspective awareness" (Meretoja 136).

In Part IV of the book, titled "A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms", Gulliver is set ashore and abandoned by his own crew and ship, to fend for himself on an unknown island. Shortly after his arrival, he meets the first creature inhabiting the lands – the Yahoos. The Yahoos are human creatures, referred to by the Houyhnhnms as Yahoos. Gulliver presents these human-like creatures to the reader as animalistic brutes with no pretence of reason or language, while the Houyhnhnms – who, in Gulliver's eyes appear as horses – are in fact the governing civilized creatures, possessing both language and reason. Within the few first pages of text after Gulliver's arrival in Houyhnhnm-land, important questions are already raised. What is the status of the Yahoos? What about the Houyhnhnms? Are they humans, or animals, or both?

This is not the first instance in the novel where normative roles of human and non-human creatures are frustrated, and where Swift's constant and insistent altering of perspectives, both physical and mental, literal or figurative, acts as a potential catalyst in altering perceptions of human-animal relations. In Lilliput, part I of the novel, Gulliver finds himself to be a giant among a people of miniature humans. Conversely, in part II Gulliver becomes the allegorical Lilliputian among the Giant populace of Brobdingnag. In fact, the four parts of *Gulliver's Travels* follow a contrasting pattern in terms of construction and plot. The story proceeds in a specific order, so that each part is the reverse of the preceding one. Gulliver himself is first big in size, next small, then he is perceived to be wise, only to finally perceive himself as ignorant in the last part of the story. This pattern also follows in relation to the structure of the civilizations he encounters, and the specific forms of government in those countries. In part I the civilization is complex, but in part II he discovers a civilization which is simple. In part III the country is scientific in its orientation, and part IV tells of a natural organization of civilization. The governments are perceived by Gulliver to be alternately worse and better compared to the government of his homeland Britain. Additionally, the way Gulliver perceives the different civilizations and cultures is also part of this predictable pattern of contrast and altered perspectives. After having visited the land of Lilliput in part I, Gulliver comes to perceive the Lilliputians as both vicious and corrupt. In part II, the king of Brobdingnag, to whom Gulliver has voyaged, expresses his view of Europe and its population to be similar to Gulliver's perception of the Lilliputians. In part III, Gulliver sees Laputans as unreasonable, so predictably in part IV the Houyhnhnms come to see humanity exactly like this. Gulliver's perceptions are consistently mirrored by his

antagonist in the following part of the story, but the more interesting aspect of his change in perceptions, in regard to the topic of this thesis, is his gradual descent towards the deep misanthropy of part IV.

After having arrived in Lilliput, Gulliver is surprised and shocked by the viciousness of the Lilliputians. From this first journey to his last, something has changed in Gulliver, but the biggest change still happens during his stay with the Houyhnhnms in part IV. In this part of the book, Gulliver comes to liken the behaviour of the animalistic Yahoos he meets to the nature of all people he knows, including himself. Gulliver slowly changes from the good-natured optimist he is in part I, to an absolute misanthrope after his journey to the land of the Houyhnhnms in part IV. Regarding Gulliver's relation to humanity, and his development of misanthropy, the fourth part of the book is the crucial part.

Swift's frequent altering and contrasting of perspectives in *Gulliver's Travels* invites the reader to imaginatively inhabit alternate perspectives, something which enables reflection and extension of empathic consideration across the species dichotomy. It is especially Gulliver's stays in Lilliput, Brobdingnag and in Houyhnhnm-land that are most relevant and useful related to the topic of non-human animals, although this chapter will focus the discussion on Gulliver's time among the Houyhnhnms in part IV.

3.1 Ethical conflicts, species and morality

Regardless of one's position on the matter of blurring or deconstructing the species boundary between human and non-human animals, it is important to recognize that the issue is connected to human ethics. As previously mentioned, Swift has created a narrative which furthers an engagement of the reader's narrative imagination into specific questions about the ethics of our relationship to non-human animals. This is enabled especially by Swift's altering and contrasting of roles and perspectives to create an obvious *difference* from normative states and expectations in the novel.

Martha Nussbaum's theory on ethics and narrative is interestingly related to Swift's narrative strategy. Nussbaum promotes a humanist ethics which "…acknowledges otherness as important for ethical engagements with narrative, but it emphasizes the benefits of connecting across difference" (Phelan 539, cf. Nussbaum). In part IV of *Gulliver's Travels*, Gulliver is markedly sceptical about the idea and the benefits of "connecting across difference". Indeed, the manner in which Gulliver speaks of the Yahoos and the Houyhnhnms

makes us doubtful of the existence of any prospects he might possess towards appreciation and a welcoming attitude to perceived difference.

Ethical conflicts in narrative fiction may induce reflection and raise inquiries into the ethics presented by the text in its readers and is therefore a useful technique when the text relates to ethical issues. Such reflective activity may also make the reader aware of her own ethical views. If, when reading, the reader discovers a disagreement between her expectation and the events the text presents her with, an ethical conflict may be presented. Such ethical conflicts are in *Gulliver's Travels* often characterized by two things. First, they are instances of subverting human and non-human animal roles or perspectives; second, they become conflicts by operating with species-based and non-species based absolute morality simultaneously:

> Species-based morality makes love of mankind primary; to desire the destruction of the human race is, in this scheme, *axiomatically* wicked and no moral defence of such a desire is even conceivable. Non-species-based morality, on the other hand, recognizes no such practical axiom […]. It permits one to step back, even from one's own species, and to form an ethical judgement on it. (Nuttall 56)

With this in mind, one would presuppose that the purely rational species of the Houyhnhnms would prescribe to a non-species-based morality. Surprisingly, however, they do not. During Gulliver's first encounter with the Houyhnhnms, he becomes utterly mesmerized by their rational appearances, and swiftly concludes that the morality of the Houyhnhnm-kind is superior to that of humankind. Interestingly, the horses' morality "…can be construed as thoroughly species-based, and at a level it simply mirrors the species-based presumptions of human beings" (Nuttall 57). This is evident in how the Houyhnhnms blankly disregard the Yahoos as mindless brutes without much intrinsic worth and hold themselves as the superior and most complete species in their world. If a Houyhnhnm were to fully realize its "nature", that nature would manifest itself as stoic rationalism. The Yahoos, which by inevitable extension include humankind, manifest their "nature" as animalistic brutes. From this the reader gathers that Gulliver's idea of an ideal humankind is represented by the realized Houyhnhnm. The realized Yahoo on the other hand could be interpreted as Swift's exposed opinion on human nature and humankind, which is almost comically misanthropic.

The way in which the Houyhnhnms treat Gulliver is also very similar to how humans have treated apes and other intelligent non-human animals, and predominantly continue to do. Having already engaged with Kafka's ape Rotpeter in this thesis, it becomes possible at this point to observe the similarities and compare Gulliver during his stay with the Houyhnhnms

to Rotpeter during his time with the Academy. In common with Rotpeter's academic audience, the Houyhnhnm Master is curious about Gulliver's origin, and like Rotpeter, Gulliver too comes from "…over the Sea, from a far Place, with many others of my own Kind, in a great hollow Vessel made of the Bodies of Trees" (Swift 199). Rotpeter and Gulliver share the position that their masters, the Houyhnhnm and the human academics, have of their unusual traits, as "…they looked upon it as a Prodigy that a brute Animal should discover such Marks of a rational Creature". While Gulliver's Master expresses his desire "…to learn from whence I came, how I acquired those Appearances of Reason, which I discovered in all my Actions, and to know my Story from my own Mouth…", Rotpeter is similarly being invited to give the academics "…an account of the life I formerly led as an ape" (Swift 198) (Kafka 195).

Gulliver and Rotpeter have both attracted their captors' attention and interest by speaking their language. Sitting in his cage in front of the sailor crew come to gawk at him, Rotpeter reports to the Academy how, "…because I could not help it, because my senses were reeling, called a brief and unmistakable 'Hallo!' breaking into human speech, and with its outburst broke into the human community, and felt its echo: 'Listen, he's talking!'…" (Kafka 203). Similarly, Gulliver tells his readers of how, after he has met the first two Houyhnhnms and having heard them speak between themselves,

> …as soon as they were silent, I boldly pronounced *Yahoo* in a loud Voice, imitating at the same time, as near as I could, the Neighing of a Horse; at which they were both visibly surprized, and the Grey repeated the same Word twice, as if he meant to teach me the right Accent… (Swift 192)

In both stories, mastering their captors' language serves as a key to being noticed, and for any sort of inclusive consideration to happen. This sort of narcissistic egocentrism, in which the captors only show signs of interest beyond novelty after the captives have demonstrated a capability for likeness, is the quintessential history of the relationship between human and non-human animals. Only in modern times has some of human society opened its mind to the idea of intrinsic worth of different, even radically different, ways of existing and living in this world.

