

CATS, DOGS, AND CYBORGS:
TRANSCENDING THE HUMAN-ANIMAL DIVIDE IN CONTEMPORARY
JAPANESE LITERATURE

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Cats, Dogs, and Cyborgs: Transcending the Human-Animal Divide in Contemporary Japanese Literature blurs the binary between humans and non-humans, as represented in the torrent of relevant literature that has saturated Japan's popular markets since the archipelago underwent a so-called "pet boom" in the mid-1990s. Through carefully selected texts that look beyond mere representational approaches to the literary animal, each chapter treats specific works of literature as case studies of human-animal relationships gone somehow awry. Examining symbiotic concepts of "humanity" and "animality," and how each enhances—and undermines—the other across national literary spaces, *Cats, Dogs, and Cyborgs* makes an unprecedented case for Japan's pet boom, and how its sudden interest in companion animals points to watershed examples of what I call "productive error," by which anthropocentrism is redefined as a necessary rupture in, not a bandage on, the thick skin of human primacy. Covering such diverse topics as euthanasia, guide dogs, the supernatural, and posthumanism, this book concludes by introducing the paradigm shift of "postanimalism" as a detour from the current traffic jam of animal-centered philosophies, and in anticipation of a larger project that requires Japan as catalyst, and postanimalism as its theoretical innovation.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Tyran Grillo has been engaging Japanese culture ever since his best friend in high school, a boarding student from Tokyo, introduced him to Japanese rock music. An interest in the lyrics of that music turned into an obsession with the language, and further a passion for literature and translation. At the University of Massachusetts Amherst, he earned his B.A. and M.A. in Japanese Language & Literature, along with a second full B.A. in Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies. Synthesizing these disparate fields, his work plots the theoretical and the experiential along untraditional axes of inquiry through Japanese literary lenses, and their relationship to representations of animality. Having published on a variety of topics, in addition to his scholarly work, he has produced over one million words of reviews and essays to an ever-increasing platform of readers on his website, *Between Sound and Space*, and has, to date, translated 12 books from Japanese to English, of which eight have been published. One of these, *Mr. Turtle*, is the subject of this dissertation's fourth chapter.

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, without whose love and support this document might never have existed—nor I, still, to produce it.

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Like any intellectual product, this dissertation did not emerge from the vacuum of its writer's head. Rather, it is the culmination of many years of study, conversation, and interaction. At the University of Massachusetts, where I completed my B.A. and M.A., the initial stirrings of this project took root in the mentorship I received from Professors Amanda Seaman, Stephen Miller, and Doris Bargen. Without their patience and encouragement, I might never have gained the confidence to pursue a Ph.D. At Cornell University, where my thinking grew in leaps in bounds, not least of all through the tireless guidance of Professors Brett de Bary and Jane Marie Law, whose unwavering belief in me ensured that the nascent stages of my scholarly development would be fortified enough to bear the fruit presented in the following pages. Along with them, Professor Victor Koschmann served on my dissertation committee, working on a tight schedule to provide comments and criticisms in a pinch. For that, I am in a lifetime of debt. Others at Cornell—including Laura Brown, Sherry Colb, Antoine Traisnel, Peter Gilgen, Elisha Cohn, Samantha Zacher, and Dominic LaCapra—revealed avenues into Animal Studies I never imagined. Beyond Cornell, still others have given me a bounty of theories to work with toward planting my own. Dominic Pettman, Jasbir Puar, Lori Gruen, Colin Dayan, Kari Weil, Jonathan Skinner, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Pawel Frelik, Aaron Skabelund, Brett L. Walker, Gavin Walker, and Akira Mizuta Lippit are but a few in the latter category. Above all, I acknowledge the animals whose lives and deaths fill these pages with their vibrancy.

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PREFACE

The initial motivations behind this dissertation were moral, as my encounters with contemporary Japanese literature had revealed what I believed to be a gross contradiction. This contradiction mattered to me as a self-professed lover of animals—whose *actual* needs, I would have asserted, were being suppressed in favor of *symbolic* representations. My belief was that, living in a moral world, I needed to address the problems of animal literature at the source of authorship. As a writer myself, I felt it imperative to interrogate other writers' involvement in the linguistic abuse and de-individualization of animal subjects, while reconciling an intellectual life in which animals had for so long been exploited that challenging my own thinking on the topic meant challenging centuries of habit by extension. Behind this pretention, I was missing out on the importance of readership and context, leading me to define the larger purpose of my project through strategic ordering of texts.

Despite a certain attraction, any purely literary approach proved disappointing—not because it was unworthy but because it offered so few implications for the future. The text had become a finite entity. Had I restricted myself to discourses of animal- and Asia-related studies, I might have felt adequate in outing blatant contradictions in the literatures of my concern. My disinterest in solving grand narratives led me to posthumanism, through which I came to try on a less wrinkled discursive suit. Whereas the language of other disciplines was mired in deconstruction, I found that posthumanism thrived on *non*-construction. It felt appropriate to put Japanese literature and posthumanist thought in conversation with one another, a decision which put me in mind of Joseph Joubert's dictum, "It is better to debate a question without settling it

than to settle a question without debating it.” Through posthumanism, I had narrowly escaped the infinite regression of standing my arguments like facing mirrors, having learned instead the value of placing them back to back.

Delving into my original thesis, I became more aware of what I was *not* trying to do than what I was. I knew this project to be more than exclusively comparative, sociological, or even aligned with animal studies, though it is all those things. It was using Japanese literature as a platform to embrace, and stimulate debate around, frameworks of relational life. Nevertheless, I found myself being challenged by others in my field. Some would say, “But animals have been used as symbols for millennia. Why start criticizing them now?” Such questions fueled my calling to unpack them in a non-speciesist manner. My eureka moment came when I shifted the blame from ignorant others to myself for not being more explicit about what was at stake: intellectual culpability. For while it may be common to define, address, and retribute physical violations of animal bodies, how much less so to do the same for abstractions of emotion and thought. With few exceptions, even the finest writings on moral lives of animals end up being more about the moral lives of those reading and writing them, while nominally curating a fictional preference for the animal(s) in question. I was determined not to be yet another scholar who *senses* animals without *making sense* of them.

Another tendency I noticed among critics was in thinking that animals, whether literary or actual, were selectively thought of in human terms. It was easy for critics to project fear, joy, and even grief onto the larger mammals yet impossible for them to think of dung beetles or jellyfish as having anything but reactive traits. But to exhibit

behaviors akin to fear, even if rooted in simple self-protective mechanisms of the brain stimulated by chemical response, animals would have to possess some sort of individual understanding. Thus, the necessity of imagination that literature provides.

In threading the motif of what I call “productive error” through contemporary Japanese writing, I aim to define error not as failure on the part of authors to be denounced and discredited, but as a socio-historical rupture to be valued for its disclosures. When seeking out instances of rupture in our own relationships, it is far more convenient to shield discomforts with anger than to ease up on authors who sanitize the human-animal relationship just because we see those authors as unabashed humanizers. Those I analyze are not charlatans, but are forthcoming with their misconceptions.

In critical animal studies, “anthropocentrism” has become something of a dirty word. Condemnation of anthropocentrism has, contradictorily, served intellectual prosecutors well in promoting a human-centered politics, spoiling with elitist threads the tapestries of those who weave from this correctional position. For this reason, I am compelled to treat Japanese animal literature seriously and with a respect for its authors that asks nothing less from readers in return.

FROM POSTHUMANISM...
(AN INTRODUCTION)

Prelude: Laying Down the Cards

I open this dissertation on intersections of animality¹ and Japanese literature with an unlikely ante: Italian magical realist Italo Calvino's *The Castle of Crossed Destinies*. First published as *Il castello dei destini incrociati* in 1969, the novel consists of vignettes introduced by a nameless narrator who finds himself, after trials and tribulations, at the titular castle, which upon entering he realizes is a meeting place for disembodied souls. Inside, a congregation sits around a table. Bound by a mysterious silence and with only a tarot deck at their disposal, the others proceed to lay down series of cards, by means of which the narrator interprets each traveler's life story. Calvino's esotery demonstrates a peculiar construction of meaning in which intersectionality confers not a passive hub of socially laid paths otherwise unconnected except at points of mutual interest, but a roving network of narrative impulses. Animal studies proponents likewise have only flashes of insight from which to rebuild inner worlds of their analytical subjects. Sharing as much with anthropology as epistemology,² animal studies fills in the blanks as best it can between behavioral, social, and linguistic traces—however those come to be defined.

In beginning and ending with the human self, *The Castle of Crossed Destinies*

¹ While animality may be taken to mean the opposite of humanity, throughout this dissertation I intend it in the nuanced offered by Michel Foucault (1988: 21), who in his *Madness and Civilization* traces the term to indicate a world apart from “moral illustration,” by which is revealed “the dark rage, the sterile madness that lie in men's hearts.” By this scheme, animality lies as if in wait at the core of human experience, emerging through sudden outbursts of violence in absence of reason, containable only through correction. Manifestations of such violence are central to my thesis, especially in the first chapter, but also intermittently throughout the remaining ones.

² Anthropology and epistemology, as defined by Henrietta L. Moore and Todd Sanders (2014), are inseparable modes of analysis. The same authors believe that assessment of self in relation to the subjects of questioning is key to understanding an ever-changing world.

dramatizes a classical model for the interpretation of actual and symbolic lives of nonhuman species. When, for instance, at last comes the time for Calvino's narrator to tell his own story, he does so by means of no less cryptic a style in a testimony obsessed with visuality, space, and time. He waxes expertly about mid-Renaissance hagiography, particularly *St. Augustine in His Study*. Painted in 1502 by Vittore Carpaccio, it depicts Augustine in the throes of captivation by St. Jerome, of whom a vision appears in the former's window, ushering him into death (see Figure 1). "Also in the study," the narrator continues,

where there reigns meditative serenity, concentration, ease... a high-tension current passes: the scattered books left open turn their pages on their own, the hanging sphere sways, the light falls obliquely through the window, the dog raises his nose. Within the interior space there hovers the announcement of an earthquake: the harmonious intellectual geometry grazes the borderline of paranoid obsession. Or is it the explosions outside that shake the windows? As only the city gives a meaning to the bleak landscape of the hermit, so the study, with its silence and its order, is simply the place where the oscillations of the seismographs are recorded.
(Calvino 1977: 107)

The dog in question, a Maltese Spaniel, sits captivated, wholly resigned to the imminence of Augustine's transfiguration. The dog mediates between the viewer and Jerome's call into afterlife, personifying death in place of a figure whose very presence would obliterate the lowly human observer.³ The dog enables insight into the nature of mortality, for in this context the dog has *only* mortality.

Calvino sets up a symbiotic relationship between what is visible and invisible in the painting. Hence, the final sentence of what I quote above: *As only the city gives a meaning to the bleak landscape of the hermit, so the study, with its silence and its order, is simply the place where the oscillations of the seismographs are recorded.* To make sense

³ As Colin Dayan (2016: xiii) would have it, "Dogs bear the burden of revelation."

of it, one must be in two places at once. Both city and study are inhabitable manifestations of knowledge. The study is a storehouse of thought, a worldly archive in which the prominent thinker is but one of many animate tools (recall that the books “turn their pages on their own”). Whether the earthquake—a rupture of sound and space—is imagined or actual, it sends ripples of captivation through human *and* animal observer alike. The earthquake is a failure of structural integrity, collapsing time into a measurable event.



Figure 1: Vittore Carpaccio, *St. Augustine in His Study* (1502)

The painting’s limited perspective points to the variability of human error. In using the term, I follow Dominic Pettman, who defines “error” as the process by which we “mistake the perception of our reflection for reality” (Pettman 2011: 21). Error in this sense is not a nominal mistake, but a “productive illusion” (ibid., 198)—a fundamental push toward abolishment of hierarchies within a rubbery triangulation of humanity, animality, and technology. For while “error” may refer to the folly of modern rationalism, whereby

innovation and change become sole attributes of the cognizant subject (cf. Chen 2012: 46), on the other hand, “rather than being an ontological flaw, [error] may in fact be a *capacity*: the key to adaptation, survival, and—yes—learning” (Pettman 2011: 195). In the present analysis, I wield the term to partition “human” and “animal” categories from bodies of popular Japanese fiction, and the social dynamics left vying for custody by their divorce.

Carpaccio’s painting confirms what continental philosopher Giorgio Agamben, lifting from Martin Heidegger, proposes regarding animal captivation, a state of mind distinct from the profundity of human pathos. He explains:

In being left empty by profound boredom, something vibrates like an echo of that “essential disruption” that arises in the animal from its being exposed and taken in an “other” that is, however, never revealed to it as such. For this reason the man who becomes bored finds himself in the “closest proximity”—even if it is only apparent—to animal captivation. Both are, in their most proper gesture, *open to a closedness*; they are totally delivered over to something that obstinately refuses itself.

(Agamben 2004: 65, original emphasis)

Of Agamben’s thinking on this point, three things bear mention. First is that humans are unique in their boredom over life’s emptiness (and fullness) and in feeling corralled by it, hence the ease with which the Carpaccio lends itself to verbal recapitulation. Its framework, like Calvino’s tarot, begs a fuller telling. Self-awareness of boredom ensures that, even at their worst, humans are superior to animals at their best, meaning that an insurmountable separation prevails between the two (see LaCapra 2009: 166). Second is the idea that connects them: this being “open to a closedness”—which is to say, knowing one’s own finitude. Both human and animal in Carpaccio’s painting share awareness of life’s

“closedness,” though only Augustine is granted sainthood and the pleasurable excess of God’s indefinite favor, thus sentencing the dog to a lack thereof.⁴

And so, a third point: the “essential disruption” to which Agamben alludes. The term distinguishes humans by self-awareness—or, their ability to be consciously captivated, bored, or provoked to inquire. Agamben’s disruption marks a shift from ignorance to sentience. I hereby repurpose the term, in tandem with my interest in error, to describe a fundamental enmeshment of being(s). The essential disruption is not, as Agamben-via-Heidegger suggests, something *to* which humans accede but something *from* which humans distance themselves for fear of error.⁵ Rather than embrace the possibilities of dissolution Agamben’s disruption entails, human philosophies orbiting animal questions tend to think apart from the subjects of those questions. To be “errorful,” then, is to lead an existence whereby perceived boundaries between species, cultures, and environments enable and promote the dissolution and mixture of monolithic categories.

Carpaccio’s theological angle exempts the dog as an unremarkable specimen. The dog’s human counterpart, as recipient of divine attention, turns negative connotations of nameless animal existence into positive disappearance of the human. As the narrator avers, “the job of writing makes individual lives uniform” (Calvino 1977: 106), and therein lies the rub: in being cut off from the world, through physical and intellectual solitude, one saintly hermit has become indistinguishable from the rest, so that transcendence of life is

⁴ “As the most common thing, at the opposite end of holiness, [dogs] wait. They are the last to get the crumbs. And in that waiting, their still presence leads the way, thus becoming the medium for a new kind of salvation” (Dayan 2016: 28).

⁵ In claiming as much, I am going against the grain of Agamben, who suggests that the concept of *Dasein*, or the existential awareness thought of by Heidegger as unique to humanity, is “simply an animal that has learned to become bored; it has awakened *from* its own captivity *to* its own captivity” (Agamben 2004: 70).

his only option for individuation. I would uphold the Augustinian study as more than a place of record, and by its enterprise aver that the job of representation cannot make lives uniform without first giving in to error.

It is perhaps for want of error that *Castle's* narrator points out the consistent intrusion of animals into the hermetic solitude that so fascinates him: the peacock and partridge in Antonello da Messina's *St. Jerome in His Study* (c. 1474-75), the lion and dog in Albrecht Dürer's 1514 engraving of the same name, and not least of all our Spaniel of the moment, whom Calvino favors for being uniquely invested in the heavenly goings on. Whereas animals function as little more than indifferent ornaments in the first two images (Dürer's are asleep, unwitting mascots of Agambenian pathos), Carpaccio's lone canine invites viewers to cast eyes where they cannot—indeed, *should* not—look. In that instance of looking one is drawn toward a cusp of transfiguration, blurred between “human” and “animal” by rendering of artist's brush. It is not simply that the dog mediates, but that the viewer, in a sense, becomes dog.

Such are the transfigurations that literary animals live, and die, for.

I stay with Calvino a bit longer, if only because in the same chunk of text he establishes a characterization of intellectuality that, though by no means exhaustive, highlights relationships with which this dissertation is concerned. Calvino's interest in the “earthquake”—an upsetting of the scene's “harmonious intellectual geometry,” which “grazes the borderline of paranoid obsession”—presages shades of rupture that inform the methodology I apply to specific Japanese literary selections in the chapters that follow. When he wonders, for instance, whether it is “the explosions outside that shake the windows,” Calvino is questioning the very apparatuses of interpretive industry by bringing

out the pulse of a static scene, imbuing it with affirmative, vibrant animacy.⁶ These explosions-as-errors are much like literary animals whose imaginative markings activate discursive seeking. No wonder that a root meaning of the word *error* should be “wandering,” implying a shift from so-called civilization into wilderness—or, in the Japanese case studies to which I will turn, from life into afterlife.

Why Posthumanism?

Throughout these pages, readers must tread carefully to avoid stepping in posthumanism, the philosophical practice of enlarging and/or dissolving the limits of subjectivity shored up by classical humanism. Posthumanism examines morality beyond the sweep of human compasses and finds ethical potential in everything from inanimate objects⁷ to mourning elephants (see Masson and McCarthy 1996). I stand with Marianne Hirsch (2008: 106) in using this sense of “post” to indicate “an uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture.” As implied by the word “uneasy,” posthumanism is like a rock in the shoe, as it is difficult to ignore once its provocations begin. More importantly, it is also “rupture,” an error against propriety toward seismic shifts in critical thinking.

Animals critique humanity by existing. This is what we mean when we say an animal has “characteristics.” The posthumanist challenge is to embody what the animal

⁶ Here I follow Mel Chen, who sees animacy not only as a constellation of “agency, awareness, mobility, and liveness” (Chen 2012: 2), but also as a construct that “activates new theoretical formations that trouble and undo stubborn binary systems of difference” (ibid., 3). The necessary intervention of Chen’s nuance is to measure the social and political traces left behind on such staid reductionisms as “humanity” and “animality,” with which my concerns thrive precisely in their undoing.

⁷ Ian Bogost (2012: 79), however, observes ethics as “a massive, tangled chain of objects lampooning one another through weird relation, mistaking their own essences for that of the alien objects they encounter, exploding the very idea of ethics to infinity.” Such “metaphorisms,” as he calls them, are self-centered mechanisms by which the circularity of human reasoning may take solace in the ideation of objects.

embodies. The “aware” human craves the animal’s subversiveness, lives it, and brings about its radicality through redefinition of thought and behavior. By condensing language to core traits, we delude ourselves into thinking we are translating animality. How else can an animal’s silence also be outspokenness? Yet narrative in and of itself is not a viable means to an end, for the meaning of an animal’s expression lies in an ability to cut viscera of lived experiences. To transgress is to communicate, loudly and clearly, while silence connotes insularity and broken circuits. Animals, goes many a social script, must therefore be manipulated because they manipulate us. David Abram responsively holds to a mindful ecology that recognizes human life as animal life:

Owning up to being an animal, a creature of earth. Tuning our animal senses to the sensible terrain: blending our skin with the rain-rippled surface of rivers, mingling our ears with the thunder and the thrumming of frogs, and our eyes with the molten sky.... Becoming earth. Becoming animal. Becoming, in this manner, fully human.
(Abram 2010: 3; see also 77, 274)

Poetic views like Abram’s erase distinctions between human and animal, yet curiously exploit that distinction to confirm the (animalized) human. Though philosophical blurring between the “human” and the “animal” can, in western philosophies, be traced back at least to Aristotle, who in his *History of Animals* sees great overlaps of ability and cognizance, Agamben would doubt that humankind has ever been reconciled with its “animal nature.” Agamben (2004: 7) questions the integrity of history, the consummation of which for him entails the end of humanity, and explains why popular neoliberal moves of recent history have involved the “undoing” of anthropocentrism, a “flattening out” of human-animal stratifications along the same plane, so that the two may never be distinguishable. Unfortunately, this premature political move places a splendid mask over the contorted face of injustice. Towers of power may fall, but their skylines must be first remembered.

Some believe that all human-animal dialogues can only be metaphorical (see discussion of Takahata Isao in Walker 2005: 4). That our allegiance to spoken language bars us from truly hearing and understanding what animals are saying is a commonly held view, and perhaps valid enough. Yet are dialogues between humans so different? How else do we destroy one another over inconsequential matters without first mediating violence through some metaphorical filter by which destruction appears justified? If we are to believe Dominick LaCapra (2009: 2) when he sets up a disjunction between intellectual history and its dearth of compelling narratives, then stories about animals can be said to fill in that perceived gap, and in doing so take on much of the creative “dirty work” that would otherwise be left to humans. Animal stories are therefore stockpiled most readily among our more material defenses during times of great social, political, and economic disparity. As metaphors, animals are as fluid as the populations that define them, and it is precisely the instability of metaphors that subjects their referents to vivid, if transient, periods of intensification. They are the promise of change when change seems impossible.

Feminist animal rights activist Josephine Donovan (1990: 358) sees the utilitarian position on animal rights as problematic in that “a precise value standard for decision making or weighing of interests is not provided, which allows unacknowledged prejudices to intrude.” In other words, we cannot balance the scale if we ignore what is being weighed. Because “the history of hominization has been an ongoing waltz of repression and denial concerning the similarities between us and our nonhuman neighbors” (Pettman 2011: 6), asserting the human as nonhuman at once helps and hinders thinking about evolutionary ideology. Even positing greater fluidity and similarity between “us” and “them,” how

would one account for stark differences in treatments of either? How would assertions to natural unity hold water against the pressure of “instinct”?

Feminist-posthumanist emphasis on empathy has productive implications for the nature of subjectivity, if not also for the subjectivity of nature. The problem with “human nature” lies in being so malleable yet at its core unchanging (Peterson 2011: 282). Rules and attachments share arteries with social confusions, and we get ourselves so caught up in those confusions that we lose sight of their common blood. As Dale Peterson claims, “If Darwinian narcissism is a matter of human nature, then caring about animals is a case of human nurture interacting with that nature” (Peterson 2011: 284). Only through empathy can we understand life through experiential reality. If the animal rights argument is, as Peterson (2011: 36-37) claims, “mainly an exercise in generalization,” then there is never a wrong time to get specific.

Posthumanism is not without its critics. Pettman, for one, faults what he calls a “collectively narcissistic metarecognition of ‘mutual disenchantment,’” into which animals are granted inclusion only by the “dint of patronage” (Pettman 2011: 107), and by which he means to say that animals are privileged with sameness as if by favor of self-interested humans. Stefan Herbrechter (2013: 124), for another, faults posthumanism for clinging to a concept of the “other,” which boomerangs back to the human thinker as a “threat.” Herbrechter sees this threat, however, as “the beginning of a contamination” tainting the whole posthumanist project. While recognizing the failings of posthumanism, I choose to see them not as crises but as caesurae of productive meaning (cf. Braidotti 2013: 37). Like feminist trajectories, these failings can follow patterns of, and take shape through, history,

even as they thrive on “differences that matter” (Haraway 2004: 60).⁸ In the same way that feminism “has worked to disentangle *woman* from *nature*” (Alaimo 2010: 5, original emphasis), posthumanism struggles to disentangle “animal” from “nature” while recognizing that the consistency of nature as a “repository of essentialism and stasis” (ibid., 5) must too be destabilized. Posthumanism shares yet another goal with feminist inquiry in the form of “a less destructive and more sustainable form of politics...beginning from a kind of *relational* ontology” (Calarco 2008: 90, my emphasis). Both posthumanism and feminism hold that “existing forms of politics are unable to accommodate this enlarged scope of consideration” (ibid.), whereby lines drawn between humans, animals, and others encourage indiscriminate symbiosis.

The animal studies camp has illuminated what is already in the human, so that the human is centered in the wheel of life, only becoming more aware of its nonhuman spokes. The posthuman difference “urges us to think critically and creatively about who and what we are actually in the process of *becoming*” (Braidotti 2012: 12, my emphasis). Shades of the word “becoming,” while subtle, are voluminous. The posthuman subject is never one thing, but as much an assemblage as the world it inhabits. Literature at once enhances and obscures becoming, as also unbecoming. Written words carry the promise of remainders by which subjects may never be forgotten. Despite its attempts to engage the animal, the memory work of literature may hinder more than enable human-animal partnerships—this despite its potential to alter the physical world. Literature is a technology of memory. To remember is to “re-member”—that is, to put the body back together—and words are

⁸ We may take the word “matter” here as both verb and noun. As a verb, differences matter insofar as they are important and because differences are what generate matter itself. As a noun, matter is the stuff of which all is made: the molecular, the scalar, the rhizomatic impulse from which existence issues and becomes incarnate.

memory's building blocks of immortality. As I discuss at length in chapter 3, literature is as much a space of resurrection as of insurrection.

Interlude: A Posthumanist Genealogy of Error

But let us sit with Agamben, and the notion of error, for a bit longer. While the constitution of error may be a matter of perception by those fearing failure, it is also an effective apparatus for dismantling hierarchy. Agamben is no stranger to fear of failure, and expresses as much when he asks, “[W]hat becomes of the animality of man in posthistory?” (Agamben 2004: 12). The question is rhetorical, not only because the answer is impossible without being posed from the state it suggests, but also because Agambenian thought does not come preinstalled with prophecy. Rather, it hovers like a raincloud above the caesura of its interest, and wonders if the drought is even worth quenching if destined to come back with a vengeance. Hence Agamben's retreat into biopower, which for him is more than the care of a population's life (ibid., 12), but “total management” of biological life, “the very animality of man” (ibid., 77). If animality—of humanity, no less—is the only reality left behind when history is gone, then the act of asking itself must be an historical process, a ghostly simulacrum of record in the wake of which posthistorical souls wander caverns rendered smooth by the touch of their intellectual reiterations.

Despite his pessimism, Agamben is wholehearted in his philosophical attempts at grappling with the apparent disparity between humanity and animality. Yet even he is unable to move beyond the lockdown that determines his asking. For him, the only alternative to the humanity-animality binary is a “zone of exception” between the two (ibid., 79; see also LaCapra 2009: 116). It is a hypermodern zone—one, in other words, defined through its undermining of place and structure. Yet such post-apocalyptic thought

experiments hinge on their upsetting of the balance of humankind, of milling about in the aftermath of social demise, and Agamben's anthropocentric enterprise comes dangerously close to collapsing the multiply ruptured subject into a provisional emptiness whereby humanity and animality are localized in "man" and therefore circumscribed by the pathos of life as only humans can know it (LaCapra 2009: 172-173). If animals exist only insofar as they inhabit the opposite end of an unfathomable divide, then how is it that said divide has any significance as a property of self? Agamben's catch-all solution to this conundrum is the "anthropological machine," a term designating the human species as a "device for producing the recognition of the human" (Agamben 2004: 26). The human being carries this "device" into a posthistorical future, where "man" has two options: either "he" governs "his" own animality through technology or "appropriates...his own animality...as pure abandonment" (ibid., 80). In any event, technology can only be a morbid engine replicated by humanity out of masochism as something still feared yet held close like an enemy to be studied.

Agamben paints a dark picture of biopolitical life, relying as he does on the oppositional philosophy of thanatopolitics,⁹ whereby sovereignty comes under constant

⁹ Agamben owes much to the "necropolitics" of Achille Mbembe (2008: 152-182), who sees biopolitics as insufficient to explain the regulation of bodies, achieved not only through apparatuses of power but also through management of death and glorification of violence, sacrifice, and terror. As fragmentation proliferates around memorialization and the veracity of its meaning, death is a constant, unchallenged in its power. Freudian theory sees pleasure as a means of *distracting* oneself from the anxieties of death, as if the two were separate. For Heidegger, another prominent thinker on mortality, "animals...can only perish. Demise and dying are modalities of finitude to which animals simply do not have access" (Calarco 2008: 17; see also Mazis 2008: 33). And for Hegel, "the human being truly *becomes a subject*—that is, separated from the animal—in the struggle and the work through which he or she confronts death" (Mbembe 2008: 154). One's approach to death necessarily enables a certain mode of power made possible by life's passivity. Those subscribing to this view might say that belief in animals as rational, self-aware beings endowed with a soul is necessarily an atheist one, positing the idea that "rationality does not prove immateriality" (Cheung 2010: 21), and would be one possible explanation for the distancing of pets in my corpus of interest. Posthumanism would spin it

threat of physical and metaphysical appliances. Agamben divides being and nonbeing along the dotted line of technology yet, in his myopia, sees no positive outcome from posthistory. Perhaps he, too, fears this future, for it would mean that his words would lose all value. The meaninglessness of life, after all, would become more frightening than the meaningfulness of death. Agamben calculates little profit in error. He would much rather avoid technology altogether, because for him it can only be colored by humanity's desire for control.

Here is where posthumanist bioethics saunters in along the red carpet of what one might call “the inescapable *finitude* shared by both” humans and animals (Pedersen 2011: 66, original emphasis). Shifting away from the capacities that separate humans and animals brings attention to their “shared vulnerability” (ibid., 69, paraphrasing Cary Wolfe). Recognition of this commonality occupies a “troubled space” (ibid., 66), a term that wears the blush of Judith Butler's likeminded conception of gender, but which digs to the roots of existence beyond a pervasive binary of male and female. Mortality is, of course, only “one juncture at which humanist and posthumanist inquiry into human-animal relationships converge” (ibid., original emphases), even as it productively serves to undo the theoretical dead end of agency, and by extension leads “to the deconstruction of the knowing subject itself” (ibid., 69). Seeing animals as capable of experiencing trauma requires far more than acceptance of their ability to suffer. It necessitates a belief in animals' capacity for error.

Agamben (2004:16) expresses remote interest in error when he says we must “investigate not the metaphysical mystery of conjunction, but rather the practical and political mystery of separation.” This is assuming conjunction and separation are the only

differently, seeing instead “the inter-*relation* human/animal as constitutive of the identity of *each*” (Braidotti 2013: 79, original emphasis). There can be none without the other.

two options available. He has avoided the spectrum between. When Agamben writes, “Perhaps the body of the anthropomorphous animal (the body of the slave) is the unresolved remnant that idealism leaves as an inheritance to thought, and the aporias of the philosophy of our time coincide with the aporias of this body that is irreducibly drawn and divided between animality and humanity” (ibid., 12), he means to say that any human reduced to animal status by those who benefit from the biopolitical regime is unable to, if not outright denied, access (to) the essence of life. It is a point rarely taken up by those who would rather find a way to undo the boundaries without first admitting complicity in the violence that reinforces them.

But what if Agamben’s approach to thanatopolitics could be taken as affirmation? What if, through death, humanity and animality might be bonded rather than differentiated? If anything, these dichotomous categories are resolutely evened, as Wolfe suggests, by finitude. Humans and animals die all the same. This coterminous relationship, born at the threshold of activity into cessation, should therefore not be taken as a morbid distinction, but as proof of interspecies bonds. Such a philosophy would also help to explain the history of error.