In addition to their similar positions in relation to their captors, and the similar role language plays in opening up possibilities for them in their captors' societies, there is a third interesting similarity between the two characters. Gulliver and Rotpeter both use clothing to distinguish themselves from other members of their species, and to disguise their respective ape and Yahoo bodies. In the case of Gulliver, "The *Houyhnhnms* […] could hardly believe

me to be a right *Yahoo*, because my Body had a different Covering from others of my Kind" (Swift 199). By never taking his clothes off, he explains how he has "…hitherto concealed the Secret of my Dress, in order to distinguish myself as much as possible, from that cursed Race of *Yahoos*…" (Swift 200). The clothes obscure their connection to animal origin, and it represents a certain presence of shame. Gulliver is clearly ashamed of being Yahoo-like and therefore also animal-like, but it is a shame which he does not have until faced with the Houyhnhnm perception of the Yahoos and of Gulliver's stories of his own people. Through the Houyhnhnm's perspective on his species, Gulliver becomes shameful of being human, and therefore seeks to distance himself from being Yahoo-like and instead become more like the Houyhnhnms.

Much like Gulliver, Rotpeter is also hiding his animal origin by learning language and wearing clothing, but does he feel shame for being an ape? I do not think he feels any shame for his ape origins; rather, he has become a scapegoat for our human shame of our denied animality. Rotpeter must answer to this crime of having animal origin in a hearing-like setting in front of his judges, the members of the Academy. One could theorize that what the Academy really seeks is to destroy Rotpeter as a symbolic Scapegoat in hopes of relieving their own shame, the same shame which they are attempting to inflict upon Rotpeter by making him do his report. Although it is not a central part of the discussion of Fowler's and Coetzee's works, shame is central to their protagonist's stories. Costello is constantly striving to come to terms with being human. She is horrified and ashamed of being human because of humans' treatment of animals and struggles to live with a peaceful conscience among humans. Rosemary is also engaged in a constant battle against shame, and for her that shame revolves around being a monkey-like hybrid being who is not really welcome as she is in human society. That shame is such a relevant aspect of all four works tells us something about the effects of the nature of the species dichotomy. By ignoring the existence of human animality, and by refusing to see characteristics of species as a matter of degree and not as fundamentally different and exclusive, being different will feel shameful and alienating.

Although there are many similarities between Gulliver and Rotpeter, there is one significant difference between the two. Gulliver develops a fascination for his masters, and wishes to live out his days with them, striving to be more like them. As readers we are forced to doubt the sanity of a human wishing such a life. Rotpeter does not express any fascination for, or joy in being part of, human society. He has no choice and is essentially forever a captive in our society. One must therefore conclude that Rotpeter is saner and more human-like in his response to his situation than Gulliver is. Gulliver is equally captive in Houyhnhnm

land but ignores this through self-deception and great misanthropy. He develops a great hate for his species, as the Houyhnhnms comment is characteristic for the Yahoos, "…the *Yahoos* were known to hate one another more than they did any different Species of Animals…", and distances himself from all Yahoo-kind until the point of absolute absurdity (Swift 219).

3.2 Animal languages

Gulliver's stay in Houyhnhnm-land subverts the typical anthropocentric roles of human and animal, especially by means of language. Swift conjures up speaking horses and animalistic "humans" lacking any capacity for language, which becomes an interesting scenario.
Upon meeting the animalistic Yahoos, Gulliver relates to the reader that he "…beheld several Animals in a Field…", observing that

> Their Heads and Breasts were covered with a thick Hair, some frizzled and others lank, they had Beards like Goats, and a long ridge of Hair down their Backs, and the fore-parts of their Legs and Feet, but the rest of their bodies were bare, so that I might see their Skins, which were of a brown buff Colour. (Swift 189)

Gulliver then comes to the conclusion that "Upon the whole, I never beheld in all my Travels so disagreeable an Animal, nor one against which I naturally conceived so strong an Antipathy" (Swift 189). Shortly after having met these Yahoos, Gulliver meets two Houyhnhnms in the same field. He explains to the reader how he

> …took the Boldness, to reach my Hand towards his Neck, with a Design to stroak it, using the common Style and Whistle of Jockies when they are going to handle a strange Horse. But this Animal seeming to receive my Civilities with Disdain shook his Head, and bent his Brows, softly raising up his right Fore-foot to remove my hand. Then he neighed three or four times, but in so different a Cadence, that I almost began to think he was speaking to himself in some Language of his own. (Swift 190)

Gulliver is immediately overcome with enthusiasm and adoration for the rational appearances of these beings and concludes that "…they must needs be Magicians, who had thus metamorphosed themselves upon some design…", thereby categorizing them as something other than non-human animals (Swift 191). The Houyhnhnms remain unimpressed, though intrigued, describing Gulliver as "…a wonderful *Yahoo*, that could speak like a *Houyhnhnm*, and seemed in his Words and Actions to discover some Glimmerings of Reason" (Swift 199). More than anything, it is their apparent capacity for language similar to that of humans which strikes Gulliver as remarkable, reckoning that "…their Language expressed the Passions very

well, and the words might with little Pains be resolved into an Alphabet more easily than the Chinese" (Swift 192). Since the Houyhnhnms do not speak any language Gulliver recognizes, he must endeavour to learn their language in order to make himself understood.
Gulliver spends a year among the Houyhnhnms, and during this time he learns to express himself tolerably well, but communication remains troublesome for Gulliver, as he explains how "…I doubted much, whether it would be possible for me to explain myself on several Subjects whereof his Honour could have no Conception, because I saw nothing in his Country to which I could resemble them" (Swift 205). There is a language barrier originating from the fact that while the Houyhnhnms are perfect rationalists, humans are naturally not. Therefore there are uniquely human concepts like lying, war, greed, "…and a Thousand other Things [which] had no Terms; wherein that language could express them, which made the Difficulty almost insuperable to give my Master any Conception of what I meant" (Swift 206). This difficulty also works in the opposite direction, as the Houyhnhnm culture is rich in concepts which are unfamiliar, and possibly unconceivable, to human minds. Gulliver therefore expresses to the reader that "My only Concern is, that I shall hardly be able to do Justice to my Master's Arguments and Expressions, which must needs suffer by my want of capacity, as well as by a Translation into our barbarous *English*" (Swift 207).

Con Slobodchikoff, professor and director of the Animal Language Institute at Northern Arizona University, is well-known for his research on animal languages, but perhaps not so much for his novel, *Chasing Doctor Doolittle; Learning the Language of Animals*. For those who have not read his academic papers, this novel summarizes some of the most interesting findings and perspectives from his research. In it he states that

> …according to many scientists and linguistic professionals, language is the last gulf that separates us from all other animals. Over time, all of the other barriers have fallen by the wayside. Not too long age, people thought that we were the only tool users, the only ones with culture, the only ones with a sense of self. All that has crumbled as we have found out more and more about other animals […] so all we have left to cling to – that makes us special and separate, that sets us apart from the rest of the natural world – is language. (Slobodchikoff 2-3)

Slobodchikoff's research makes it clearer than ever that when one speaks of human and animal languages, differences are now agreed upon by scholars as *graded* and not defined by a chasm of intellectual capacity that was previously often presupposed.

Slobodchikoff's research and findings on animal language, if such a term should even be used, belong to recent, modern time. It therefore highlights the radicality and great imagination of Swift's text, who wrote his novel in a pre-Darwinian period long before the

then-heretical idea of humans as originating from animals was proposed, let alone widely accepted, and who imagined animal languages long before animal languages were taken seriously by scientists. This remark does not imply, though, that Swift's creation of animal language equals an outright investigation of animal language by Swift.

3.3 Human animality

The Houyhnhnms, greatly admired by Gulliver, serve in the novel as an example of how truly rational humans would appear, thus illuminating the great gap between humans and Houyhnhnms. Gulliver quickly devotes himself to the Houyhnhnm way of life in a religious-like manner, telling the reader how he

> …had not been a Year in this Country, before I contracted such a Love and Veneration for the Inhabitants, that I entered on a firm Resolution never to return to human Kind, but to pass the rest of my Life among these admirable *Houyhnhnms* in the Contemplation and Practice of every Virtue; where I could have no Example or Incitement to Vice. But it was decreed by Fortune, my perpetual Enemy, that so great a Felicity should not fall to my share. (Swift 218)

The Houyhnhnms collectively decide that Gulliver is an unnatural and inferior imitator among Houyhnhnms and too dangerous to live among the Yahoos (he might spread his vices like war and weaponry to them and disturb the peace) and must therefore go back to whence he came. Gulliver is devastated by this decision, but since he knows that the purely rational creatures cannot be swayed by manipulation of emotional or polemic kind, he simply accepts his fate and journeys back to England.