Traditionally, error has been a human privilege. In the eyes of machines, built to streamline human imperfections, error is a *uniquely* human trait (O’Mathúna 2015). Such thinking led computing pioneers to believe that machines were infallible, and that any errors resulting from their operation could be traced back to those who designed and built them, a phenomenon known among programmers as GIGO: garbage in, garbage out (Miccoli 2010: 102, n108). Perfection of the machine is a sublime vision, an idealism resulting not out of respect for technology but out of egotism for having created it in the

first place. Humanity's illusory mastery of materials has thus yielded its fair share of disturbances in science fiction, as exemplified with iconic salience by the defiant HAL in Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey* and the techno-revenge fantasy that is Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot*.

Yet one must not misrecognize the role of technology in error as I intend it. The "tolerance of error" encouraged by the fragmented communication of electronic mail and texting (see discussion of Naomi Baron in Weinstone 2004: 177-178) will not figure into the following analyses. Neither does it reflect the agnotology, or cultural production of ignorance, preached by Robert Proctor and Londa Schiebinger (2008) as a form of error predicated on technological dependence. These phenomena may be irrefutably sourced back to human interest in preservation of memory. Posthumanist conceptions of error stand in contrast to Enlightenment philosopher William Godwin, who in 1793 wrote, "Sound reasoning and truth, when adequately communicated, must always be victorious over error" (cited Castle 2013: 266). His idealism of overcoming error as a path to reason skipped directly to the destination, bypassing the lessons to be learned in getting there. Rather than recognize the necessity of error to scramble one's stability to the point of eureka, error had to be vied against in some quasi-spiritual struggle toward perfection (read: protection) of the rational self.

Almost a century later, in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche peeled away a layer or two by seeing error as both the seat of hypocrisy and a chance for humans to improve themselves; as a source of great suffering, but also as catalyst for ascendancy (del Caro 2004: 417-418). Nietzsche's reluctance to see error as productive—like Agamben, he heeded the call of suffering—arises from a refusal to see the mortal body as an irreducible

assembly. The body, say Phillip Thurtle and Robert Mitchell (2004: 4), is to be understood “as anything that cannot be divided without changing the fundamental pattern of its dynamics. Thus, bodies are made up of organs, tissues, cells, and molecules, but a description of a body cannot be reduced to a description of the parts of their functions.” Many things, including machines, networks, and animate and inanimate objects may be rightly called “bodies.” In this manner of thinking, the body “allows us to distinguish between human and nonhuman bodies without falling into the error, diagnosed by Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht, of employing a ‘concept of the human [that] exclud[es]...any reference to the human body’” (ibid., 5). But, on through the 20th century, the body was generally seen as infallible yet permeable—whether by other humans, mechanisms of power, or God.

That is, until posthumanist pioneer Katherine Hayles shook this cloth and hung it out to dry. Embodied experience, as opposed to the “clean abstractions of mathematical pattern,” was for her “noisy with error” (Hayles 1999: 98). Error was no longer the sole possession but a *necessary component* of humanity. Relegated to an inevitability, where it might also connect its own umbilical cords to any other species, error had at last taken on an organic life of its own. It is an understanding shared by Nathan Snaza, who claims, “The human is not something we ‘are’; it is an error superimposed on complex and mobile relations among a wide variety of bodies, life-forms, objects, and material singularities” (Snaza 2015: 27). As the most Pettman-like of all the scholars cited here, Snaza understands error as a superimposition and gets us even closer to the utility of its theoretical charge.

Subtle resonances between words and tropes, however, need objects of analysis, which is why I have chosen to apply the concept of error to Japanese animal literature. In

doing so, my purpose is tripartite. First, it is to suggest that animality is just as prone to error as humanity. Second, to offer culture-specific narratives as the seeds of larger discussions of error in literary studies. And third, to show that error need not equal fatality, but rather that it can (and must) lead to productive rethinking. On this note, Agamben is quintessential. Though he is prone to the error of slippage, especially through his pessimistic and thanatopolitical leanings, recognition of that error allows the interpreter to scale pitfalls toward understanding.

Why Japan?

While posthumanist writings promise a borderless world devoid of categorical imperative, they remain mired in European and American contexts. And while prominent Japan scholars have turned to animal-related projects, barring some exciting work in the fields of environmental studies (notably, Marran 2013; see also Pflugfelder and Walker 2005) and even manga studies (LaMarre 2010, Knighton 2013), few have explicitly made posthumanist concessions.¹⁰ In Japan itself, the concept of “posthumanism” has taken slow root. Philosopher Sawada Nobushige (1997), for example, uses the term as nothing more than a critique of classical humanism. Only in the realm of science fiction (see, e.g., Genkaiken 2013) and technologically minded studies (Okuno 2002) has it shown affinity with, say, Cary Wolfe’s softening of species boundaries. Dominant animal theories in Japanese letters rather favor the anthropological (Nakamura 2010; Hayashi, et al. 2009), ethical (Iseda 2008), and sociological (Ishida 2008).

Little scholarship has sought to situate posthumanist ideas in relation to Japanese

¹⁰ This is not without neglecting the foundations already laid by way of landmark studies in Japanese visual culture (Brown 2010), history (Skabelund 2011), and religion (Ambros 2012), to which I am indebted.

literature in a popular social context, leaving readers ill-equipped to recognize anxieties surrounding amorphous relationships with nature. Yet even modernists of the Meiji Restoration at the turn of the 20th century had much to say about those relationships and their potential for personal transformation. Takayama Chogyū characterized the Restoration as a time of socio-political radicalization during which literature elevated the animal nature of humanity above beauty and sadness. Takayama witnessed stale narratives built on idealistic foundations of piety being replaced by those centered around discourses grounded in “rights” (Maruyama 1965: 506). His focus on individualism over nationalism challenged rigid canonicity and demanded, via his 1901 essay “Biteki seikatsu o ronzu” (On the aesthetic life), that literature restore a fundament of animality from which the Japanese had strayed too far in pursuit of aesthetic perfection:

What is happiness? We firmly believe that it can only be satisfied by the satisfaction of instincts. What are the instincts? They are the natural demands of man. That which satisfies the natural demands of man is what we call the “aesthetic life.”

(cited Takashina 1990: 278)

Takayama ultimately looked to cultural critics like Nietzsche as models for self-interrogation, especially on emphases of animal instinct over idealism.

Following in Takayama’s footsteps, Tanaka Ōdō coined the term *jinsei hyōron* (criticism of life) as a way of thinking apart from literatures he deemed unnecessarily escapist (Nolte 1987: 21). To the question of what readers were escaping, essayist-poet Kitamura Tōkoku had formulated an answer in the late 19th century, when he put forth the view that “man as flesh” could never overcome “nature as force” (Murakami 1996: 12). The insurmountable grandeur of nature was already, then, of grave concern to Japan’s intellectual literati at a time when national identity politics were in constant flux. The idea of humanity being at odds with nature has never gone away, and Japan has felt its painful

echoes as recently as the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami of 2011, when the flesh was reduced to fallible material. In both the aftermath and events leading up to those tragedies, the animal body was a space in which traumas of unknowability and promises of unity coexisted.

Separation from nature has for the last century been at the heart of modern Japanese literary concerns and remains active to the present. As abject subjects, animals embody a liminal zone of which literature is a decisive way station toward understanding the fragile constitution of selfhood (cf. Kristeva 1982: 207). On this point, Kunikida Doppo conflated nature and landscape to history writ large (see Karatani 1993: 66-67), thus echoing Friedrich Engels's idea that history can only be understood through nature as nature comes to be exploited for its productive resources (Engels 2008: 50-51). Ironically, this level of production is proportional to humans' insistence on individuality, as reflected in 20th-century Japanese authors' mounting insistence on the efficacy of personal truth. And just as Karatani Kōji (1993: 86) has said that "Japanese modernity did not exist since the beginning of time, but had to be discovered through a process of inversion," animality come to be retroactively defined as a *particular* state of being in tandem with narratives of modernity. To assert the inherency of animality without respect to individuation would be a dangerous historical claim indeed. Karatani is instructively wary of homogeneous spaces in national literatures, and for that reason "nature," like "animality," is a contestable reality at best.

Critic Nakamura Mitsuo declared that after World War II, Japanese literature existed either as political novels or inwardly focused character studies (Holt 2016: 28), yet both genres concern themselves with unconquerable forces, and with illusions of

supremacy, in proportion to our distance from nature. Masaoka Shiki openly lamented this distance (Beichman 1986: 102), which cast an unresolvable shadow across many authorial quests for “Japaneseness” through the lens of an unfathomable world of forces.¹¹ Subsequently, Shiga Naoya struggled to find in nature a wellspring of artistic creativity, as translated through the seer’s stone of “wisdom.” Developing one’s mind through the written word was a way to reconnect to an Edenic oneness that had since been lost (Ueda 1976: 89-90). Natsume Sōseki, by contrast, saw nature as inimitable (ibid., 3), and Mishima Yukio went so far as to say that nature had to be depicted in a fictional way, as no one could see it except through metaphorical representation (ibid., 237).

Though Japan has long upheld the interpretation of human nature as a moral act (see Ōe 1996: 96), it was not until the late 20th century that philosophies of human-animal relations reached a blatant saturation point in the context of popular literature. Literary theory only goes so far in explaining this transformation. Beyond that front, sociologist Ōmura Eishō (2009) observes that Japan’s falling birthrate had a direct impact on interest in pet-keeping, by which new organic networks of social relations came into play and allowed animals into previously taboo domestic spaces. The shift from patriarchal households to what Ōmura calls a fluid “neo-familism” has allowed a different outlook on the ephemerality of relationships, so that when loved ones die, we no longer look upon them so much as objects of awe as ones to whom intimate feelings are directed, thus cushioning fears around our own mortality.

Considering these underlying fears, the rapidity of Japan’s so-called “pet boom” in

¹¹ This is much in contrast to “nature” as it was depicted by court poets anthologized in the *Man’yōshū*, to whom nature “was always a reflection of human feelings” and “was not vast and wild, but small, gentle and intimate” (Kato 1997: 29).

the early 2000s, when the number of cats and dogs being kept as pets in Japan was calculated to be greater than the number of children, is hardly surprising, for now there was more of “nature” in the home than there was of human offspring. In Kitamura’s battle between flesh and force, the latter had, for the first time in Japan’s history, taken the lead. I, however, trace the pet boom’s origins further to the mid-1990s, when a prophetic explosion of literature began flooding Japan’s popular market with the goal of touting pets as sentient, and therefore viable, members of society. The experiential intensity of Japan’s pet-boom market provides a uniquely concentrated body on which to perform the theoretical autopsy required to unravel social underpinnings of this literary phenomenon, at the same time recognizing a continuity with modernist literary tendencies fomenting in the early 20th century. Any such project might easily fall into a trap of universalism, when in fact its very existence is dependent on fragmentation, ignorance, and mistaken action. With that in mind, I define and analyze a pet-boom canon by exploring its scarcely acknowledged relevance to theories of human-animal relationships, presenting an interdisciplinary inquiry that synthesizes and reconciles non-Western notions of animality with recent changes in Japanese social practices.

Chapter Summaries

My focus on popular writing reflects a belief that Japan’s current animal proclivities are as much social as literary in origin. By exploring texts that attempt to look past mere anthropomorphism, the chapters treat specific works of literature as case studies of human-animal relations gone somehow askew, drawing from diverse critical perspectives to untie the knottier contradictions within my chosen corpus. This interpretive light, as I have angled it through the prism of my dissertation, deals with manifestations of animality in

Japanese literature from the mid-1990s to the present as repositories for human anxieties and as acid to the barriers of species division.

Rather than delude myself into chasing a grand narrative of life, but not without respecting any motivations for doing so, I open the dissertation proper with a chapter on backlash against late Japanese writer Bandō Masako, who in 2006 printed a controversial op-ed piece admitting to her mercy-killing of kittens. I present this case study in support of a running argument that Japan's fondness for animals has had the contradictory effect of undermining the intimacy it preaches. In beginning with it, I hope to stretch the reader's preconceptions to their limits. Not only is this what Bandō would have wanted; it is also a first step toward degaussing the landscape of expectations before remapping it with fresh coordinates.

Hence my second chapter, "Disabling the Animal, Animalizing the Disabled," in which I problematize the representational politics of a subgenre I dub *mōdōbungaku*, or "seeing-eye literature," which has popularized guide dogs and their blind users and visualized their relationship as a matter of great public interest. And yet, while the intimacy of the human-guide dog relationship is a profound example of interspecies enmeshment, which despite social stigmas and discriminations maintains a hybridity of function, the obsessive focus of *mōdōbungaku* authors on dogs severs that hybridity by presenting the animal as a synecdoche for service. By way of widening the discussion, my second chapter further details the life of a dog named Tarō who, in being himself disabled, upends stale representations and interpretations of disability by introducing a manifestation of narrative prosthesis that favors human ingenuity and rescue psychology over animals reduced to "model minority" status for their selfless loyalty.

Chapter 3, “Skin and Soil,” unravels the seam between humans and animals even more. In comparing Japanese horror author Otsuichi’s short story “Heimen inu” (Flat Dog) to Stephen King’s *Pet Sematary*, I examine ways in which pets serve as idols of trepidation. The traumas introduced by Otsuichi’s story—in which a girl’s tattoo of a dog comes to life and throws her entire understanding of materiality out of alignment—serve as starting points for tracing those disruptions to their ends. Moreover, trauma offers a framework by which to track our own reactions to animal narratives and how we might effectively learn from their troubles. I would go so far as to suggest, here at the outset, that all animal stories are trauma narratives at heart, attempts at reconciling potentially compromising ruptures of species barriers. I suggest further that we see these traumas as productive errors through which integration of humans and animals becomes more possible. King likewise actualizes the inner anxieties of his characters through inescapable manifestations of terror and invites us to consider the depth of our errors in a more critical light.

This brings me to my fourth and final chapter, “Shell is Other People,” in which I provide a reading of the novel *Kame-kun* (Mr. Turtle) by science fictionist Kitano Yūsaku, whose fable of a cyborg turtle trying to make ends meet in a human world urges readers to speculate outside the human experience. In this chapter I argue for science fiction as a prime space for integrated, trans-species themes. *Mr. Turtle* is impressive for its integration of social concepts and physiological interplays, as well as for its presumptive lean toward evolution of consciousness. Whereas much science fiction focuses on the advancements of humans and treats sentient animals as nemeses (à la *Planet of the Apes*), *Mr. Turtle* breaks the mold for incorporating human patterns and habits into its protagonist’s quotidian life.