If humans really were truly rational creatures like the Houyhnhnms, we would likely describe ourselves as cold, cruel and passionless beings. A characteristic often attributed as opposite to pure reason, is *passion*. If we suppose this to be a sustainable dichotomy, we might deduce that human passion, being opposite of reason and thereby inextricably connected to our "animality", is that which unlocks our capacity for being virtuous, noble and decent creatures.

The idea of a purely rational being like the Houyhnhnm is terrifying. As void of emotion as a calculator, life among such creatures sounds anything but tempting. Even more terrifying, and shocking, is considering whether Swift in fact would prefer his rational horses to his own kin of animalistic Yahoos. Nuttall quotes from Swift's correspondence with his friend, the poet Alexander Pope, citing: "'I hate and detest that animal called man' […] 'although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas and so forth' […] 'Upon thus great foundation

of Misanthropy […] The whole building of my Travells is erected'" (Nuttall 54). By openly recognizing his own misanthropy like this, Swift makes it clearer that he might have suffered internal conflicts in dealing with his own association to Yahoo-kind – although such interpretations of biographical traces in a fictional text are generally to be avoided. Regardless of Swift, I am inclined to read the personal struggle of Gulliver in *Gulliver's Travels* as representative of the general struggle of Mankind in coming to terms with our partly animalistic nature, as embodied by Swift's Yahoo.

While the narrative presents a struggle between humanity and animality, between reason and passion, there also seems to be a struggle between nature and convention or culture, where culture is in a continuous internal combat with nature in humankind. This process is exemplified by Gulliver who clearly, to everyone but himself, is a Yahoo, but suppresses his kinship due to his desire of a life among the rational horses. This suppression is often explicit, like the instance where he, "…expressed my uneasiness at [the Houyhnhnm] giving me so often the Appellation of *Yahoo*, an odious Animal, for which I had so utter an Hatred and Contempt, I begged he would forebear applying that Word to me…" (Swift 201).

Swift's writing is deeply misanthropic. Thus, it is ironic how Gulliver's tale prompts reflection on the importance of our animality to our idea of what "humanity" is. "Humanity" does not, and probably cannot, exist separate from our "animality". Without our animal-related properties, we would probably not recognize ourselves as having "humanity" at all. It is also worth considering that while the Houyhnhnms are well acquainted with human nature as represented by the Yahoos, they may be entirely unfamiliar with human culture, as represented by Gulliver. If a Yahoo is meant to represent the human nature without language and reason, is the Yahoo also meant to be free of human culture? If so, becoming fully and truly "human" is a process of cultural learning and conditioning. It is then our culture, above and beyond our nature, which makes us fully "human". In human society, we exist as constructed cultural concepts more than as a manifestations of our biological nature. Yet our culture cannot exist separate from our biological bodies and springs from our nature. If it could, that separation would possibly be the ultimate conclusion to the "Bacon-esque" idea of Man taming and conquering nature and all of our other physical realities, even transcending beyond the constricting reality of our own bodies. From the Houyhnhnms' perspective, the human culture which Gulliver has tried to teach them about may be worse than the brutish Yahoo nature, as explained by Gulliver:

> Whoever understood the Nature of Yahoos might easily believe it possible for so vile an Animal, to be capable of every Action I had named, if their Strength and Cunning equalled their Malice. […] …although he hated the *Yahoos* of this Country, yet he no more blamed them for their odious Qualities, than he did a *Gnnayh* (a Bird of Prey) for its Cruelty, or a sharp Stone for cutting his Hoof. But when a Creature pretending to Reason, could be capable of such Enormities, he dreaded lest the Corruption of that Faculty might be worse than Brutality itself. He seemed therefore confident, that instead of Reason, we were only possessed of some Quality fitted to increase our natural Vices; as the Reflection from a troubled Stream returns the Image of an ill-shapen Body, not only *larger*, but more *distorted*. (Swift 209)

Thus, it may be chiefly due to Gulliver's "Quality" he possesses, "instead of Reason", that he is deemed unnatural and a danger to Houyhnhnm society, and consequently banished from their lands.

3.4 Facilitating ethical reflection

A potential to stir ethical reflection in readers is often assigned to narrative fiction. Nussbaum emphasizes in her theory on ethics and literature that only literary narratives of a certain character can "…adequately state certain important truths about the world…" by means of positioning the reader so that she may engage herself in activities for grasping those truths and views presented (Nussbaum 6). In addition to the ability of the author to favourably position the reader, it is also important that the reader is able to interpret written stories independently and is of great significance to the reader's personal potential moral, social and political life (Hillis Miller 3).

These observations, which I find convincing, entail that although *Gulliver's Travels* is ripe with opportunities for triggering ethical reflection and thought, its ethical "success" relies on the reader's ability to interpret the narrative, and to discover the author's "set-ups". Successful interpretation would result in engaging the reader in ethical reflection, or an interpretation that suspends or overlooks the text's ethical aspects, is always a possible outcome as well. The subversion of normative human and non-human animal elements is the aspect of Swift's endeavours which most obviously inspires and invites his readers to engage in activity of ethical reflection. Examples from the novel of this role subversion are plenty. When living in Houyhnhnm-land, Gulliver explains how he sometimes catches small prey by use of "…Springes, made of *Yahoos* Hairs…" (Swift 197), and that his worn garments eventually will have to be replaced and "…supplied by some Contrivance from the Hides of *Yahoos* or other Brutes…" (Swift 200). In human society, the hair and hide of horses and

cows are common in production of brushes, clothes, shoes, furniture and so on, but substituting this with human skins is both monstrous and illegal. Only in the worst horror-stories from the most evil Nazi camps have we heard stories of such use of human skin, and it chills us to our cores to imagine it true. Here Gulliver's very matter-of-factly use of human hair and skin stands out in a shocking contrast to the reader's conventional expectations, and works to further challenge, and possibly deconstruct, the human-animal dichotomy by opening up us to the idea of comparing and contrasting conventions.

Having returned safely to England after his first voyage to Lilliput, Gulliver expresses that he "…would gladly have taken a Dozen of the Natives, but this was a thing the emperor would by no means permit…", so instead he puts "…[his miniature] Cows and Sheep into [his] Coat-Pockets, and got on board with all [his] little Cargo of Provisions.", his only misfortune being that "…the Rats on board carried away one of [his] Sheep; [he] found her Bones in a Hole, picked clean from the Flesh", but he fortunately he "…made a considerable Profit by shewing [his] Cattle to many Persons of Quality…" (Swift 64-66). Gulliver's subsequent journey to Brobdingnag subversively contrasts this episode. He is here captured himself by a giant farmer, and during his captivity he reflects that "…what a Mortification it must prove to me to appear as inconsiderable in this Nation as one single *Lilliputian* would be among us" (Swift 72). Perspectives are changed as Gulliver now inhabits the role of pet animal and object, as the farmer "…considered a while with the caution of one who endeavours to lay hold on a small dangerous Animal in such a manner that it shall not be able to scratch or bite him, as I my self have sometimes done with a *Weasel* in *England*.", and therefore "…apprehended every Moment that he would dash me against the Ground, as we usually do any little hateful Animal which we have a mind to destroy." (Swift 73). Gulliver escapes extermination, but is captured and transported in the farmer's pocket, displayed in exchange for money and amusement at markets and fairs, all without consideration of his rapidly declining health, and – in the farmer's opinion – imminent death. Gulliver is therefore quickly sold, like his own miniature cattle and sheep were, at "…a considerable Profit…" to a "…[Person] of Quality…", namely the Queen of Brobdingnag (Swift 66).

Upon request, Gulliver relates his story to the Queen about his life as the farmer's non-human animal, a "Splacnuck", where he explains that "…the Life I had since led, was laborious enough to kill an Animal of ten times my Strength. That my Health was much impaired by the continual drudgery of entertaining the Rabble every hour of the Day…" (Swift 85). By telling his story from the position he now finds himself in, Gulliver is

representing and giving voice to animals by articulating his anthropocentric perspective on this type of life experience. The fates of animals living in food and entertainment industries, even as pets, unable to protest against their cruel conditions and abuse, are illuminated by Gulliver sharing a disempowered position which may resemble some of theirs. Safe to say, Gulliver's position is likely one of the better ones for an animal to find itself in, so Gulliver's resemblance is limited. Ye the humanization of non-human animals like the Houyhnhnms and the dehumanization of Gulliver creates awareness of the life situations of animals, thus implicitly advocating animal welfare and anthropomorphic ethical perspectives.

Having escaped from his involuntary stay in Brobdingnag, Gulliver comments that "As [he] was on the Road, observing the Littleness of the Houses, the Trees, the Cattle and the People, [he] began to think of [him] self in *Lilliput*. [He] was afraid of trampling on every Traveller [he] met, and often called aloud to have them stand out of the way…" (Swift 124). His perspectives are altered, perhaps even permanently changed, and as he is now able to imagine inhabiting the role of a figurative Lilliputian in his own human world, his emphatic consideration has expanded.

3.5 A hateful Yahoo

Gulliver's personal experience with figuratively walking a mile in someone else's shoes, of inhabiting many different perspectives physically and mentally, triggers reflection in Gulliver on his views especially on what it means to be human. However, this self-reflection does not guarantee that he has deeply engaged with, or opened his eyes to, disturbing elements of his own reality. In fact, his reflections upon his Travels seems to result in an idea of moral self-responsibility which involves recognizing all humans as Yahoo, and ultimately reject them. After his visit, his

> …Design was, if possible, to discover some small Island uninhabited, yet sufficient by my Labour to furnish me with the Necessaries of Life, which I would have thought a greater Happiness than to be the first Minister in the Politest Court of *Europe*; so horrible was the Idea I conceived of returning to live in the Society and under the Government of *Yahoos*. (Swift 239)

Having lived among the Houyhnhnm for approximately a year, he is appalled when he first meets human beings again, describing how "When they began to talk, I thought I never heard or saw any thing so unnatural; for it appeared to me as monstrous as if a Dog or a Cow should

speak in *England*, or a *Yahoo* in *Houyhnhnm-land*." (Swift 241). Even the mere sight of his own wife and children "…filled [him] only with Hatred, Disgust and Contempt, and the more by reflecting on the near Alliance [he] had to them" (Swift 244). At this point, Gulliver's perception of humans and animals seems altered to the degree where one must doubt his sanity and ability to ever again live peacefully and contently among his own kind.

Swift presents readers of *Gulliver's Travels* with a vast body of ideas about the nature of humanity, of non-humanity, as well as an exhaustively misanthropic assessment of humankind underlying the whole narrative, which is impossible to ignore.
Swift's misanthropy could be understood as stemming from his stoic inclinations:

> The Stoic conception of man, it might be said, is noble and therefore the opposite of misanthropic. But because Stoics were in practice everywhere assailed by the rampant irrationality of real human beings, misanthropy seems to have come easily to them. (Nuttall 57)

The misanthropy of Gulliver, which saturates most of the novel, seems to stem from his hate of human nature, and not human culture, represented by the Yahoos, and from the disappointing failure of humans to be different and ultimately "better" in his eyes.
Is Gulliver's misanthropy really in any form justified, one must ask, when even the honourable Portuguese Yahoo sailor who rescues Gulliver near the end of the novel repulse his senses? One surely needs to be reminded that if a Yahoo cannot "…be admired for his decent benevolence, then neither can a Houyhnhnm" (Nuttall 61).

Despite the stifling misanthropy of Swift's novel, which may easily have had readers depart from the story with a newfound pessimistic view on humanity, this reading has attempted to demonstrate how Gulliver's time with the Houyhnhnms actually had a positive effect on the matter of being human. Indeed, we are forced to doubt the sanity of any human being thriving in the sole company of such cold, passionless and cruel beings. It is therefore ironic that, despite the misanthropy, Gulliver's tale actually prompts reflection on the importance of our animality to our idea of what "humanity" is, and what properties we value in our own species. It is also unlikely that Swift meant his audience to read and interpret Gulliver's story void of the satire and dark humour Swift's authorship is so very well known for.

However, as Gulliver demonstrates to his readers, the search for a defining characteristic of humanity is usually in vain, as most of our "unique" traits are shared with at least one other species, and therefore the difference between species is one of degree and not

of kind. This realization makes a strong case for humans to adopt a more non-species-based morality which encourages us to step back from total anthropocentrism in matters of ethical judgement, allowing an inclusion of other beings as important and worthy of our ethical considerations.

3.6 Conclusion

More than any of the other works discussed in this thesis, *Gulliver's Travels* is a true challenge to make sense of. The issue is not that Swift is unclear or difficult to understand, but that the text can be understood and read in so many ways that its thematics becomes extremely complex. As the purpose of this thesis is to explore the connection between fiction literature and the ethics of how non-human animals live in relation to human beings, my reading of *Gulliver's Travels* has been guided by that quest.

One of the most interesting observations from reading Swift's novel in light of the thesis' aim is that in *Gulliver's Travels* the aspect of difference is closely linked to perspective. Swift demonstrates the arbitrariness of how a species (or a country, or a societal structure) is perceived by the contrasting pattern in the story's structure. Exemplifying this in the text is the instance where Gulliver believes the Lilliputians to be a despicable people and deems himself their moral superior, only to later in the story have the king of Brobdingnag see Gulliver's people in exactly the same way. The next civilization Gulliver encounters, the Laputans, are a people Gulliver believes to be totally unreasonable. Somewhat predictably, then, after encountering the Houyhnhnms, the Houyhnhnms find Gulliver and his humankind to be equally unreasonable and consider themselves as morally superior to humankind. By making this predictable pattern of contrast, Swift creates a scenario where no one people/species is really ever markedly better than the other. All options are better or worse, depending on the perspective from which they are being judged. Gulliver's inability to discover this for himself may imply a critique of humankind's inability to understand this themselves.

The way in which the Houyhnhnm treat Gulliver is very similarly to how humans have treated apes and other intelligent non-human animals, and predominantly continue to do, as previously discussed in this chapter. The narcissistic egocentrism displayed by the Houyhnhnms as they only show signs of interest beyond novelty after Gulliver has demonstrated a capability for likeness through imitating their spoken language, is the

quintessential history of the relationship between human and non-human animals. Gulliver does not perceive himself to be in an equally disempowered position in relation to the Houyhnhnms and refuses any likeness they point out between himself and the Yahoo species of their land.

Gulliver's somewhat comical resistance to being compared to the Yahoo implies the presence of a certain degree of shame. He is ashamed of being Yahoo-like and therefore also animal-like, but the interesting aspect of his shame is that he does not possess it until faced with the Houyhnhnm perception of the Yahoos and of Gulliver's stories of his own people. By seeing himself and his species through the perspective of the Houyhnhnm, Gulliver becomes shameful of being human, and thereby seeks to distance himself from being Yahoo-like and instead become more like the Houyhnhnms. A human in the eyes of a Houyhnhnm is comparable to an ape in the eyes of a human. Perspective is therefore demonstrated to be crucial in how we understand ourselves as a species, and how we compare to other species around us. Because everything about species becomes relative in *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift invites the reader to reflect on the arbitrariness and unsoundness of the fundament upon which humans structure their societies and "the truth" about species.

Through inhabiting different perspectives physically and mentally, Gulliver's world view is altered irrevocably. He cannot go back to who he was previous to these experiences, as they have triggered reflections on his self-perception, and on what it means to be human. However, Gulliver's reflections do not seem to come have come about because he has deeply engaged with the world around him. Instead, his altered perspectives seem to be motivated by his newly instilled sense of shame about who he is, which results in an idea of moral self-responsibility which involves recognizing all humans as Yahoo, and ultimately rejecting them. His ability to philosophically reflect goes wrong, as these are not conclusions we as readers can agree to. We do not seek to reject the Yahoo but rather the cruel and cold Houyhnhnms whom Gulliver idolises. Gulliver demonstrates an inability to reflect wisely upon his life and travels, but illustrates instead the human tendency to suppress, deny or distance ourselves from whatever it is we perceive as somehow making us lesser or inferior. For Gulliver, this means he must distance himself from his association with the humans/Yahoos. For humans, in terms of species, this means distancing oneself from aspects of animality.

What is the response we find in Swift's novel concerning the issue of whether we can accept to live together with non-human animals when we fail to accept our own animality? Can we coexist with non-human animals in a respectful and ethical manner when we as a

society refuse, or are unable, to live with the presence of human animality? If Gulliver is a representative for humankind, it seems we cannot. I am inclined to read Gulliver's personal struggle in *Gulliver's Travels* as representative of the general struggle of Mankind in coming to terms with our partly animalistic nature, as embodied by Swift's Yahoo. Through Swift's constant altering and contrasting of perspectives, *Gulliver's Travels* provides an environment which enables critical reflection, and which invites the reader to imaginatively inhabit alternate perspectives. Having already experienced and inhabited alternative perspectives on species when reading *Gulliver's Travels*, the reader may be encouraged to reproduce this experience in relation to non-human animals.

4 Living With Animality in Fowler's *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*

> But Mr. Hayes said that the significant, the critical finding of their study, the finding everyone was choosing to ignore, was this: that language was the only way in which [the chimp] Viki differed much from a normal human child. (Fowler 288)

4.1 Simian sisters

The last work of fiction this thesis will examine is Karen Joy Fowler's 2013 novel *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*. The novel is by far the most contemporary of all the four works of the thesis, published 14 years after *The Lives of Animals*, and 96 years after Kafka's text. The novel was written *after* significant shifts occurred in how we think about human-animal relations, as well as in a period of time when scientific studies have come far in demonstrating human similarities to non-human creatures, and the complexities of unique non-human lifeforms.