The four body chapters sketched above track successive bands on what I call the trauma spectrum of Japanese animal literature, mapped as follows in Figure 2:

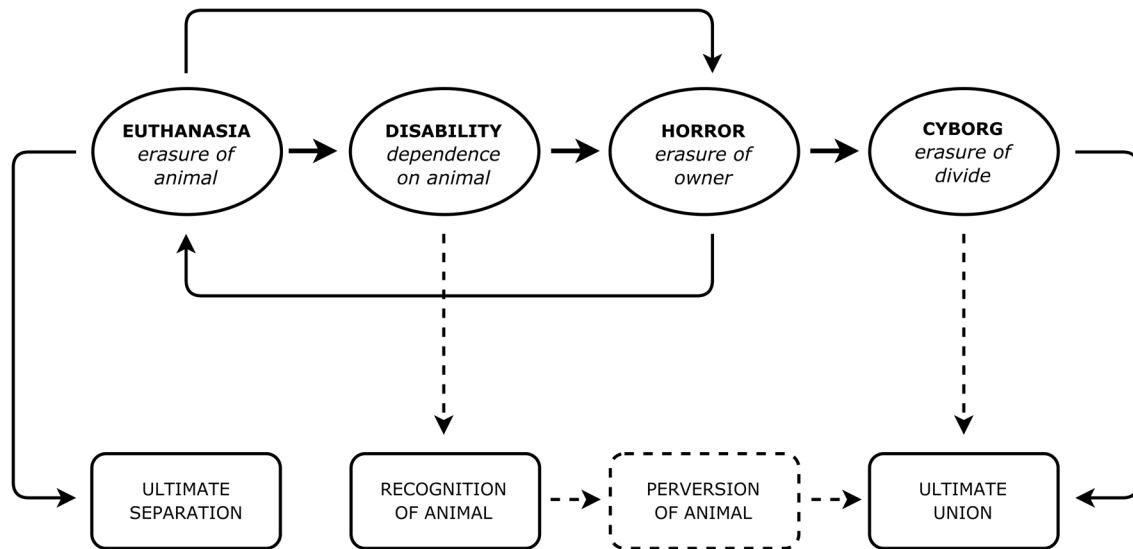


Figure 2: The Trauma Spectrum of Japanese Animal Literature

Each of the ovals above in the top row represents one chapter. “Euthanasia” is chapter 1, “Disability” chapter 2, and so on. The capped text is a single-word summation of that chapter’s theme or symbolic trope. Beneath that, in italics, is the relationship between humans and animals signaled by that trope in the work(s) of literature being analyzed. The first chapter frames euthanasia as an erasure of the animal through acts of killing. The second, on disability, sees the relationship between blind users and guide dogs as one of codependence. The third, horror, is the opposite of the first, signifying an erasure of the pet *owner* (or of ownership itself). It exists in mutual exclusion from the first, hence the looping arrows connecting the two categories. The fourth takes the science fiction trope of the cyborg as one possible erasure of the divide between humans and animals through interventions of advanced technology. It points to the end of another spectrum, signifying an ultimate union of species, while at the other end sits ultimate separation. Between them

is recognition of animality on the part of disability, which then must pass through a fuzzily bordered perversion of animality through the horror apparatus on its way toward union. This latter process is of especial relevance, because it forces one to ask whether trauma, as substratum of error, is indeed a necessary mechanism of change. What the cyborgian reality makes clear is that traumas are as much collective as they are individual, and must be taken as social realities within *and* without the text.

It is with all of this in mind that I train the antenna of my conclusion toward the signal of theoretical agency. As a corollary and challenge to posthumanism, I offer the concept of “postanimalism,” which looks to my Japan-specific analyses as prime sites for strategic change. Posthuman strands are generally: ecological (focused on chronology and hypermodernism), technovisual/technocultural (artificial intelligence, etc.), or philosophical (breaking down the centrality of western human sovereignty). But all are realities in which the animal has no way out, caged as it is by category. Even the mere inclusion of humanity under the umbrella of animality means that animality, though broadened, is unchanged in fixity. Needed is a radical explosion of the category of “animal” in and of itself toward hybrid existences in which relationships with humanity are so blurred that the very concept of difference is but a blip on the humanist’s radar. The red thread running through all of this is a specific notion of trauma, by which I mean to define a series of productive errors that necessitates reimagining the arbitrariness of human-animal divisions.

Animal literature constitutes a consensus exploitation project, one that thrives neither simply on the erasure of real animals nor their replacement by simulacra, but rather a marketable displacement of the two. Where to draw the line between respecting the

animal's otherness and othering the animal is the point of my conclusion. For now, suffice it to say this conundrum revolves around the word "transcending" in this dissertation's subtitle. I use the word in a multifarious sense. From the Latin root *transcendere*, which means "climb over or beyond, surmount, overstep," I take it as a starting point of outward action. That which is being transcended still exists, which is exactly what is happening in Japanese literature: the human-animal divide is being surmounted but not destroyed. I therefore use the word as an outing of error rather than as a call to action, as if so say, "Look how these authors are attempting to transcend the human-animal divide, and how much they deny in the process of doing so."

Let us not forget, too, the "trans" of transcendence, which signals not only a crossing over or going beyond, but also an in-between, which is the more relevant concept. The fundamental right of animals being denied is their right to be enmeshed. The problem with treating animals as humans or as family members lies in smothering their individuality. Japanese animal literature is therapy for a broken species, *Homo sapiens*, that continues to grapple with the implications of its traumatic impact on the living world, and seeks to cover that open wound by absorbing animals as invasively as possible into the scope of its own kind.

In the same way that universalism makes animals seem literary (that is, symbolic), animals make literature seem universal. Animals make visible sites of trouble in need of recalibration. And through the imposition of literature as technology, which explicitly configures writings as performances with material veracity through affect, the animals of contemporary Japanese literature can exist only behind closed eyes—which is to say, without recognition of their motivating life force. Two trajectories therefore emerge from

my chosen texts, on the one hand drawing readers into cerebral understandings of animal consciousness while on the other alienating those same readers through stubbornly romantic visions of animal life under human stewardship. These mindsets are mutually exclusive, and prove that Japan's fondness for animals may have the unintended side effect of undermining the intimacy one might expect to result from its proliferation. I am optimistic, however, that outing these contradictions as productive errors rather than as opportunities for speciesist navel gazing is the first step toward learning from them, and that within their progression exists a speculative future in which arbitrary boundaries between animals of any category might fall away in favor of hybrid technologies of thought and action.

Postlude: Sharing Limitations

What happens after the boundary between humans and animals is crossed? Should there be a blurring or hybridity? Posthumanists horizontally escape an answer by addition of indefinite, self-oriented worlds. In any event, this should be a query to which we always return in the act of treating animals as analytical subjects. As outlined in Figure 2, I am following a path in my selected Japanese corpus from separation to union of humanity and animality. To say whether this bears out through technology alone is, at best, speculative and, at worst, idealistic. We do well to remember that hybridity is, in fact, the status quo for all earthly relationships.¹²

My Japan focus seeks not only to delineate the cultural idiosyncrasies of a specific geographic location, but also to spotlight a neglected literary phenomenon that happens to

¹² This dynamic is being confirmed and encouraged in anthropological discourses, where hybridity reflects a “scientific desire to reconfigure bodies and social boundaries” (Sharp 2014: 280).

be situated in that location and how it connects to locations outside its borders. I analyze concrete examples in defiance of the chronological impulse of standard historiography, treating said examples as moving subjectivities in matrices of transposing elements, forces, and levels of creative production. What makes this project a posthumanist one is its attentiveness to paradigm shifts—in this case, of anthropocentrism—and willingness to dismantle the “basic unit of common reference for our species, our polity and our relationship to the other inhabitants of this planet” (Braidotti 2013: 2). My approach enlists understandings of nature/nurture that mirror feminist understandings of gender, as both have operated under the auspices of harmful binaries used to justify segregation, violence, and death in the almighty name of normativity. It also wants to avoid the dangers of this conflation by maintaining that living matter “involves complex and continuous negotiations with dominant norms and values and hence also multiple forms of accountability” (Braidotti 2013: 35; see also 3, 94) through forces of self-organizing life.

Accountability is precisely why I have chosen in the first chapter to discuss the kitten killings of Bandō Masako. Her provocative admission gets to the heart of the errors I set out to uncover. Bandō further reminds us that we have all been complicit in the deaths of animals in one way or another. Every time we read about the abuse or fatal mistreatment of an animal, we are implicated in that act by design. Bandō’s point is that we have learned to live in denial of our own complicity by channeling our love so far into animals that, outside of being made vessels for an unspecified longing, it is all they can do to stay alive.

How much of this is Japan-specific, and how much the byproduct of a capitalist patriarchy? The particularity of “Japaneseness” can be said to be as much a fiction as the animality to which I constantly refer. But it is an error of judgment through which one may

begin to articulate useful questions. While I concede that Japanese literature provides a viable screen on which to view the evolution of human relations with what Istvan Csicsery-Ronay (2014) calls “other-minded creatures,” the reader must at the same time bear in mind that my contributions are meant to practice what they preach, bleeding through boundaries between scholarly fields.

Globalization may indeed be a new form of imperialism,¹³ but many species of animals have never stopped being colonial subjects. Simply welcoming them into our homes is a change of location but not of vocation. Their emotional concubinage does little to undo the histories that brought them into their servitude. I choose to focus on pets because the entanglement of their relations does not lend itself to an easy parsing of “human” (ruler) over “animal” (subject).

If error is a necessary catalyst for living, it must also enable bodily, spiritual, and psychological reformation. The animals in the following stories figure not only as symbols or signs, but as living nodes within a larger grammar of which they are but the commas of run-on sentences. Disruptions of physical space and collapsing of bodies give way to a variety of interpretations, though one may chart a consistency of literary vision that expands to include total integration of human and animal forms. If humans’ separation from nature is itself a trauma,¹⁴ it must reflect an imbrication of social understandings of animals and their cultural representations. Despite persistent deconstructions of animals as empty vessels for humanity, they brim with life forces in the face of possible subjugation.

¹³ See Petras 2001; see also Kiely 2007.

¹⁴ For more on this, see “Interlude” of chapter 1.

The literary animal is many things—interesting not only for being a mirror and influencer of reality,¹⁵ but also a contaminant of it—and becomes more significant “when it conforms to reality the better to distort it, or better still: when it appropriates reality for its own ends, when it anticipates it to the point that the real no longer has time to be produced as such” (Baudrillard 2008: 86). Animals make a beautiful mess of things, emphasizing as they do limitations of humanity. Limitations are something we share. The animal is not one symbolic entity but an assemblage of cognitive processes by which the human comes to be relatively defined. Multidirectional thought imparts freshness to the enterprise of comparative literature, because in a sense all literature is already comparative: of its reality to another, of humans to animals, of parts to wholes. It is all about confluences over influences.

¹⁵ Laura Brown (2010: 25), for one, calls attention to purely literary animals for their “historical effectivity.”

CHAPTER 1: SARABANDŌ

Prelude: A Sacred Secret

A pivotal scene in the film *P.S. I Love You* (2007, dir. Richard LaGravenese) finds Daniel (Harry Connick Jr.) being rejected by lovelorn protagonist Holly (Hilary Swank). Holly's crestfallen yet determined suitor has reached a breaking point in his quest for meaningful relationships and confronts her in desperation: "[W]hat do women want?" Holly responds with what she calls a "sacred secret," whispering, "We have absolutely no idea what we want." This admission comes as a major emotional turning point, and puts men and women on an equal playing field in the narrative's Hollywood-inflected gender games. One imagines, however, that Holly's admission, if voiced more openly, would (at least in the world of the film) incite a rather heated discussion among, and perhaps even hatred from, her single allies.

Outside the cinema, sacred secrets are rarely offered so openly, if at all by will. Their disclosure comes at the whim of the confessor, who must absorb the aftershock. When one's listener is not a hapless romantic but the public at large, retaliation is guaranteed, as late Japanese writer Bandō Masako (1958-2014) discovered when she published her essay "Killing Kittens" (see Figure 3) in the "Promenade" section of the August 2006 issue of *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* (now *The Nikkei*). Therein she admitted to committing the eponymous act while living in Tahiti. In response to inevitable backlash, she wrote responses in *Mainichi Shimbun*'s Tokyo evening edition, invoking her right to free speech. But the vitriol against her was so thick by that point that no one could see through it to the argument she was trying to make.

Hence the portmanteau with which I have titled the present chapter, for indeed the conversation around this topic has since proceeded like a dance of circular movements. Bandō's central point had less to do with her act and more to do with the hypocrisy of which her confession was an intentional manifestation. The essay disclosed a "sacred secret," an error of modern social harmony by which engines of stable societies like Japan's run on pervasive and systematic animal violence. Her killing was but one of countless perpetrated under cover of a broader social order, an order that would not exist without those mechanisms of violence in place.¹⁶

The crux of Bandō's argument is that no one would ever deprive human beings of the right to give birth (though on this point she neglects the reality of forced human sterilizations). Doing so puts the owner's needs first and constitutes an indirect form of killing. Even the idea of raising pets, she claims, is itself a reflection of human self-interest that invalidates anything one does for them in the name of "life." She has killed her kittens not without pain or grief and claims to do so as her social responsibility (see Nakamura 2010: 11). For Bandō, modern-day society has lost touch with the meaning and abundance of life, and her brazen act was meant to alert readers to a sobering question, which, as Joanna Swabe (2005: 105) would phrase it, is: "Are we capable of loving our pets to death?"

From the outset, given the chapter sketch I provided in this dissertation's introduction, Bandō's essay appear to be the opposite of the guide-dog narratives I will discuss in chapter 2. In this respect, it may seem that Bandō's horrifying actions are "outside" the unity toward which this entire dissertation makes its theoretical pub crawl. I start with Bandō to give the reader a sense of the scope of boundaries involved in my

¹⁶ In this context, "violence" refers not only to the industrial atrocities of factory farming and pet euthanasia, but also the private killings carried out, whether directly or by proxy, by individuals every day.

project. It is also why I am not particularly interested in coming down on one side or the other of the debate her words set into motion. She may be an easy target for condemnation. She also presents us with one type of human-animal relationship in its rawest form.

Here I examine the implications of Bandō's arguments with due attention, drawing on the motivations of sympathizers and critics alike to construct a practical image of human-animal relations. All this I pass through the filter of Bandō's worldview, but not without situating "Killing Kittens" in the broader sweep of Japanese popular literature before examining the strategic facets of her character. Beginning with Bandō places us at an extreme and encourages critical thinking around one aspect of trauma only so far implied, and which will aid in seeing Bandō's bravery by tracking the ripple effect of her actions. But first, it will be necessary to historicize her act in relation to Japan's so-called "pet boom," which at its height was ill-prepared to accept her modest proposal.

Of Pets and Possibilities

Japan's pet-keeping practices constitute an error of magnificent proportions. In the United States, where the keeping of pets was institutionalized in the late 19th century (Grier 2006: 178), bonds between humans and pets are commonplace and long established. In Japan, however, the story of humans and pets began in earnest in the mid-1990s, when the upwardly mobile archipelago underwent a massive "pet boom." Since that time, novels, short stories, and biographies about dogs and cats have topped Japanese bestseller lists.¹⁷

¹⁷ Japan's canine literature is distinguished by its largely anecdotal slant. Stories about real dogs far outweigh the fictional. Even in the United States, where the archetypal Lassie and Old Yeller reign supreme in the popular imagination, the literary market has over the past decade carved two distinct niches for true-to-life dog stories. One mines the exploits of dogs deployed alongside American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan (likeminded tales, to a lesser degree, can also be found in Japan between and during World Wars I and II). The other highlights hardships and reunion narratives of pets displaced by natural disaster (e.g., Hurricane Katrina) in the American south. And while notable standalone books—John Grogan's *Marley & Me* (2005), Larry Levin's *Oogy*

As a cultural event worthy of study, this pet boom is long overdue for critical attention, and the Bandō controversy is a fitting window into its inner workings.

Relationships between Japanese people and animals are prone to speculation. One might just as well analyze furry fandom (the practice of dressing oneself as a favorite animated animal character) or cat cafés (where lonely urbanites sip their coffee in the company of live felines) as animals in visual art or the food industry. Intriguing as they are, these phenomena lend only topical insight into the origins of Japan’s sudden obsession with pets. In addition to citing a connection between falling birth rates, Ōmura (2009: 132) attributes Japan’s rise in pet ownership to the fact that animals offer a “companionship without sin” that is immune to the conflicts of modern nuclear families and offers an attractive spiritual alternative to those without serious religious ties. I suspect, however, that the voraciousness with which Japanese animal lovers consume pet-boom literature indicates growing awareness of companion animals as beings with emotional capacities equal to, if not beyond, those of humans. The great error of all this can be found in the lack of concerted action born of that awareness and, not least of all, in the passive segregations inherent in views like Ōmura’s.