The story of the novel is told through retrospective first-person narration by the protagonist, Rosemary Cooke, and centres on her unconventional childhood and the aftermath of losing her little sister Fern as a child. The secret at the heart of the story, which is not revealed to the reader until we are already firmly invested in the life of the two sisters, is that Fern is not human. Little sister Fern is an orphaned chimpanzee baby, taken in by the Cooke family in the 1970s to be part of a scientific experiment led by Rosemary's dad who works as a behavioural scientist at a nearby university. The two girls are raised together almost from birth, together with their older human brother Lowell. When Rosemary is five years old, Fern is abruptly taken away from the family and the research experiment is ended, for reasons Rosemary can only vaguely recall in her narration. She questions the reliability of what she remembers, and this becomes an important part of her journey to discover who she is and to find her sister again many years later. The trauma of her separation, and the ensuing struggle to go on living without her sister constitutes the centre of the story, but the driving force of Rosemary's narration is the question "Who am I?". Rosemary has no 'self' to return to which existed prior to Fern's introduction into her life. She has also been affected by the 'ape-ness' of her simian sister to the extent that she has to submit herself to processes of humanization and domestication in order to be accepted in human society, like kindergarten and school,

among other human children. Throughout her narration, we feel Rosemary's sense of alienation from other humans, her loneliness and depressive state, searching for a sense of self and belonging which seems to be available nowhere.

In many ways, the novel enforces what much literature about the relation between non-human and human animals has already presented. However, the work differs from the other selected works of this thesis since the story has its roots in real-life scenarios of orphaned chimpanzee babies being fostered in human families with human siblings. A whole chapter is dedicated to stating the individual fates of many such real-life families, after their experiments ended, few of which are happy stories. The story of the novel is more closely woven around seeds of real life than the other narratives previously discussed in the thesis, in the sense that it narrates the effects of the human-animal divide realistically and intimately as the lives of sisters Rosemary and Fern unfold on the pages. The text differs in an interesting manner from the perspectives of Swift, Coetzee and Kafka, who are more philosophical and indirect in their treatment of the subject. I argue that Fowler's engagement with the concept of *entangled empathy* as a tool and guide for talking about human-animal issues is the most important and fresh contribution she makes to the discussion of human-animal relations with her novel. Her focus is also in line with current scholarship within literary animal studies and animal ethics work. What much of the previous debate and literary works on the topic of animal ethics has lacked is a clear focus on the importance of context and subjectivity when we try to understand what the best course of ethical action is for a specific non-human Other.

4.2 Becoming human

The story of the novel is put in direct relation to Kafka's "A Report to an Academy" as all six parts plus the prologue of Fowler's novel are prefaced by quotations from "A Report".
As discussed in the chapter on Kafka, his short story raises the idea that our species divides are created and enforced by processes of humanization and domestication. Being human is a matter of becoming, and there is therefore a clear performative aspect to species belonging. More than anything, I believe it is this idea which connects Fowler and Kafka's texts, and that this is the central idea which Fowler seeks to explore and elaborate on with her novel. Fowler's novel—similarly to the texts by Coetzee, Swift and Kafka— counters boundary-guarding beliefs and works by questioning and prodding the existing boundaries between human and non-human animals. The sisterly bond between human Rosemary and chimpanzee

Fern is in itself a strong confrontation of the culturally normative nature of human-animal relationships and borders.

Rosemary's narration is saturated with little anecdotes and memories about life after Fern, and her own journey towards becoming human. The impression left by forced processes of domestication and humanization seems to have been strongest immediately after Fern's removal, as Rosemary's first solo meeting with human society came as quite a shock to her. She reminisces how

> …my kindergarten teacher had said that I had boundary issues. I must learn to keep my hands to myself, she'd said. I remember the mortification of being told this. I'd truly had no idea that other people weren't to be touched; in fact, I'd thought quite the opposite. But I was always making mistakes like that. (Fowler 30)

The term "boundary issues" in this passage is revealing. Rosemary's upbringing has left her with boundary issues of various sorts, and is defining for all the struggles she faces in her life after Fern. With Fern, there were no boundaries in terms of private space or other areas of life which can feel intruded upon if not treated with respect. In addition to this, there were more importantly, and ultimately defining for Rosemary's life, no boundaries in terms of species. Fern and Rosemary grew up in a controlled environment dictated by a scientific experiment based on there being no species divide present. Fern and Rosemary were raised like sisters, regardless of species belonging. When the experiment comes to an abrupt end, the species boundaries which neither of the two girls have ever experienced is enforced swiftly and brutally in both of their lives, but in different manners. For Rosemary, the meeting with this divide, and her realization of how ape-ness is actually not welcome among humans, comes at an early age: "Kindergarten is all about learning which parts of you are welcome at school and which are not", and this marks the start of her intentional burying of her past with Fern, and all revealing marks of it (Fowler 26).

When reading "A Report" in the context of Karen J. Fowler's *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*, it becomes evident that Kafka's prerequisite exclusion of human animality and the lives of other animals, in becoming human, is also central to the struggle of Fowler's protagonist Rosemary. "Becoming human", as suggested by Kafka, must necessarily equal accepting the loss of one's animality. Rosemary does not, or cannot, give up her animality, and therefore she is never fully human but remains a hybrid creature situated in the borderlands of the species dichotomy. It is therefore tempting to read Rosemary as Rotpeter's literary foil. If Rotpeter is the human ape, Rosemary is the "counterfeit human" and "monkeygirl" whose animality unsettles her classmates (Fowler 102).

In common with Rotpeter, Rosemary's life after the traumatic departure of her chimp sister Fern is characterized by the difficult task of sufficient humanization and the uncomfortable experiences of a hybrid being whose very existence undermines the human-animal dichotomy. As Rosemary grows up, she becomes less unsettling to the human society around her and passes as "fully" human. We do, however, get the impression that her fully human way of life is largely performative, as her animal side is imparted to us through emotions and urges she reveals, but consciously restricts and subdues, like when she as an adult describes how "To this day, the Socratic method makes me want to bite someone" (Fowler 6). Like Rotpeter, Rosemary learns to subdue her partly chimp nature through an inflexible process of domestication and humanization. Rosemary's mother is the one who initiates this process by teaching Rosemary some essential tricks before starting school:

> Standing up straight.
> Keeping my hands still when I talked.
> Not putting my fingers into anyone else's mouth or hair.
> Not biting anyone, ever. No matter how much the situation warranted it.
> Muting my excitement over tasty food, and not staring fixedly at someone else's cupcake.
> Not jumping on the tables and desks when I was playing.
> I remembered these things, most of the time. But where you succeed will never matter so much as where you fail. (Fowler 102)

Once Rosemary begins to participate in human society, she understands that even obeying these tips and tricks from her mother is not enough. She explains how "…most of all, I learned that different is different. I could change what I did; I could change what I didn't do. None of that changed who I fundamentally was, my not-quite-human, my tabloid monkey-girl self" (Fowler 103). She recognizes that the process of domestication and humanization will be at a superficial level, a performative act so as to not unsettle the humans around her with her animality. Rosemary needs to be able to participate in human society but seems to share Rotpeter's view on humanizing oneself: "…there was no attraction for me in imitating human beings; I imitated them because I needed a way out, and for no other reason" (Kafka 203).

Despite Rosemary's best efforts, she does not have the power to alter her fundamentally hybrid self. Her time with Fern was not merely affecting her personality or manners, it was in fact identity-constituting. During their childhood, by means of letting Fern sort images of humans and chimpanzees into piles, the research team learned that she would always place her own photo in the pile of human faces. Rosemary, who had equally been part of the experiment, was never submitted to the same testing, most likely because her own species-confusion was never anticipated:

> Dad didn't know then what we think we know now, that the neural system of a young brain develops partly by mirroring the brains around it. As much time as Fern and I spent together, that mirror went both ways. […] Subsequent studies with larger sample sizes have confirmed what Dad was among the first to suggest: that, contrary to our metaphors, humans are much more imitative than the other apes. (Fowler 101)

The scientific experiment of her father transforms Rosemary into a sort of accidental Frankenstein's monster, who is doomed to a borderland existence in the spaces between species. The enforcing of species boundaries upon her life cannot possibly succeed at this point in her life, except in dividing her sense of self and in further alienating her from the world around her.

4.3 Perspective shifts

Fowler's novel, in addition to the narratives by Kafka, Swift and Coetzee, makes use of perspective shift to induce certain thoughts in her audience. In the case of Kafka, Coetzee and Swift, it is the implied author who employs the strategy, separate from the protagonist.
In Fowler's novel, it is also the implied author who acts to alter perspectives, as Rosemary delays the most important piece of information about her bond with Fern for a long time.
By doing so, she is consciously implying that she does not trust the reader to extend the same sort of cross-species identification and empathy as she herself does towards her ape sister Fern. Rosemary tries to invoke in the reader the same sort of empathy she imagines the reader to have for a human sister towards Fern, long before revealing the nature of Fern's being.
After Rosemary reveals Fern's species, she feels the need to justify her deceit towards the reader:

> But much, *much* more important, I wanted you to see how it really was. I tell you Fern is a chimp and, already, you aren't thinking of her as my sister. You're thinking instead that we loved her as if she were some kind of pet. […] Fern was not the family dog. She was Lowell's little sister, his shadow, his faithful sidekick. Our parents had promised to love her like a daughter, and for years I asked myself if they'd kept that promise. (Fowler 78)

Rosemary narrates this story from a point in time where she is grown up and has already experienced the difficulty of making people understand the bond she has to her sister. From a human perspective, the difference in species makes such a sisterly bond seem strange or even impossible. How many people have ever gotten to know a chimpanzee in the setting of being

a family, of being raised together from birth as equals? Rosemary has preventively decided that her perspective, rooted in her personal experience, is too alien for most humans to be served straight up without alterations and precautions. When attempting to legitimize her sisterly feelings towards Fern, she turns to literature: "I began to pay better attention to the stories they read me, the stories I soon was reading myself, looking to learn how much parents love their daughters. I was a daughter as well as a sister. It was not only for Fern's sake that I needed to know" (Fowler 78). In the fictional narratives she reads, she attempts to validate and mirror her relationship to Fern in the relationship of other fictional sisters, looking for legitimization and support for her sisterly feelings, stating "…I loved her as a sister, but she was the only sister I ever had, so I can't be sure; it's an experiment with no control. Still, when I first read *Little Women*, it seemed to me I'd loved Fern as much as Jo loved Amy if not as much as Jo loved Beth" (Fowler 79).

4.4 Entangled empathy

Rosemary's relationship with Fern does not end after Fern is sent away from her family. What Rosemary chooses to share with us in her narration is dominated by the topic of her story, which is her permanent and inescapable entanglement with her sister Fern. Lori Gruen's term entangled empathy is a term which I believe is helpful when discussing the nature of Rosemary's relation to Fern. As we remember from the Introduction (pp. 14–18 above), Gruen describes entangled empathy as a state of attentive perception, of attunement to a dissimilar Other, in relation to their experiences, and with a sense of connection and responsibility towards her.

Fowler's novel was published only a couple of years prior to Gruen's book on entangled empathy, and both texts are in line with – and contribute to – the current focus on empathy in relation to animal ethics. Rosemary attempts to formulate to the reader the special connection she felt towards her ape sister:

> I always used to believe I knew what Fern was thinking. No matter how bizarre her behavior, no matter how she might deck herself out and bob about the house like a Macy's parade balloon, I could be counted on to render it into plain English. Fern wants to go outside. Fern wants to watch Sesame Street. Fern thinks you are a doodoo-head. Some of this was convenient projection, but you'll never convince me of the rest. Why wouldn't I have understood her? No one knew Fern better than I; I knew every twitch. I was *attuned* to her. (My emphasis, Fowler 98)

Rosemary's account exemplifies a human-animal relation of entangled empathy. Rosemary's description of her relation to Fern is characterized by entangled empathy, of the feeling of attunement and responsibility, of deducing and representing the interests of her sister through empathetic engagement. Theorizing that it is through this sort of engagement with animal Others that we can learn how to act ethically towards them, Gruen criticizes more traditional types of ethical reasoning often utilized by animal rights activists such as Peter Singer and Tom Regan:

> As it is usually practiced, ethical theorizing detaches us from our actual moral experiences and practices through abstract reasoning. It sidesteps the complex social and political structures and ideologies that are always in play. It also sets aside our particular concerns, our relationships, and the other things that make life worth living. It thus can seem rather alienating, and an alienating theory will not help us to begin to solve the myriad problems that it is supposedly designed to help us address. (Gruen 13)

Gruen's particular take on animal ethics is to move away from abstract and generalizing ways of reasoning, and towards a complex and context-reliant point of view which respects the subjective and unique parts of individual animal experience as she argues that "…it is often the richness of the individual's experiences and relationships that helps us to understand what makes life meaningful, interesting, and valuable to them, and thus what is lost or gained when we act or fail to act" (Gruen 12). An animal is not an animal in general. Our understanding of a dog's life does not make us fully equipped to make assumptions or decisions about the best way for a chimpanzee to live its life, although they are both non-human animals. In fact, Gruen argues that even within species, we cannot make satisfactory decisions about how individuals within that species should be treated ethically, based on what we know about one individual. I concur with this view. A wild chimpanzee does not have the same needs as a domesticized chimpanzee, or a traumatized chimpanzee rescued from a research facility, or from a home where she has been kept as a pet, or in Fern's case as a disowned family member. Through entangled empathy, we are enabled to better see the individual "needs, interests, desires, vulnerabilities, hopes, and sensitivities", from which our course of ethical action can be guided.

4.5 Problematic assumptions

By emphasizing the importance of difference between humans and non-human animals in relation to a discussion about the ethical treatment of the latter, one runs the risk of triggering

initial concern and doubts regarding choice of direction. This comes as no surprise since relations between humans and non-human animals have traditionally and historically been defined by difference. Humans have, and to a large extent still do, define themselves as essentially different from the animal Other, and attempt to establish and maintain human uniqueness through non-human animals' deficiency or lack in "humanity". Yet the existence of differences does not equate total or irreconcilable difference, nor does it indicate absence of relevant similarities. Contemporary studies within academic fields which engage in the ongoing discussion of human/non-human animal relations have increasingly focused on finding similarities, thus slowly and steadily deconstructing the historically established dichotomy between humans and animals. It is becoming clear that this dichotomy can no longer be scientifically documented.

Defining and emphasizing humanity through difference from non-human animals is problematic, and overcoming such binary mindsets is a necessary task. However, one must not trivialize or ignore the aspect of difference. There is no doubt that the search for similarities between humans and non-human animals has been necessary, and has proved quite successful, in strengthening the case for improved ethical treatment of animals. This said, identifying difference, and using that knowledge in order to develop an appropriate set of ethics for the treatment and the rights of non-human animals is crucial if one aims to act in the best interest of the animal Other.

Particularities must be accommodated in a reimagining of our animal ethics. We must provide that which Kafka's Rotpeter was not offered, and which Fowler's Rosemary suggests to us, namely "a way out" for non-human animals that does not necessitate "humanizing" or abandoning animality/species particularities, but that is respectful of our shared indistinction with them and their own differences. Relating to the perceived human/non-human animal dichotomy, the discussion of difference is not a matter of difference in kind, but of degree.

In *Entangled Empathy*, Gruen identifies a problematic aspect of how we relate to similarities and differences towards non-human animals: "…although the recognition of similarities between us and other animals helps to break down the divisions that have long separated humans from all the other animals, looking for ways that other animals are like us may enforce anthropocentrism" (Gruen 24). She points to two different ways in which anthropocentrism affects our relation to non-human animals. First, *inevitable anthropocentrism* indicates that our perceptions will always and inevitably be human, because we are humans. Gruen stresses that this inevitable anthropocentrism "…doesn't mean that we can't work to see things from the perspectives of nonhumans, and I'll argue that empathy is a

skill that helps us in doing this" (Gruen 24). The second, and more problematic, form of anthropocentrism is *arrogant anthropocentrism*, which Gruen describes as

> … a type of human chauvinism that not only locates humans at the center of everything, but elevates the human perspective above all others. A focus on similarities can provide openings for thinking about ourselves, our practices, and our concepts in new ways, but we also run the risk of unwittingly projecting our human preoccupations onto other animals and engaging in arrogant anthropocentrism. (Gruen 24)

An ethical perspective characterized by arrogant anthropocentrism opposes the idea of entangled empathy. Although this form of anthropocentrism can hardly be the ideal point of departure for developing just animal ethics, it is sadly the perspective which saturates most of human treatment towards non-human Others in terms of factory farming, lacking animal welfare laws and sanctions for animal abuse.