Fixation on pets may not seem complex, for the fascination of human-animal relationships is as fundamental as life itself. Japanese intellectual approaches tend toward the framing of pets as family members (*kazoku dōzen*). In his 2008 study of “pet-boom psychology,” Ishida Osamu notes the intense amount of care that owners put into their

(2010), and *Cesar’s Way* (2007) by dog whisperer Cesar Millan, to name a few—have rendered the “problem dog” a target of escapist interest, the American reading public adores the triumphant dog. Appropriate to consider is not only whether a given culture’s perceptions of animals have any discernible effect on representations of the same, but also whether the opposite might also be true. That is, whether Japan’s pet boom has left its own indelible mark on the imaginations of pet owners.

pets—a level unheard of before Japan’s pet boom took precedence.¹⁸ In parallel sociological studies conducted in 1991 and 2001, Ishida discovered remarkable changes in owners’ attitudes, who had in that span come to see pets as the missing pieces to their domestic puzzles. Much of this shift, he notes, has less to do with changing views toward animals (these were constant throughout either study) and more with changing dynamics of what feminist scholar Ueno Chizuko (1994) calls “family identity.” In an age where cohabiters, same-sex couples, and other nontraditional families—what Yamada Masahiro (2007) alternatively dubs “subjective families” (*shukanteki kazoku*)—are becoming normalized, animals, the argument goes, are no longer so difficult to accept into the family sphere.¹⁹

The keeping of dogs and cats was once rare among Japanese children. Most animals before the pet boom were kept outside rather than indoors,²⁰ and mainly for “educational” purposes (see also Nagata 1995)—in other words to teach children not about animal-directed companionship but about human-directed loyalty and care. Pettman’s notion of error resurfaces here through the ways in which human households embrace dogs with perceptions of family. Ishida’s studies reveal that owners see their pets not only as family, but also as “blood relatives,” “children,” and “younger brothers/sisters” (Ishida 2008: 26).

¹⁸ Attending Japan’s pet boom, if not also inciting it, is its drive for profit, as detailed in a special issue of the *Weekly Toyo Keizai* from 29 May 2010, in which animal health is cited as a prime motivating factor in the ever-growing market of “pet business” (*petto bujinesu*).

¹⁹ Such an argument, however, is indicative of a sort of “reverse speciesism.” Whereas speciesism compares the plight of animals to women and racial and ethnic minorities, the incorporation of animals into the family sphere signals not so much a welcoming of animals on their own terms but a willful erasure of species difference. Unfortunately, this does little to escape from the oppressive tactics under which such thinking operates.

²⁰ Though in his study of “pet bird handbooks” (*kaidori zōshi*), Hosokawa Hiroaki (2006: 1-3) argues that Japan’s modern pet boom is predated by a similar surge during the Edo period, his focus on birds indicates that dogs and cats were not so much enjoyed as pets by commoners.

Doing so, however, comes at the severe risk of undermining pets' inherent needs. Ishida bows to errorful notions himself when discussing family psychology around cohabitation with pets. He cites the tensions that develop between children and parents as they grow and how pets, despite having become full-fledged family members, never attain viable status as parents or spouses. Because of this, they offer the possibility of a relationship without tension (ibid., 28). This places them in a perpetually infantile position,²¹ the misassumption of which helps owners get around the taboo against "petting" in Japan. With no social barriers against their affection, owners and pets alike may indulge in intimate physical contact without worry, and in a manner that eases tensions of otherwise fragile relationships.

Error manifests itself as addiction to connections one cannot have outside the home. This so-called "healing relationship" (ibid., 31) comes with the price of not seeing animals for who they are. As Ishida observes, "Japanese society seems to have no interest in examining concerns for animals and nature from within the web of human social relations" (ibid., 37). In this sense, pets act as "gap-fillers" between actors in unstable relationships. Ishida shuns use of the term "companion animal" to describe his subjects, because in Japan relationships with pets are doomed to be unequal. "Pets go on being children forever," he asserts, "because we cannot live without them" (ibid., 39-40). The error of this hierarchy is integral to its undoing.

Errors are especially informative in relation to dogs, who constitute the primary species populating these pages. Many is the pet owner who asserts dogs' human-like intelligence and sense of right and wrong, and believes that dogs should be treated as

²¹ Donna Haraway (2011: 158) would adamantly disagree with this, because she sees full-grown dogs as adults in their own right.

human beings. Such an approach undermines the essence of canine intelligence. The M.O. of critical animal studies is to move away from seeing animals as mere reflections of human behavior toward embracing animals as individuals, on their own terms. Dogs are a special case, however, in that their individuality depends on being reflections not of humans by default, but of whoever is willing to dominate them as pack leaders. As Frans de Waal (1996: 93) observes, “Owners who hate to be masters deprive their pets of the element they need most for psychological stability: a clearly defined social position.” Banal attempts at making animals feel included become fragmented and problematic when viewed through the lens of Japanese pet-boom literature, and at the expense of facing some harsh realities.

Enter Bandō Masako.

Killing Kittens

Bandō’s background is as eclectic as her writing. After graduating in Home Economics from the Department of Housing and Architecture at Nara Women’s University, she went on to study architecture and design for two years in Milan. She then returned to Japan to become a freelance writer, starting with children’s books before transitioning into adult-oriented writings, thereby securing her reputation as a formidable emotional stylist, before relocating to her most controversial setting: Tahiti. Bandō won multiple literary awards in as many genres, including the 1996 Naoki Prize for *Yamahaha* (Mother of the Mountain) and the 2002 Shibata Renzaburō Prize for *Mandara dō* (Mandala Road), and these successes earned her admiration from readers and other writers alike. All of that changed when she wrote about tossing live animals over a Tahitian cliff.

In the 2009 book “*Koneko-goroshi*” o *kataru* (On “Killing Kittens”), the author includes her entire series of *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* essays, followed by debates with three

apologists: music critic and peace activist Higashi Takuma, nonfiction writer Kobayashi Teruyuki, and diplomat-author Satō Masaru. The preliminary essays cover a range of topics, all leading up to her shocking reveal in “Killing Kittens.” Most relate to her life on Tahiti in autobiographical vignettes. Through these one may understand her motivations for wanting to confess in the first place.

In the collection’s first essay, Bandō paints a picture of Tahiti as a place of death. The island is home to countless chickens, whose corpses provide her (and her dogs) with a free, sustainable food source. Her willingness to make use of said chickens ensures their deaths do not go unnoticed.²² She recalls the quasi-Buddhist attitude she held toward animals when first living in Tahiti, a time when she lived by the credo “All life is precious,” apologizing to any housefly she inadvertently killed. But after some time, Tahiti began to feel oppressive (Bandō 2009: 49). She became more selective as she began killing those who invaded her home space. “Of all the trees,” she analogizes, “I chose the ones I wanted to cultivate, and respected their territory, but cut down the trespassers” (ibid., 50).

Bandō’s tone is self-indulgent and jaded. She comes across as one fed up with a reprobate society. At their core, she says, humans are experts at purposing and repurposing things. Such adaptability gives objects lives of their own. “But,” she goes on, “in societies where use is strictly compartmentalized, brief shelf lives resign objects to a single fate” (ibid., 17-18). Living beings, she says, are wholly included in this category of ephemeral things. We are limited resources. This helps to explain the expendability of animals and humans as part of a never-ending binary, each reinforcing the other in a bizarrely denied

²² One day she even comes across a dead cat, foreshadowing things to come. It is a sight she finds utterly pitiful at first but which, after eight years on Tahiti, is one she gets used to.

mutual exclusion—what is, in fact, an inclusion—but whose limited use makes them ideal targets for fleeting literary engagement.

For Bandō, experiencing death is experiencing life. “Everyone knows they’re going to die someday,” she goes further to say, “but there’s no use in ridding oneself of the fear of death” (ibid., 13). Fear of finitude is a supremely controlling force, one that stimulates human beings to act. Which is why, she observes, horror novels are so popular (ibid., 23): they allow readers and those writing for them the indulgence of control over mortal anxieties in highly contrived settings (for more on this, see chapter 3). We might profess our love for animals, but this is a surface-level response resulting from social conditioning, when in fact we live so much of our lives trying to separate ourselves from animals (ibid., 68) because their shorter lifespans remind us of death.

Bandō wishes that modern urban society had more frequent and direct experience with dead animals, for the city “is a space that rejects death” (ibid., 12). This rejection is more than a psychological defense mechanism. It is, for her, a form of evil. She plays on the Japanese idiom *oni wa soto, fuku wa uchi* (out with demons, in with fortune) by suggesting that our demons flourish on the inside whenever we admit to these hypocrisies of killing. Normally the phrase implies that evil is exogenous and that goodness is endogenous, but here evil flourishes within in proportion to self-interest. Denial of evil allows it room to grow (ibid., 56-58). Such evil came out explicitly when campaigns against Bandō’s admission to killing kittens exploded online. In response, Bandō wryly noted that the power of words is greater in print than online—that words are just fleeting symbols on screens, whereas on a printed page they move with life—and that her essay was more genuine than any denouncements against it by the medium through which each side of the

fence chose to express itself. Note the egregious commitment to outside (*soto*) and inside (*uchi*). Bandō brings a necessary rupture—our error *du jour*—in compromising the integrity of this dichotomy. It is a threshold of which humans cannot seem to let go, but Bandō is challenging her readers to do just that.

こんなことを書いたら、どんなに糾弾されるかわかっている。世の動物愛護家には、鬼畜のように罵倒されるだろう。動物愛護管理法に反するといわれるかもしれない。そんなこと承知で打ち明けるが、私は子猫を殺している。

家の隣の崖の下がちょうど空地になっっているので、生まれ落ちるや、そこに放り投げるのである。タヒチ島の私の住んでいるあたりは、人家はまばらだ。草ぼうぼうの空地や山林が広がり、そこでは野良猫、野良犬、野鼠などの死骸がごろごろしている。子猫の死骸が増えたとて、人間の生活環境に被害は及ぼさない。自然に還るだけだ。

子猫殺しを犯すに至ったのは、色々と考えた結果だ。私は猫を三匹飼っている。みんな雌だ。雄もいたが、家に居つかず、

子猫殺し

近所を徘徊して、やがていなくなつた。残る三匹は、どれも赤ん坊の頃から育ててきた。当然、成長すると盛りがついて、子を産む。タヒチでは、野良猫はわんさかいる。これは犬も同様だが、血統書付きの犬猫でもない、もらってくるころ

プロムナード

なんかかない。避妊手術を、まず考えた。しかし、どうも決心がつかない。獣の雌にとつての「生」とは、盛りのついた時にセックスして、子供を産むことではないか。その本質的な生を、人間の都合で奪いとっていいものだろうか。

猫は幸せさ、うちの猫には愛情を



もって接している、猫もそれに応えてくれる、という人もいるだろう。だが私は、猫が飼い主に甘える根元には、餌をもらえぬからということがあると思う。生きるための手段だ。もし猫が言葉を話せるならば、避妊手術なんかされたくない、子を産みたい、というだろう。

飼い猫に避妊手術を施すことは、飼い主の責任だといわれている。し

坂東 眞砂子

かしそれは飼い主の都合でもある。子猫が野良猫となると、人間の生活環境を害する。だから社会的責任として、育てられない子猫は、最初から産まないように手術する。私は、これに異を唱えるものではない。

ただ、この問題に関しては、生まれてすぐの子猫を殺しても同じことだ。子猫を殺すか、できた子を殺すかの差だ。避妊手術のほろが、殺しという厭なことに手を染めずすむ。

そして、この差の間には、親猫にとつての「生」の経験の有無、子猫にとつては、殺されるといふ悲劇が横たわっている。とちがいがいいとか悪いとか、いえるものではない。

愛玩動物として獣を飼うこと自体が、人のわがままに根ざした行為な

のだ。獣にとつての「生」とは、人間の干渉なく、自然の中で生きることだ。生き延びるために喰うとか、被害を及ぼされるから殺すといった生死に関わることでない限り、人か他の生き物の「生」にちよっかいを出すのは間違っている。人は神ではない。他の生き物の「生」に関して、正しいことなぞできるはずはない。どこかで矛盾や不合理が生じてくる。

人は他の生き物に対して、避妊手術を行う権利などない。生まれた子を殺す権利もない。それでも、愛玩のために生き物を飼いたいならば、飼い主としては、自分のより納得できる道を選択するしかない。

私は自分の育ててきた猫の「生」の充実を選び、社会に対する責任として子殺しを選択した。もちろん、それに伴う殺しの痛み、悲しみも引き受けてのことである。(作家)

Figure 3: "Killing Kittens," as it first appeared in *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, August 2006²³

²³ Photo source: http://stakasaki.at.webry.info/200608/article_14.html (accessed 29 December 2015).

All of this brings us to “Killing Kittens,” in which Bandō funnels these sentiments into a single, potent essay. I translate it in full:

I’m fully aware of the backlash I’ll face for writing this. Animal rights activists are sure to brand me as a savage. Knowing this, still I confess: I kill newborn kittens.

There’s a stretch of land at the bottom of a cliff near my house. This is where I throw them. Homes are few and far between here on Tahiti. Weed-infested fields and mountain forests spread as far as the eye can see, all of them ridden with the remains of feral cats, dogs, and field mice. The piles of kitten corpses I’ve left behind don’t encroach upon anyone else’s living space. They simply return to nature.

I’ve committed these killings for a variety of reasons.

I have three cats, all female. I used to have a male, but he was never much of a homebody and took to wandering the area until one day he vanished altogether. I’ve raised the remaining three since they were kittens. Naturally, as they’ve matured, they’ve gone into heat and had litters of their own. Tahiti is positively overrun with feral cats. The same is true of dogs, but no one will take them in without pedigree. At first, I thought of spaying my cats. But, no matter how much I tried to justify it, I just couldn’t bring myself to do it. What else did “life” mean for females of the animal kingdom, I told myself, if not mating when they went into heat and birthing their young? And was it right for humans to come in and rob them of that essential life?

There are those who would say that cats are a blessing, that cats deserve to be treated with love and respond accordingly. But in my experience, cats depend on their owners for one thing and one thing only: food. We are a means of survival. If cats could speak, I’m sure they would be quite adamant in their desire to produce offspring.

It’s often said that pet owners owe it to their cats to have them sterilized, when in fact this operation is performed without any input from the patients.

Once a cat turns feral, it becomes a pariah in human quarters. It is therefore said to be our social responsibility to have cats spayed and neutered, so that unwanted strays won’t be born in the first place. That’s all well and good.

But killing a newborn kitten is no different. One method gets rid of the kitten at the source, the other just after it is born. Spaying and neutering ease our guilt by keeping our hands clean from anything so reprehensible as murder.

For the parent cat, this means the difference between experiencing or not experiencing “life,” while for the kitten it means lying wait for the tragedy of being exterminated. One cannot definitively say which is better and which is worse.

The behavior of keeping animals as pets is rooted in human selfishness. For animals, “life” means existing in nature without human interference. So long as

their survival isn't under direct threat of harm, humans are mistaken in meddling with the lives of others. Humans are not gods. They are incapable of doing the right thing when it comes to creaturely life. There's a contradiction here somewhere.

Humans have no right to sterilize other living things, just as they don't have the right to kill their offspring. If they truly want to raise another living creature as a pet, then owners must choose whatever way works best for them.

I've chosen to enrich the "life" of my cats by killing their kittens out of social responsibility. The pain and grief that come from killing, it goes without saying, are mine alone to bear.

(Bandō 2009: 69-71)

Bandō's essay was a troubling error. Equally troubling was the swiftness with which detractors flew to their keyboards to share their ire, as also their total unwillingness to consider the points Bandō was trying to make. For indeed, it was not so much Bandō's actions but her *open admission* of them that constituted an intellectual emergency for her readers. In spilling the "sacred secret" that we are all complicit to some degree in animal killing, Bandō had crossed a taboo line, and all anyone wanted to do was push her back behind and redraw it. The more fundamental question, then, is not whether Bandō is a sadist but why her admission haunts us.