An additional problematic assumption connected to the relationship between human and non-human animals is assuming that human language and literature can adequately capture animal reality and reality in general, due to the limitations of human language. This problem is also central to Coetzee and Kafka's texts previously discussed. In *Beside Ourselves*, the issue is drawn attention to by Rosemary several times throughout. Rosemary sometimes struggles to express her unique experience in words, and at one point she utters that, "Language is such an imprecise vehicle I sometimes wonder why we bother with it" (Fowler 85). She also connects the way language affects our memories, pointing out how

> …the happening and the telling are very different things. This doesn't mean that the story isn't true, only that I honestly don't know anymore if I really remember it or only remember how to tell it. Language does this to our memories—simplifies, solidifies, codifies, mummifies. An oft-told story is like a photograph in a family album; eventually, it replaces the moment it was meant to capture. (Fowler 48)

Rosemary is struggling to remember the traumatic events of her childhood, and something about her early memories always seems a little "off" to her adult self: "Why are there so many scenes I remember from impossible vantage points, so many things I picture from above, as if I'd climbed the curtains and was looking down on my family?" (Fowler 57). Contemplating the unreliability of her memories, she finds that she is primarily confused by memories of the traumatic events of her life. I want note here that the way I understand narrative and memory is linked to my understanding of trauma, which I provisionally define as the lasting effect(s) of a deeply distressing or disturbing experience. It does not follow that Rosemary's traumatic experience is totally inaccessible – Fowler does not suggest that there is a stable or

unchanging break between word and world. What Fowler does suggest, however, is that while narrative can enable Rosemary to come to terms with aspects of her traumatic experience, other aspects of that experience, including the way it is remembered, resist narrativization. One reason for this kind of resistance is that the attempt to narrate blends into an act of remembering that activates, or intensifies, painful memories of the traumatic experience of losing her sister Fern. Thus, Rosemary's narration is coloured by the complex and unpredictable ways in which her memories intrude. At the same time, it is, as Jens Brockmeier has shown (Brockmeier 119) the act of narration that activates these memories.

A few years after Fern's disappearance, Rosemary vaguely remembers her dad purposefully driving over a cat who refused to move away from the car: "To this day, I can feel the bump of the tire over the cat's body. And to this day I am very clear in my mind that it never happened. Think of it as my own personal Schrödinger's cat" (Fowler 91). From this incident, Rosemary reflects that one can revise memory according to emotion, or the aversion to process traumatic experiences. She is open to the possibility that she has been revising her memory according to what she can accept as her reality, concluding that "…who knows what revelries, what romps my memories have taken with so little corroboration to restrain them?". By asking this question she makes the reader question the reliability of her narration (Fowler 58).

4.6 A "Way Out"

Rosemary's "way out" is not revealed to the reader until the very end of the novel: "For the last seven years, I've been a kindergarten teacher at Addison Elementary, which is as close to living with a chimp troop as I've been able to get so far" (Fowler 293). Rosemary finds a space for meaningful life as the hybrid creature she is, and even restores a relation to her sister Fern. She regularly brings in her kindergarten class to finger-paint and do other fun activities with the chimpanzees at a nearby chimp sanctuary, now the home of her sister Fern, which Rosemary is now cooperating with, teaching the children about the lives of chimpanzees, and letting them meet her sister. After the death of her father, and the incarceration of her brother Lowell, she decides to write a book together with her mother about her life with Fern. This writing project approximates to a form of activism on behalf of Fern and all other suffering chimpanzees of the world, much like Fowler's own endeavour. Although Rosemary seems to have found her place in the world, she states that after her book is published

> Everyone from the women who cuts my hair to the queen in England might know who I am. Not who I really am, of course, but an airbrushed version of me, more marketable, easier to love. The me that teaches kindergarten and not the me who will never have children. The me who loves my sister and not the me who got her sent away. I still haven't found that place where I can be my true self. But maybe you never get to be your true self, either. (Fowler 298)

Maybe getting to be your fully true self is too much to ask in our imperfect world, but Rosemary has nonetheless used her life and her moral agency to make the world around her a little more accommodating for the hybrid selves of her and her sister. Despite their shared in-distinction, there is difference between them which matters greatly in how their lives unfold. The two sisters have different opportunities, they are subjected to different conditions, and they are given very different opportunities to form relations in their lives. In the end, Fern's life in the chimp sanctuary, which is the best scenario for her in a human world, is still a life Rosemary regretfully describes as "not enviable". She understands that she cannot give Fern exactly the life she ideally should have lived, but she gives her the best she can achieve.

Many of the themes presented in *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* are recognizable from the three other works discussed in this thesis, something which binds them together on a thematic level. While the process of humanization and domestication is central to the story of *Beside Ourselves*, the idea that being human as the result of being submitted to humanizing processes is also present in Kafka and Swift. In addition to this, a common denominator for the four novels is their distinctive features as texts which, albeit in different ways, seek to counter boundary-guarding work/beliefs.

Exploring human-animal relations is a setting such as *Beside Ourselves* proves to be highly interesting and productive. In many ways, the human-animal relation is a (complicated and often unhappy) family relation in which "the animal" is cast as the unloved, neglected, or even betrayed relative of "the human", much like Fern's relation to the Cooke-family. Fowler's use of sharp humour is a gift to her audience, and it helps us through some of the heavy issues the novel deals with.

The novel's reflection on the processes of becoming human forces us to examine the question of what distinguishes or differentiates humans from non-human animals. However, in contrast to the fate of Rotpeter, Rosemary manages to create a life and space for her hybrid nature as an adult, as her being essentially human in a human world gives her options Rotpeter is never offered. Rosemary's narrative illuminates a way of life which accommodates alternate ways of understanding human-animal relations. It includes a consideration of the existence of animality in human beings, as well as reflections on the

value of animality in a human world which strives to distance itself from animality at an almost ideological level. Her narrative makes us reimagine alternate human-animal relations, as well as a more just mode of living in relation to the complexity and abundancy of the non-human animal worlds.

4.7 Conclusion

As previously discussed in this thesis, a literary work can produce similar effects as Gruen's concept of entangled empathy. Directing "…our attention to the things that need moral response, [it] can provide context and understanding about what the right response would be, and, […] can provide us with a more accurate picture of who we are and what our responsibilities to other might be" (Gruen 56). The process Gruen describes is an individual internal process triggered by genuine empathic engagement with a non-human Other. The other three texts discussed in this thesis provide opportunities for empathic engagement with characters, but none of them are as close to Gruen's concept as the manner in which we are able to engage with Fowler's characters. There simply is not enough engagement of our empathic senses in the other three texts. In contrast to those, *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* provides a narrative which engages the whole of our minds, not "just" our rational minds as Coetzee points out through his novel *Lives*. *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* is a strong example of how a of narrative fiction can produce the feeling of entangled empathy in readers. Fowler's novel illustrates how such a fictional narrative can make ethically natured arguments about the treatment, and consideration, of non-human animals. By providing the opportunity for entangled empathy with non-human sentient beings, it also provides the opportunity for insight into the animal existence, and by that, insight into what the best course of ethical action for that particular being might be. Additionally, as entangled empathy is a form of reflective empathy defined in the thesis' introduction, it also "…enables alteration in one's perspective on others", which could alter our world view and therefore bring about changes in how we understand ourselves in relation to the non-human animal world (Aaltola, *Varieties of Empathy* 133).

As mentioned already, I am inclined to read Fowler's text in light of Gruen's concept of entangled empathy, as a tool and guide for talking about human-animal issues. I argue that a reading of the novel emphasising these aspects of empathic engagement can include Fowler's novel as an important and fresh contribution to the body of literature on this topic, as

well as to the literary discussion of human-animal relations. Fowler's focus on empathy related to animal ethics is also in line with much of the current scholarship within literary animal studies and animal ethics work. What Fowler's novel possesses is something which much of previous debate and literary works on the topic of animal ethics have lacked: a clear focus on the undeniable importance of context and subjectivity when we try to understand what the best course of ethical action is for a specific non-human Other.

In Fowler's novel, protagonist Rosemary's relation to her sister Fern is characterized by what Gruen defines as entangled empathy: the feeling of attunement and responsibility, of deducing and representing the interests of her sister through empathetic engagement. The underlying thematic thrust of the entire novel is Rosemary's permanent and inescapable entanglement with her ape sister. By experiencing and examining their relationship through the lens of entangled empathy, we can, as I hope to have shown, improve our understanding of the individual "needs, interests, desires, vulnerabilities, hopes, and sensitivities" from which we can chart our course of ethical action (Gruen 3).

In the end, does Fowler suggest a solution as to how we can coexist with non-human animals in a respectful and ethical manner, despite the fact that we live in a society which refuses to live with the presence of human animality? In the case of Rosemary, whose life is filled with the dilemmas of being animal-like and human, there is no obvious solution given. Rosemary actually does get a happy ending to her story, as she carves out a space for her hybrid self and her ape sister, in an idyllic setting which only fiction could conjure up. Still, I read Rosemary's narrative about her inner journey towards finding peace and meaning as a hybrid creature in a human world to signal the need for human beings to accept our closeness and kinship to other animals, and to recognize them as part of our community of sentient empathic beings similarly experiencing life on earth. The first step towards doing so must be to accept that we too are animals, and that *having animality is part of being human*. By refusing to accept the existence of human animality, and by refusing to see characteristics of species as a matter of degree but instead perceive it as something exclusive which makes us fundamentally different, then being different will feel shameful and alienating. Rosemary is engaged in a constant battle against shame. Throughout her narration, we feel Rosemary's continuous sense of alienation from other humans, as she exists in a state of depressed loneliness while searching for a sense of self and belonging which seems to be available nowhere in her society. Rosemary's upbringing with Fern was not merely affecting her personality or manners, it was identity-constituting. Therefore, the enforcement of species boundaries upon her already formed sense of self could never succeed in doing anything

except dividing her sense of self, and to further alienate her from the world which never felt welcoming after her sister was taken from it.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis, as discussed in its introduction, is to explore the connection between fiction literature and the ethical potential of such literary works. I have sought to explore, through literary texts, the ethical aspects of how domesticated non-human animals are being treated as they live their lives in constant relation to human beings. By exploring this connection between literature and ethics, the aim has been to illustrate how the four literary texts chosen for discussion are making ethically informed arguments concerning the treatment and consideration of non-human animals. An additional aim has been to provide examples of how these texts go about providing critical reflections on the coexistence of non-human animals and human beings in society.

In choosing to write a thesis on this topic, I am implying that I believe there is something of value in the link between animal ethics and fiction literature which facilitates empathic entanglement with non-human characters. I have also proposed that such literature can be helpful to develop our perceptions of the ethical responsibilities we have towards non-human animals, especially domesticated animals who live their lives in close and constant relation to human beings. Because the impact of the connection between reading literature and the ethics of the reader is still difficult to adequately study, it remains a challenging task to systematically delineate the intricate links between literature and ethics. Therefore, I have instead chosen to work under the presupposition that the connection simply exists. The thesis is written under the assumption that there *is* a link between reading literature and ethics, that there is a link between literature and empathy, and that empathic reading experiences *can* change our perceptions and world views and thereby impact our ethical actions and moral lives.

The four selected works by Kafka, Coetzee, Swift and Fowler are texts which critically reflect on the ethical aspects of how non-human domesticated animals are being treated as they live their lives in constant relation to human beings. The texts do this through endeavouring to blur the perception of an absolute species dichotomy, through addressing the issue of coming to terms with human animality, through emphasizing forms of interspecies kinship across the species divide, as well as through examining how humans and non-human domesticated animal currently do coexist.

I chose four different texts which all relate to the field of Human-Animal studies, and which hopefully have enriched my discussion as they have enabled med to consider the thesis topic from multiple perspectives. We have seen that each novel presents an interesting and distinct contribution which I argue show four different aspects of the thesis topic. In "A Report", Kafka engages with the thesis topic with a focus on processes of humanization. Kafka's story reveals how our anthropocentric society demands sacrificing ones animality to become part of it. In the anthropocentric society, the only chance for a domesticated animal to inhabit any other position than being oppressed, and to gain freedom, must be through becoming one of us. The animal must submit itself to a process of humanization. So, what if an animal really did become human to the extent which Rotpeter succeeds in doing? Does this mean freedom? Does it mean purpose and fulfilment? Happiness? For Rotpeter is means none of these things, and for the non-fictional animals in the world around us this is an impossibility. I therefore conclude that Kafka suggests the only plausible solution to this problem is to provide a "way out" which does not require humanization of non-human Others. We must create a space, or spaces, in our society in which humans and non-human animals can coexist. If not, a free animal existence will no longer be possible, as the possibility becomes doomed by the increasing marginalization on earth of anything non-human.

Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* engages with the thesis topic by emphasizing the importance of the connection between form and content, as well as exploring the relevance of world view in ethical concerns. Coetzee specifically focuses on how the dominant use of standard philosophical discourse in the discussion of animal ethics can be limiting in ways which prevent us from reaching ethical insights and initiating necessary changes. Coetzee's critique of standard philosophical discourse suggests that such a discourse will not provide the solutions needed. The questions we ask reveal our world view, and it is primarily our world view which needs to be altered if we are to inhabit the perspectives which leads us to the questions which human society needs to be asking themselves. Empathic engagement through literary texts is one way to inhabit different perspectives which again may, or may not, be influential to our world views. I believe Coetzee's critique of the conventional manner in which humans choose to discuss animal ethics is necessary, and I hope it may influence the direction of moral philosophy and literary works connected to ethical concern for non-human animals.

In *Gulliver's Travels* the thesis topic has been explored with a view to part four of the novel in particular. Swift's distinct engagement on the topic is characterized by a focus on the importance of perspective. Swift acknowledges and illustrates the importance of perspective

in how we perceive other species and ourselves in relation to them. Through constant altering and contrasting of perspectives, Swift creates a fictional universe which enables critical reflection, and which invites the reader to imaginatively inhabit alternate perspectives. Adopting alternate perspectives is significant for ethical reflection, as it can unveil to us something about what it means to be human in relation to non-human animals, thereby also revealing the potential for changing the meaning of that relation. The value of the focus Swift provides in *Gulliver's Travels* is that, having already experienced and inhabited alternative perspectives in relation to species when reading the novel, the reader may become encouraged to reproduce this experience in relation to non-fictional non-human animals.

Fowler's novel *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* also contributes to the exploration of the thesis topic in a distinct and important manner. The aspect of the novel I have chosen to focus on is the illustration of the human-animal relation through a form of empathic engagement which Gruen describes as entangled empathy. As my discussion has shown, I believe entangled empathy to be a suitable and ethically instructive perspective on how humans could approach our relations to the world of non-human animals. The value I perceive *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*, in terms of its potential to imply greater kinship across the species dichotomy, is the opportunity Fowler's novel provides to become invested in animal lives through entangled empathy. I reiterate that there is no guarantee for such entanglements to happen, nor is it certain that they will have an ethical impact on the reader. Yet I conclude that that providing the opportunity to experience such encounters is valuable in itself. Additionally, there is always the danger of empathic fatigue and numbness towards our ethical responsibilities. I propose that entangled empathy provides us with a remedy to this by teaching us how to best exercise our moral agency, and by guiding our course of action by means of interpreting the needs, wants and desires of the specific individual in its own specific context. Thus, entangled empathy enables us to become engaged in extended moral consideration and in the task of strengthening the potential of our own moral agency.

Although each novel brings its own focus and perspective, the four texts still have many important common denominators. They are all texts of a narrative fiction, focused on the lives of domesticated animals and the issue of living human animality/animality. By use of perspective changes and play with proximity and distance, similarity and difference, all four texts suggest a closer kinship across the species divide, thus blurring boundaries and normative perceptions by presenting the reader with alternative perspectives. All four protagonists suffer a loss of species identity, human or animal, which was inflicted upon them

as a direct result of the species dichotomy to which they are all exposed. The four protagonists also share the experience of being a non-human or hybrid being in a world that is anthropocentric to the degree of being hostile towards those that are not human enough.

All four texts invite us to imagine ourselves into different states of being from which we can gain ethically relevant insights about the relation we as humans have to the non-human animals. Because the lives of domesticated animals are so vulnerably and completely in our human hands, we realize that we have great ethical responsibility towards them, and that our ethical responsibility towards these beings must necessarily be even greater than that towards wild animals which exist relatively independently apart from us human everyday life.

My thesis has emphasized the connection between entangled empathy-inducing fiction and animal ethics. Through this discussion, I hope I have managed to demonstrate the importance and contribution of form, discourse, world view, perspective-shifts and the concept of entangled empathy, in relation to the non-human oriented ethical potential of fiction literature. I hope to have demonstrated the benefits of looking at empathic engagement in human-animal relations for the purpose of identifying the proper ethical course of action through the lens of entangled empathy. By reading literature that provide alternative perspectives from which to explore the concept of species, humanity and animality, as readers we can discover our capabilities for extending notions of kinship and empathic engagement to the non-human animals.

Although the fates of Rotpeter and Rosemary are tragic and painful, there are positive developments happening in the world which would have resulted in their stories ending very differently if their lives took place outside the pages of a novel today. As a direct result of Peter Singer and Paola Cavalieri's 'Great Apes Project', the Spanish parliament has as of 2008 approved 'human rights' for apes, stating that "Great apes should have the right to life and freedom…" (Glendinning). An article about the development states that "Using apes in circuses, television commercials or filming will also be banned [...] while housing apes in Spanish zoos, of which there are currently 315, will remain legal, [but] the conditions in which most of them live will need to improve substantially" (Glendinning). In India, as of 2013, all dolphins have gained unprecedented rights, as the country "…has officially recognized dolphins as non-human persons, whose rights to life and liberty must be protected. Dolphin parks that were being built across the country will instead be shut down" (Cohelo). In New York, the trial of Happy the elephant's right to personhood has been the source of much media coverage and has sparked public discussion concerning the inadequacies of general law and animal welfare to act in the best interest of beings such as Happy (Gold) (Keim).

These are just a few examples to illustrate the massive change in perception regarding our ethical concerns of non-human animals which is currently happening in society. I believe that the discussed works by Kafka and Swift, and perhaps by Coetzee and Fowler especially, as well as encounters of entangled empathy (fictional or otherwise), have played, and continue to play, a significant role in paving the way for these changes. They are, I conclude, significant.

> "It might be slow, Derrida said, but eventually the spectacle of our abuse of animals will be intolerable to our sense of who we are". (Fowler 238)

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