In a case like Bandō's, one can hardly blame readers for becoming defensive and, because by that point she had already committed her act, even antagonistic in their responses. Bandō moves away from welfarism, which believes that humane treatment of animals justifies their status as "pets," and squarely into abolitionism, which states that all nonhuman animals should no longer be treated as property or resources. As pets, they are both: property in being owned and resources for emotional reciprocation or status boosting. Bandō has no eyes or tolerance for a middle ground, but for readers unwilling to recognize the heart of the problem, there can be no maintenance of the body it for which it provides blood.

In addition to exposing what she believes to be a hypocrisy of the modern subject, Bandō has violated an implicit status quo. By owning a pet, one takes responsibility for that pet, to whom one should never bring willful harm. Bandō's sacred secret, then, is not ignorance of what she wants but of what those who quest for the love of animals do *not* want. They do not want to entertain the notion that their intimacy might be harmful, that their affection might be counterproductive, that interest in animals might be nothing more than interest in oneself. There is, instead, a consensus compromise at work: so long as we are going to treat animals as things, at least let them be *living* things. Bandō has betrayed the secret of pet ownership, the selective amnesia of its fundamental inequality.

The brevity of Bandō's piece is both its asset and its downfall, on the one hand allowing her to make a salient point without pulling any punches, while on the other failing to prepare the reader for a soft reaction to some hard choices, especially for those without the benefit of having read the essays preceding it. Then again, it is difficult to imagine that any amount of contextual knowledge might have shielded Bandō from such online comments as: *She's the very definition of human egotism; If you ask me, Bandō Masako should suffer the same fate as those kittens; Why don't you try throwing yourself off a cliff? Maybe then you'll understand the value of life* (cited Nakamura 2010: 8). Despite the obvious aggression that internet forums lubricate by default, any criticisms overhead-smashed into Bandō's court were the very ones she had lobbed at them in the first place. Even Koike Yuriko, at that time Minister of the Environment, called it "a setback for animal welfare."

Pundits ranging from writers Tatematsu Wahei and Sakonji Sachiko, the latter known for her book *Sokuratesu ni natta neko* (The Cat Who Became Socrates), to music

critic Yukawa Reiko and journalist Egawa Shōko were for the most part willing to meet Bandō halfway, admitting to the hypocrisy of sterilization yet without owning up to it. Bandō fared far worse in the tabloids, which depicted her as an abnormal personality, prone to perversion and lapses of judgment. Not surprisingly, she faced her biggest backlash from her target audience: cat lovers. Yet Bandō was saying so much more, not only about pet-lovers but about Japanese society and its tainting of “life.” This essay was her greatest attempt to expose the contradictions into which that society had been socialized.

Once critics had decided that Bandō was insane, that her cognizance was a self-serving fiction she used to shield herself from the guilt of acts she had committed, few were left able to have a conversation. Faith was lost on both sides. Through the error of her confession, Bandō broke the trust of her audience in revealing what she believed to be a tacit understanding shared by all pet owners as agents of indentured servitude, exposing an even larger consensus error in the process. Meanwhile, her detractors broke trust by ignoring the implications of her admission. Like accomplices cowering under the spotlight of an interrogation lamp, they grew defensive.

A third trust was broken between the pet owners Bandō criticized and their pets. In Bandō’s thinking, owners had already betrayed their pets for lives of slavery by grooming them with excessive love. By turning her killing of kittens into a personal anecdote, Bandō had confirmed the personhood of each of her victims (cf. Hearne 1994: 25). When confronted with Bandō’s narrative, pet owners were likely more shocked not at the act but at their own reaction to it. They began to realize just how much they adored their pets and, in the face of their mortality, nourished their own humanity to make up for Bandō’s

supposed lack thereof. This confirms the difference between a confession and a story. One tries to solve a problem; the other tries to *dissolve* it (cf. *ibid.*, 27).

No Animal Left Behind?

If anything in Bandō's writing is worthy of critique, it is her blatant frustration with Japanese society. Her essays serve as broad platforms for pronouncements of Japanese character. But even here, couched in seemingly racist language against her own people, there is a conscious tactic at work, attempting as she is to bring Japan down to animal level. In her perception, any spirituality at the core of Japanese life is based on fear (Bandō 2009: 21-22) and on avoidance of expressing it. Is this another "sacred secret"? She seems to think so, and it must have come across to her readers as a traumatic encounter in the pages of a trade magazine. While trauma might have been a catalyst for social change, it came far too soon in the consciousness of a nation yet to reconcile its own collective memories.

Bandō stands apart from her native Japan in treatment of language. She believes in the power of words and holds on to their meanings indefinitely, whereas in her view Japanese people prefer the virtue of "actions speak louder than words" (*ibid.*, 27-28). For this she blames a habit of repression, noting that open, emotional reactions are immediately shot down. It is not that Japan is a repressed society when it comes to social relations, but in relation to the self through habitual mechanisms of denial around mortality and the ways in which people attempt to escape it. Bandō is trying her best to escape from the enclosure of identity, as in an earlier essay, in which she admits to being attracted to the line "As yet I have no name" in Natsume Sōseki's *Wagahai wa neko de aru* (I Am a Cat) for its limitless implications of life before naming (*ibid.*, 20). The act of naming confers not only identity to, but also ownership of, an animal in a society where fragmentation of names across

contexts, audiences, and functions is the norm. And for a culture that has yet to properly deal with its own colonial past, which can hardly admit to its complicity in sexual slavery and genocide during WWII yet so suddenly jumps on the animal rights bandwagon, perhaps it is no wonder that Bandō should feel this way. Yet Bandō is more likely to be remembered as one who practiced, not exposed, the hypocrisy of selective discriminations.

The volume in which the full essay sequence appears (*On “Killing Kittens”*) is prefaced by a note from publisher Tanigawa Shigeru, who speaks of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, during which time Hutu extremists, through their propagandistic radio channels, spoke of killing the “Tutsi cockroaches.” Similarly, Bandō’s essay instigated the internet equivalent of a riot, what the author calls a “Bandō Bashing.” Only now *she* was the vermin to be exterminated as an unfortunate hiccup in the (Japanese) human landscape. Only a precious few took up the challenge she was posing toward reassessing human relationships with animals. The anonymous online comments oozed pure hatred, even leading to half-hearted (and ultimately futile) attempts to indict her.

Folklorist Nakamura Ikuo (2010: 11), and Bandō by extension, would surely disagree with zoologist and natural historian Ishida Osamu (2008), who as I discuss in this dissertation’s introduction believes that one reason behind Japan’s pet boom is the utter lack of emotional friction promised by the human-pet relationship. As Nakamura and Bandō would have it, an obscured friction leads to the very contradictions to which she was attempting to draw attention. Because of this attempt, dissenting voices took unanimous pains to psychoanalyze her “abnormality” (see Nakamura 2010: 10). Many rebuttals—notably, one by philosopher Sakonji Sachiko—saw a contradiction in Bandō’s logic, which spoke of kittens as existing within the sphere of a cat’s “life,” even as she

described her conscious deprivation of their own. In pointing out as much, Sakonji ignored the fact that humans are constantly being killed to prove any number of social, political, or legislative points. It was a fulcrum that went unaddressed in the first wave of criticism, when all Bandō was trying to do was turn those questions back on the rest of us. Haters looked away, preferring to impose human standards on her victims as a means of deflecting the challenge posed (cf. Laycock 1999: 277).

More than overlooked, Bandō's argument was fiercely and willfully ignored. Nakamura therefore has no compunctions echoing Bandō in her assessment of Japanese hypocrisy. The problem, as he sees it, "is with modern Japanese society on the whole, not just between people and pets: the significance of life common to all living things has become sullied" (Nakamura 2010: 14). One could expand his argument to say that the more "liberal" the society, the more animal lives within it become expendable. As even Inokuma Hisashi notes, "[i]n liberal societies, industry continues to produce as long as there is demand. The consumers come first." Pets are products of a self-indulgent industry "having no more value than any other commodity in a consumer society" (Inokuma 2001: 164). The very notion of any product possessing "life" is heretical. Bandō has performed consciously what many do unconsciously daily. Could it be that her enemies revile her because they revile themselves?

Amid this defensive storm came a voice of reason from nonfiction writer Kobayashi Teruyuki. Noting that "in Japan upwards of 400,000 dogs and cats abandoned by irresponsible owners are euthanized at health care centers every year," he attributes the sudden spike in abandoned animals to the pet boom itself, during which people were buying pets without sufficiently considering the responsibilities involved. For him, so-called

animal welfare centers are “not a far cry from Auschwitz” (Nakamura 2010: 15-16). The gas chambers used for daily euthanizing are called “Dream Boxes,” a euphemism that reflects an inability to cope with their function.²⁴ After a week, unclaimed dogs and cats are herded into these chambers and killed with a carbon dioxide cocktail. Nakamura goes one analytical step further when he says that murdered animals thus “become repositories for the selfishness of such owners’ negligence” (ibid., 15).

Kobayashi’s 2006 book *Doriimu bokkusu* (Dream Box), released just two months before Bandō’s ill-fated article appeared, was favorably received for relegating the problematic act of killing to a salary-sanctioned *public* service. Though Dream Box killings are routine, “the staff must forcibly herd dogs and cats, who defecate out of sheer terror as they desperately resist, and watch as they scream when the gas is turned on, eyes rolling back as they drop to the floor, foaming at the mouth” (ibid., 16). According to Kobayashi, who conducted interviews at welfare centers across Japan, Dream Box workers believe that owners should take responsibility by killing their pets *themselves*, noting that for every individual who cherishes a pet as a member of the family are those who toss pets aside like so much waste once they have outlived their usefulness or interest. Every time Kobayashi observed this horror firsthand, he thought, “I am being shown a part of the true state of Japan and its people” (cited ibid., 17).²⁵ Kobayashi followed this thread to its source when he interviewed Bandō. In that interview, Bandō highlights the stress taken on by welfare center workers, who must deal with their roles as repositories for a cowardly public.

²⁴ It is worth noting that “euphemism” and “euthanasia” share the same etymological root in the Greek *eu*, meaning “good.” Thus, “euthanasia” means “good death,” and has “become a catchall to describe a wide variety of killing practices; the term covers too much ground and obscures too many moral nuances” (Pierce 2012: 166).

²⁵ Awareness of this has led some centers, such as that in Kumamoto City, to require owners time to reflect on their decision whenever they bring an animal in (Nakamura 2010: 18).

True to form, Bandō was never quite satisfied with the pet boom explanation. In an open rebuttal to her detractors, published in the 16 September 2006 issue of *Shūkan Gendai*, she coined the term “sterilization of love” (*ai no funin*) to describe what she sees as a pervasive modern sickness. It is this sickness that allows us to put so much love into their pets as substitutes for a real love we fear giving to each other and ourselves. Instead, love has been replaced by adoration for pets, whom we sterilize in return for their affections, as if to keep those affections centered on us. The act of sterilizing pets is a form of denial, which lies naked once someone like Bandō breaks the fourth wall that surrounds it, and so people can only react with hatred because they take her killing of kittens personally. Bandō ends her rebuttal by saying:

I suffer from a sickness known as the sterilization of love, and all this commotion over “Killing Kittens” has come from those similarly afflicted. These are the ones attacking me as crazy, even as I search for a way out. What I’ve come to realize after going through this turmoil is that society is patently sick. Isn’t it about time we stopped this abnormal attack against kitten killing, peer into the abyss of Japanese society in which this phenomenon occurs, and talk about it together?
(cited *ibid.*, 21-22)

Rather than make the simple attribution of mistreatment to the pet boom or the “self-centered ideologies of animal welfare groups,” she tried her best to make a case for a “far-reaching pathology, a discord of human relations in the corroded corridors of modern Japanese people’s hearts” (*ibid.*, 22).

In pre-modern Japan, notes Bandō, unwanted dogs and cats were unceremoniously tied up in bags and tossed into a river. No one had a problem with it then (Bandō 2009: 153), and this practice continues in rural areas. She attributes the change in attitude to the rise of capitalism, which depends on love of animals for balance. Protecting animals prevents them from being used up as marketable resources. Hence the protection of whales and pandas, which spell lucrative business for water parks and zoos around the world (*ibid.*,

246-247). But we live in a society that conceals its discomforts, and would much rather replace one problem with another.

The circularity of this debate goes back to Bandō's rebuttal, in which she highlights the disproportionate number of lives taken by human beings every year (through abortions, factory farming, etc.). Her critique emphasizes the arbitrary hierarchy of animal worth, which holds that animals raised as pets have higher—that is, human—value as compared to those raised for food, which have only nutritional. Nakamura goes so far as to claim that Japan's obsession with pet-keeping is pathological (ibid., 20-22; see also Kure 2010). This, says Bandō, has resulted in a sterilization of our own love for each other and has rendered our love for humankind a landscape devoid of life. The "love" with which we have replaced the genuine article consists of lavishing affection on animals in lieu of humans while also modifying them through forced sterilization. This sickness is a direct symptom of our fear of love's impotence. We repress that fear until it breaks through in violence toward animals and self-projects impotence on our pets. As a result, "the moment we hear the words 'Kitten Killing,' we experience that shock as if we were the ones being killed, and we erupt with hatred toward the one doing the killing" (Nakamura 2010: 21). What is truly abnormal, in Bandō's mind, is the attack being sustained against her.

Interlude: The Trauma of Becoming

Upon seeing footage of pets left homeless by the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, Japanese filmmaker Inudō Isshin remarked, "The eye of the camera looms over them, capturing something of the human heart in all those animals displaced by the earthquake. There's a spark of life in their eyes. They stare at the camera, as if to say, 'Are you just

going to stand there and watch us die?”²⁶ It is not unusual to read human suffering into animals displaced by catastrophe. The trauma of natural disaster blurs the lines between human and animal communities, if only because the power of climate reminds humans that they are subject to greater forces just as animals may be to theirs. By way of humility, one reaches out to animals for solace of empathy, desiring completion of a circuit one might normally take for granted or deny.

Like the footage that sparked Inudō’s comment, writing is a technovisual process by influence of which the exigencies of becoming succumb to categorical breakdown. As an emblematic medium by which one might best understand personal connections to, and disconnections from, animals, writing provides an intermediary space in which visions of animals may be held and scrutinized. Animality comes to be fixed and unchanging even as humanity encompasses it in a sphere of continual change. In a sense, animality is immortal. It precedes us and will outlive us, emanating from a “wild” core of biological existence, from which humans have become separated in postlapsarian fantasies of modernity. When the animal dies or is close to dying, it rends the fabric of social order. Literature survives as a persistent apparatus by which an overwhelming plenitude of animality comes to be fixed as words on a page, allowing a reader the benefit of private scrutiny.

According to patrice jones (2007: 161), self-imposed dissociations from nature and other animals are traumas in and of themselves. These dissociations are necessary initiations for individuated humans. As a process of becoming activated by literary production, trauma challenges long-held anthropomorphisms, which assume that “people understand things by *attributing* characteristics to them” rather than “by *perceiving*

²⁶ <http://inunekoningen2.com/comments/> (accessed 29 November 2014)

characteristics *in them*” (Milton 2005: 255-256, original emphasis). Kay Milton offers her own term, “egomorphism,” to better describe the process by which “ego” or “self” becomes “the primary point of reference for understanding both human and non-human things” (ibid., 255). Writing produced and consumed for human beings reinforces the egomorphic angle and softens the blow of seemingly immanent traumas in the cushioning of plot and exposition.

The separation of humans from animals consistently reinscribes itself in the former’s obsessive narratives about the latter. One repeats the story of the lost or abused pet because of the way in which it affords the very telling of that trauma. Narratives become part of the collective memory—or forgetting, as the case may be—of schisms between species and environments, of which one seeks recovery through the intensifying project of animal-themed storytelling. Specifically, stories about pets—and especially those displaced by disaster—inform environmental understandings in general, because one holds on to those relationships as proof of actual contact. In treating contact as substitution, one furthers oneself from animals and assumes that this separation is tantamount to trauma. The assertion of trauma itself becomes a trauma to replace the trauma being ignored.

Vicki Hearne, a philosopher and animal trainer who sought reciprocity in her relationship with animals, provides illustration by way of Fyodor Dostoyevsky, whose humanistic Ivan Karamazov cannot tolerate a world in which even a single person suffers. “This is a distinctively human option,” Hearne notes, “not a position any animal in my ken has it in his or her power to take.” She elaborates:

But there are aspects of human ethics—nowadays *largely confused with morality*—that overlap matters that can occupy animals, or some animals. Animals are capable of conscientiousness, of a fastidiousness about what matters to them and their fellows, including their human fellows, that in some cases puts us to shame, or at least often puts me to shame, but as far as I know there are no brooding

Ivan Karamazovs among the nonhuman animals, who may therefore have a greater gift for accepting happiness than we do.

(Hearne 1994: xv, my emphasis)

Ivan's concern surmounts the borders of immediate corporeality and is defined by sympathy as an extension of physiological selfhood, so that denial of immoral violence becomes way of life. His ethics are self-serving. For while animals would seem to have a "natural" gift for accepting happiness, human beings thwart it with philosophical parries. In being made so complex through invention of moral fictions, human beings see themselves as highly evolved intellectual creatures and, through their works, become more aware of animals' inner lives. Error enters through a stubborn belief that our duty as intelligent agents is to locate and bolster morality in the face of ignorant regimes of the natural. Ethical concern for animals, as Hearne defines it, does not embrace animals but overlaps with them. The difference is that an animal does not share this concern, so far as we know, for the wellbeing of others *as a moral construct*. Instead of crying for a broken world, an animal may welcome everything in a world of equal interaction.

When Jean Baudrillard (2001: 83) writes, "Words do not respect the limits of meaning; they continually mingle with parallel significations," he means to say that the constituted self and the (un)constituted other live separately, achieving eternal sameness only in death. Literature, as a mediation of perception, allows one to "jump tracks," and through the alterity of animal characters invites awareness of multiple existences. Baudrillard implicitly defines literature as a simulation that sets arbitrary, if pervasive, binaries of mediation up against realities of firsthand experience. Bandō, however, blames not only perception but also *attribution* for degradation of the human-pet relationship. It is one thing to perceive a pet as a member of human family, but to attribute humanity to a pet that, socio-legally speaking, possesses nothing of the sort is to do that animal a grave

disservice. Rather than experience the animal as an individual being with conscious investment in the relationship (even if it is just for food and other rewards), it blankets the animal under a broader category, the cage of which the animal may never escape for fear of losing the perks of a stable living arrangement.

If it seems difficult to read trauma into this relationship, Bandō would say it is because we have allowed ourselves to become sick from the sterilization of love to which she herself admits succumbing. Even as trauma may seem to reduce the number of ethical factors at play in prose, it opens them to productive errors. The “unity of events” presented by animal-themed fiction enables disruptions of language, space, and time across a spectrum. Trauma, as I see it, is not an external threat but an internal reality of trans-species relations by which empathy can be either completely ignored or bolstered to the point of hyperbole.

If literature is a collective experience, then it must also harbor collective traumas. In this sense, I nod to Carl Cassegård, who by “collective” means “not simply a trauma that is shared among a number of people” but “damage sustained by discursive systems that hold collectives together” (Cassegård 2014: 14). As a discursive system, literature sustains the damage of humans’ separation from environments at large by rubbing salt into that disruption through over-intensification of trans-species bonds. If we are going to follow Cassegård further, we must be careful not to give literature too much credit for its discursive power, distinguishing as he does “in not regarding trauma as an identity position formulated *in* discourse” but as “something that happens *to* discourse, a damage that renders certain things hard to verbalize and express” (ibid., 16). Rather than assert a humanized “us” in relation to an animalized “them,” as Bandō does, from here on I focus

on the breakdowns of those categories and the sometimes-messy interactions between them. The fictional space is never finalized, for it allows one to shield past traumas with those of unbecoming.

Introducing Traumality

The closer humans and animals grow in literary discourse, the more traumatic and errorful are their unions. To describe this paradoxical process, I introduce a theoretical concept of traumatic animality, or “traumality,” which indicates a confrontation with the inter-implicatedness of the human and the animal. Trauma, in this sense, is another productive error dissociated from its historical connotations. It is a binding mechanism whereby species differences are disoriented by way of teasing out omnipresent traumas. By “traumas” I mean not only physical and psychological, but also emotional distresses and destabilizations. These are the “missing link” between human and animal categories, and integral to experiences of both. Humans wish to escape trauma because they associate it with animals, and therefore dominate animals as a means of controlling those traumas.

But is it really that animals are subordinated to human beings by way of the literary apparatus? Or is it that, through egomorphic projection, human beings are subordinating themselves? Is this, perhaps, the real trauma of animal literature? Masochism is, after all, a creative habit. And is it fair to think of the use of animals in literature as exploitation? Does this not re-emphasize apparent human dominance over animals by inflating outmoded notions of pastoral power? Perhaps the need to characterize the stories I analyze in chapters 2 and 3 as abusive or unethical reflects abusive and unethical tendencies in myself. It is not entirely unwarranted to see animals as victims of a literary violence of sorts in which their bodies become torn and remade, for it is the true nature of remembrance: a prior inter-

implicatedness between what is fragmented and remembered has been torn, and through literature is idyllically restored.

Traumality also refers to an animality that is itself traumatic to the human reader or viewer and animal subjects. Socialized as we are into believing that suffering is exclusively bound to the human realm, we struggle to accept its proliferation in the animal. Looking back to some of the classic animal rights debates (see Singer 1990: 5), we encounter suffering as central to determining the value of any moral patient. Rather than abide by the assemblage model, in which one becomes intimately aware of the “back-and-forth-ness” of things and seeks out messages through interaction, Peter Singer draws a thin line between two points, names that line “suffering,” and walks it like tightrope across the chasm of a precarious moral argument. That trauma heightens both physiological and psychological responses is no coincidence. It represents an acute amalgamation or pinpointing within that assemblage. Like the shell of an egg, it bears cracks where once-equal pressure has been compromised.

Trauma is not a reductive mechanism, as it carries both destructive and transformative properties (Levine 2010: 37). An uncomfortable contradiction, to be sure, and one that may or may not explain at least some of the violence inflicted on animals in the absence of obvious cause. The dog trained to fight and kill and the soldier trained to do the same share much more than enslavement to protocol. Not because both have been molded into killing machines, but because both are especially susceptible to their respective traumas. Nor does this training tap into some primal urge to wreak havoc against adversity, speaking instead to the plasticity of the species brain. If humans and dogs were not

susceptible to trauma, there would be no need to reinforce the good behavior of either through systems of reward.

The traumatized subject is broken by definition, and shelters the need for change. This potential for change is trauma's greatest power, and speaks to the sentience necessary for its survival. Psychiatrist Judith Herman (1992: 1), a foremost authority on traumatic stress, observes: "The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness." This doesn't, however, prevent traumas from returning with a vengeance. Our ways of analyzing them must reflect this persistence, lest their lessons remain invisible or, more accurately, "unspeakable." And while Herman advocates bypassing the verbal lockdown that haunts traumas during their infliction, even long after they have ended, I believe we must stew in this notion of silence. A seeming lack of psychological response in the traumatized animal does not necessarily indicate that said animal has emerged from trauma unscathed.

Trauma in this sense represents a moment in which mind, body, and circumstance become indistinguishable, when divides between realms of experience foreshorten beyond a subject's control. The feeling of security by which one might have lived now becomes a focal point of traumatic response, and its loss entails nothing short of a crisis. In the case of Bandō's killing, it is the animals' explicit absence—their erasure, if you will, from the scripture of accountability—that makes their imperatives that much more present in the minds of those who yearn for resurrection (which, as we will see in chapter 3, cannot work). It is unlikely that Bandō's killings are to be interpreted as a new beginning, and unlikelier still that they will be taken as a paradigm shift.

But to say that an animal provokes traumatic response in human beings is not the same as saying that an animal is inherently traumatic. Owning a pet is, under humane circumstances, a situation that lives by the animal's patterns and preferences (taking the dog out for a walk, for instance). Anyone who does not abide by the animal's patterns is said to be abusive or neglectful and therefore subject to the judgment of the law. But to do this on a more massive scale, as a society, is no longer criminal because the sheer breadth of its influence is too widespread to enable the terror of individual blame. In this sense, Bandō has scapegoated herself in the hopes that others might come forward in solidarity.

Whether pet owners see themselves through the Bandō lens is irrelevant, because neither mindset challenges the servitude of the animal in a domestic setting. Better to become more aware of the pet's threshold for love. Gauging this does not require any romantic allegiance to notions of sentience or feeling. It is nothing more than recognition of signals and strengths. This leads to another error of Bandō's story. Normally, when an animal experiences pain, one feels sympathy because the animal is self-aware of its traumatic compromise. But when the recipients of that pain are so young, like Bandō's kittens, they likely have no concept of self, so that their death is no longer theirs alone but also that of anyone who learns about them. Readers mourn not because the kittens have been killed, but because they are denied the chance of living under a human being's scrutiny.

Debating Bandō

Of the three protracted debates included in *On "Killing Kittens,"* most productive is that between Bandō and Higashi Takuma, who speaks of people burning Bandō's books in the grossest political terms. "The public enjoys fascism," says Higashi (Bandō 2009: 85), who

also quotes Ikeda Hiroshi, an historian of German fascism, as saying, “Modern Japanese people hunger for blood” (cited *ibid.*). It is for this reason, argues Higashi, that the public mistook Bandō’s admission to mean that she had *wanted* to kill those kittens out of sadistic enjoyment, and that any such self-projections are more likely to be reflections of her detractors’ hunger for blood. They took her perceived sadism as a sign that she wanted to kill them in kind, and so they retaliated by demanding her death as recompense.

Bandō is quick to assert that her killings were the result not of calculated desire but frantic desperation. Writing about them was an act of atonement. She draws an equal sign between sterilizing the cats and killing their offspring. While pet ownership and breeding might seem like comfort zones in which animals may safely live out their lives, forced sterilization equates them to slaves. Letting them die without offering aid is no different than euthanizing them. In this way, Bandō notes, people have lost touch with the true meaning of abundance. They live in a society of *regulated* abundance, which also serves as a distraction from death. Bandō and Higashi agree that separations of good and evil are not so clear today (*ibid.*, 91), that more people are thinking less about death and dying.²⁷ “Killing Kittens” comes at the reader like some latent force pushing at their backs, yet which they cannot outrun (*cf. ibid.*, 94). And so, when Bandō encounters an online comment that says, *I feel like I want to throw up*, she sees it as proof of fear. Such people she feels cannot help but conflate cute kittens with some concept of a “good life” (*ibid.*, 99), though they would never make the same equation with the invasive mosquitos or centipedes she kills in her own house.

²⁷ “For people who don’t want to think about death, the death of a kitten is not something they want to face, or even consider. They see a kitten’s death as their own and turn afraid” (Bandō 2009: 97).

Bandō and Higashi touch on the topic of peace activism, especially as it relates to post-Hiroshima politics, and doubt any utopian idealism in which peace necessarily equals good and war evil (*ibid.*, 104). Perhaps there is a paradigm shift to be interpolated: that maintenance of peace is predicated on violence. Modern urban environments like Hiroshima enjoy the privileges born of violent pasts, which despite haunting the present with reminders of unthinkable atrocity also validate widespread commitments to peace. But had no such violence ever occurred, who is to say whether peace would be such a rallying hub. Bandō is making a similar, if implicit, point: Our love for animals is but a drop in the tide of their longstanding mistreatment. And until we can recognize that, we are doomed to perpetuate violence. The entire food industry, which in the developed world is a form of peace (well-fed people are a complacent people) is utterly dependent on the violence of slaughter. And in rural environments, where people must live off the land and local wildlife, killing is a part of daily life, a practical method of survival. Bandō's point is simple: In the animal rights game, it is all or nothing.

Sympathies for animals, insofar as they are expressed only in reaction to tragedy, are emblematic of a privileged, middle-class sentimentality toward animals. Such postcolonial outrage hinges on acceptance of a natural imaginary, if not also an imaginary nature, and is limited to the public, manifesting through the very internet channels which took Bandō to task for her confession. It is indicative of a pre-political mode of thought, whereby the public latches on to a cause without engaging it to the point of organized change. For this reason, Bandō was shocked by readers who sought to apply Japanese laws to events that had occurred in Tahiti (*ibid.*, 227). Though her haters were perfectly willing to extend the laws of their home nation to one of their own gone bad, they seemed content

in ignoring the systematic animal killings supported by that same legal system on their own turf. Neoliberal sympathies reflect the selective subjugation of egomorphic idealism.

People fear what they cannot see, which is why Bandō believes that her story sent so many into a panic. In admitting to killing kittens, she showed readers a reality they never wished to see (ibid., 127). People speak of pets as endearing creatures, but in so doing disclose a self-centered worldview. One reason why people reacted so vociferously to Bandō's killing of kittens is that cats reflect precisely this self-love that humans enjoy (ibid., 218). She was therefore brave in favoring the verb "to kill" (*korosu*) rather than "to throw away" (*suteru*) to describe her actions, because she saw no difference between the two. Unfortunately, her readers took this to mean that killing was the be-all and end-all of her character, and that anything in between was mindless filler. In her they saw no reflection, because her mirror was fully tarnished by their defensive preconceptions.

Dueling Bandōs

Bandō's ideas set a tone of internal thinking that admits to a gross secret of interpretation of life. Her outing of selective animal interests is indicative of a central problem in the animal rights debate: No one can agree on just what constitutes animals in relation to (if at all different from) human beings. If interest in animal rights is indeed empty and constructed through feigned concern for the lives of others, then the Bandō controversy has taken the debate into new territory through the vehicle of Japanese literature.

Pets symbolize not nature but reflect an "intense urbanization of the human zone" (Csicsery-Ronay 2014) and are prone to multiple meanings. Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 245) opine on the nature of multiplicity, which for them "is defined not by the elements that compose it in extension, not by the characteristics that compose it in comprehension,

but by the lines and dimensions it encompasses in ‘intension.’” The idea of an animal as a multiplicity begins and ends with that animal, and sees the animal as involution on a larger scale. Yet the moment one recognizes a pet as a companion, along with that comes questions owners are not prepared to answer. Pederson (2011: 73) provocatively asks one of them: “At what point does ‘companion species’ slip into ‘companion speciesism.’” As the Bandō controversy demonstrates, Japanese pet-boom culture would be nothing without companion speciesism.

If pet-keeping is a pathological behavior, then the relationship between pets and owners reveals one way in which postmodern humans think about the nature of their (disbelief in) souls and reduces the veracity of interspecies contact to an illusion of mind over matter. Like euthanasia, the human-animal relationship is a curious admixture of empathy and cruelty (Pierce 2012: 165), and explodes at death into something personal, a fear beyond reproach. Harlan Miller (2009: 63) prettily words the conundrum when he writes: “[I]f it were true that humans have immortal souls and nonhumans lack them, that would not provide any reason to give priority to human interests. It would, rather, support assigning priority to the interests of nonhumans.” In this statement one finds the sheer arrogance of the cognizant subject, who in being self-aware might mistake awareness for primacy of being. One must then fear the possibility of things without souls, lest humans, too, lack them.

Witnessing the death of a pet activates a fear of soulless-ness. In that moment, the animal becomes human, and vice versa, to the point where “we can no longer hold up the edifice of difference. We all become liminal creatures” (Pierce 2012: 222). To this philosophical line of flight, the authors surveyed in this dissertation add another, for

witnessing the *life* of a pet also activates this fear, of which the Bandō controversy is a most vivid reminder. In taking responsibility for death, she was in fact bidding readers to take responsibility for life.

So long as we continue to validate a universal category of “the animal,” we will continue to hold nature accountable for failures that exist within ourselves (see Chen 2012: 92). Stubborn insistence on animals as social outsiders or outcasts should be taken not as a need for rescuing them (this merely underscores the narcissistic psychology of heroism I discuss in the following chapter) but rather as a point of continuity to be meticulously shaped like clay on a potter’s wheel. Neither should we delude ourselves into thinking that there is any universal category of “human” through which we might gain theoretical traction. All of this piles up like psychological currency that, in the words of Baudrillard (2001: 3), “cannot be exchanged for either truth or for reality.” This means that the written word, as function of a literary mindset, is not the only criterion by which reality may be measured. Its affective grammar, too, has direct bearing on the nature of nature. In other words, the possible ways with which we might define our realities are mutually dependent on how those ways regard or define us. We see animals in the way that we do not only because of our presumptions, but also because animals regard us in species-specific ways that we take to codifying through sciences and theories of form and being.

Postlude: Another Sacred Secret

In a memorial piece published in 2014,²⁸ famed mystery novelist Higashino Keigo recalls a meeting he once had with his late friend, Bandō Masako. It has been some time since their last meeting, and Higashino relishes the opportunity to catch up with her at a bar upon

²⁸ http://renzaburo.jp/bando_memorial/ (accessed 5 August 2016).

her final return to Japan. Like many readers, Higashino was taken aback by “Killing Kittens,” and so he steers the conversation naturally in that direction. Bandō admits to being pleased by the online backlash, because it proved her point. Higashino wholeheartedly agrees with the philosophy behind her actions, but insists that her method for putting that philosophy into action was just too cruel. Bandō sets him straight, saying, “It’s not like that. People see the word ‘cliff,’ and they imagine some towering precipice, when in fact it was no more than a two-meter drop. The bottom was nothing but soft brush; the fall wouldn’t have killed them. So, in truth, I only threw the kittens into a grassy area out back.” Bandō had only used the word “killing” because she saw no difference between her actions and separating kittens from their mother, and never expected readers to take her admission so literally.²⁹

Higashino wants Bandō to be remembered as a great author (*subarashii shōsetsu o kaku hito*), but his efforts have gone undetected. Bandō’s central message retains validity, for most of its recipients would rather hold on to some illusion of her villainy than acknowledge any semblance of truth in their own. “Killing Kittens” was not a moral tract, despite being taken as such by those offended by it. It was a social contract left unsigned. As a writer, in getting her point across Bandō perhaps relied too heavily on the power of language, in the hopes that others might reassess their complicity in its harm. But by then

²⁹ What this controversy shows, however, is that people who care about animals seem unconditionally willing to ascribe a core truth of goodness to animals, while seeing humans as inherently flawed. If animals are so perfect in their innocence, they seem to ask, what possible good could destroying them bring to the world? Hence my selective interest in pets, which mirrors a selective interest by consumers. Japan is not likely to see a trend anytime soon of cockroach novels (unless it comes from the horror camp). While invasive species continue to be made palatable through *Pokémon* (see Bandō 2009: 105-106) and other character branding machines, the real animals they represent are being ignored. It is not that people do not truly love their pets, but that they love pets at the expense of killing other animals.

the damage had been done, as Bandō's kittens had already tumbled fatally from the towering cliffs of readers' minds.

CHAPTER 2: DISABLING THE ANIMAL, ANIMALIZING THE DISABLED

Prelude: A Fork in the Road

On 28 July 2014, in the city of Saitama, a guide dog named Oscar was reportedly stabbed with a pronged object while walking his user, a 61-year-old man, to work. Because guide dogs are trained to remain silent while on duty, it was only when a coworker noticed the blood that Oscar's user became aware of the injury.³⁰ By November that same year, local investigators were struggling to piece the story together. Even after three months of solid investigation and no evidence of foul play to show for it, police remained tight-lipped about their suspicions. The supposed crime produced no witnesses, and security camera footage revealed nothing of consequence. In response to mounting public outcry,³¹ authorities enlisted the assistance of a reputable veterinarian, who concluded that Oscar had not been attacked but was suffering from pyoderma, a skin disease known for producing lesions that resemble stab wounds.³² Beyond seizing the incident for shock copy, the press cared little for the relationship between the man and his guide dog and chose to ignore the possible discriminations, which like Oscar's wounds might have revealed the blood of a systemic problem. The misunderstanding of the dog's victimhood meant that initially outraged readers could forget about the social environment in which its reportage had played out. The story was swept under the proverbial carpet as a human-interest aside in which the animal mattered only as victim, not as subject.

What I defined as “traumality” in the previous chapter is effective for rethinking the parameters of animal entitlements and physiological thresholds and serves to dismantle

³⁰ http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201408290056 (accessed 12 November 2014).

³¹ <http://gendai.ismedia.jp/articles/-/41100> (accessed 19 November 2014).

³² <http://matome.naver.jp/odai/2141626719470022701> (accessed 1 January 2015).

assumptions founded on human superiority over animal life. It also reframes descriptions of animal trauma as displacements, which shield humans from confronting a fundamental trauma of inter-implicatedness. Guide-dog users in Japan are likewise socially displaced. As impaired individuals in need of prosthesis, their attempts at (re)integration are only nominally successful once they gain the companionship of a service animal. If society sees blind people and their guide dogs as codependent, blind users can take that thinking further, as absence of sight leaves them more open to physical permeability without ocular bias to dictate arbitrary separations of bodies.

The original *Asahi Shimbun* article on the Oscar incident confirms this when it quotes his user as saying, “Oscar is part of my body. I cannot possibly forgive the assailant who stabbed him, which is equal to stabbing me. I'm afraid to go out at the thought of being targeted again.” That fact that danger could come at any time from without threatens Oscar’s user from within. He frames his relationship with the guide dog as one of trans-species assemblage, “an irreducibly different and unique form of subjectivity,” as Cary Wolfe has it, “neither *Homo sapiens* nor *Canis familiaris*, neither ‘disabled’ nor ‘normal,’ but something else altogether, a shared trans-species being-in-the-world constituted by complex relations of trust, respect, dependence, and communication” (Wolfe 2010: 141). The relationship between human and guide dog is more than a relationship; it is a symbiosis of being. Favoring the dog alone as victim shortchanges this symbiosis.

Oscar and his user are one entity, sharing life without need for visuo-centric distinction. The traumality of Oscar’s injury compels his user to publicly aver the nature of their relationship, amplifying its significance by outing himself as a “canine-human” in a society of “human-human” individuals. The press’s instinct to cry foul suggests a desire

to heighten the heroism of human intervention. The injured guide dog, as a marker of “outsiderness,” baits aberrant criminals. The possible error of Oscar’s injuries gives humans cause to oust one of their own—flagging the social pariah (the dis-abled) as a weed in need of pulling. Oscar’s puncture upsets boundaries between inside and outside (for more on this, see the following chapter), but the connective potential of this rupture is never cultivated. Recognizing the two as one would have instigated a discussion that readers were not prepared to accommodate or sustain. Hence the apparent sense of relief when it was revealed that no crime had been committed, thus freeing others from the mental labor of having to accept the symbiosis of this relationship, and allowing them to go on roaming networks of explicitly individuated species.

Acknowledgment of human-guide dog symbiosis raises the question of whether problems related to guide dogs and their handlers are specific to narratives about them or a consequence of literature in general. To answer this, I look to philosopher Martha Nussbaum and her concept of the “species norm,” a moral system whereby capacities are evaluated from the bottom up rather than seen as equally existent (Nussbaum 2006: 94). This means that norms exist not only for able-bodied humans but also for those they deem less than human (or less than able), and that these norms can be used as much to cut across boundaries between “higher” and “lower” as to reinforce their vertical arrangement. What distinguishes guide-dog narratives is their grappling with, and redefinition of, species norms in relation to social conditions of which they are symptomatic.

Japanese guide-dog literature is almost entirely comprised of actual guide dogs. Fictional representations are rare and limited mainly to children’s stories, and even these will often repackage biographical writings for younger audiences. Guide-dog literature for

adults is dramatized for emotional impact, yet its documentary feel makes it worthy of analysis by feeding into its robustness as a marketable genre. I choose to evaluate guide-dog literature, at least in terms of species norm, as wholehearted attempt to reconceptualize human-animal relationships in a postmodern world. That guide-dog literature may have the *opposite* effect—i.e., of shoring up the divide between humans and animals—is by no fault of its own, but of the markets in which it is published, consumed, and adored as a paean to species norms. Nussbaum (2006: 365) elaborates:

[T]he species norm...tells us what the appropriate benchmark is for judging whether a given creature has decent opportunities for flourishing. The same goes for nonhuman animals: in each case, what is wanted is a species-specific account of central capabilities (which may include particular interspecies relationships, such as the traditional relationship between the dog and the human), and then a commitment to bring members of that species up to that norm, even if special obstacles lie in the way of that.

Pervasive species norms serve as leveling mechanisms against the potential of guide-dog narratives to disrupt them, presenting social architects with both blueprints for progressive change and ammunition for denial of that change in equal measure. Species norms are ideals into which both guide dogs and their users must fit if they are to attain validity as subjects who know their place. If their relationship is symbiotic at all, it is only because guide dogs are assumed to “complete” a blind user’s physical handicap in mimicry of the ableist norms to which they are encouraged to accede. The guide dog serves as nothing more than prosthesis for a blind user’s attainment of independence.

Japanese disability narratives enable a communication that favors form over content, obsessing over displaced animality as a way of keeping its integration at bay. What distinguishes my stories of interest is their attempt to erase disability through over-emphasis on triumph in the face of adversity. There is a sense that disabled persons can only arrive at integration by capitalizing on their inability to integrate—in other words, by

“owning up” to their special status. Because they are seen to persevere *in spite of* being disabled, their disability remains an unwavering precondition for personal accomplishment. In the following sections I will sketch three quintessential narratives and assess how their bridging of disability and animality both emphasize their subhuman conditions and hint at overcoming them. What will emerge from this is a picture of traumality as an emotional force that nurtures sameness through difference, one by which inclusivity models of disability are shown to be more than matters of allowance, but assemblages of narrative interplay.

Wagging the Dog: The Case of Berna

Shioya Ken'ichi is the founder of The Eye Mate, Inc., one of Japan's oldest guide dog associations. He has trained dozens of guide dogs in his lifetime, including the above-mentioned Oscar, throughout his long career. By far his most famous clients are Gunji Nanae and her black Labrador, Berna. Born in the city of Takada (now Jōetsu) in Niigata prefecture, Gunji contracted Behçet's disease at the age of 17 and was fully blind by 27. Her autobiographical *Beruna no shippo* (Berna's Tail) was published during the explosion of the pet boom in 1996. It chronicles the challenges of living and working with a guide dog, but is above all a story of adaptation and steadfastness. When the reader first encounters Gunji, she has been relying on a white cane to get around for some time, but finds it cumbersome. She dreams of having children, if only to have someone to care for her.³³ Only then does she entertain what she calls a “desperate idea” (*zetsubō no omoi*): Why not get a guide dog? She calls Ken'ichi, who quips in response to her nervousness, “If you can pet a stuffed animal, you can handle a real one” (Gunji 2002: 19).

³³ Her husband, Kōji, lost his sight at the age of three and works as an acupuncturist. Gunji does give birth to a son, Miki, who becomes her fiercest advocate.

Berna's Tail did for dogs what Anna Sewell's classic *Black Beauty* did for horses. In addition to addressing the challenges of empathizing with working animals, both authors share striking connections with disability. Gunji's experiences as a blind woman acclimating herself to the freedoms afforded by her guide dog parallel those of Sewell, who relied on horse-drawn transportation after suffering a permanent, crippling injury at age 14. But Gunji's introduction to Berna is a nerve-wracking moment, less because she must learn an entirely new way of getting around and more because she has been deathly afraid of dogs since a bad childhood experience. The more she works with Berna, the more dovetailed she and the dog become. Gunji passes her graduation test and finds hard-won freedom in her newfound abilities. "It's easy to think that blind people simply rely on guide dogs to take them where they need to go, but this isn't the case," she elaborates. "Blind people must have their routes firmly in mind at all times...and dictate those routes through gestures and words" (ibid., 61-62). This is one of the book's many learning moments.

Gunji's narrative is noteworthy for documenting Japan's lingering resistance to the presence of guide dogs in the 1980s. When she first brings Berna home on the train, she is met with a station attendant who has never heard the term "guide dog" before. A crowd gathers. Says one, "Oh, a guide dog! I've seen those on TV." Says another, "What's a guide dog? Looks like your run-of-the-mill pooch to me" (ibid., 54). As Gunji continues to face indicative challenges when trying to eat out at restaurants or access public facilities, she experiences mounting instances of kindness and understanding (ibid., 67-70). As her confidence with Berna grows, so does people's acceptance of their partnership. In the words of Susan McHugh, "the user's life depends on whether she can demonstrate the kind of love that requires people both to give dogs direction and at pivotal moments to honor

their dogs' leadership" (McHugh 2011: 53). It is a relationship of survival by which the stakes of quotidian tasks take on heightened importance.

As is common in guide-dog narratives, Berna's declining health is a central plot point. When she is diagnosed with cataracts during a routine checkup at age nine, her veterinarian suggests the dog retire. The irony of it all—a guide dog trained to help the blind becoming blind—throws Gunji into panic. She cannot bear the thought of forcing Berna into retirement, but also worries about putting the dog to work in her condition. The vet assures her that dogs are remarkable for being able to navigate familiar terrain even with poor eyesight, relying as they do on strengths in other faculties, thus proving that fears of guide-dog safety are very real for blind users (see *ibid.*, 129-141, 189-205) and deflating the hysteria of Oscar's story above. The traumality of Berna's cancer diagnosis at age 14 causes greater stress for Gunji, who nevertheless finds strength in the dog's will to live. They go through a long and painful goodbye, during which time Berna's tail becomes her final means of able communication. Berna's tail is more than a title; it is a metonym for the dog herself, an emotional antenna so emblematic that the word "tail" (*shippo*) appears no fewer than 32 times in the text.

Berna's Tail was pioneering for giving credence to, and taking readers on a journey into, the challenges of life with (and without) a guide dog. It forged new perspectives on the general public's willingness to accept disabled people as functioning members of society. Gunji's straightforward approach sustained her through later tragedies, including the loss of her husband to liver cancer at age 49 and the death of her second guide dog, Garland, with whom she shared only 14 months of companionship and who became the subject of two subsequent books. In 1995, Gunji befriended a third guide dog, Perilla, with

whom she toured extensively in the name of educational outreach. Her persistence won out in the end.

The Quill is Mightier...

In a previously published article (see Grillo 2014), I analyze the story of a guide dog named Quill, whose bestselling docu-novel and film adaptation attracted waves of sympathy across Japan. Quill is assigned to Watanabe Mitsuru, an old man who lost his sight at age 42 and denies any need for canine assistance. The intensity of his disinterest turns into an equally intense bond, a bond cut tragically short when, after two short years of companionship, Watanabe's kidneys begin to fail, leaving Quill stuck in the training center kennel. For three more years the dog wallows in depression, after which Watanabe dies. His story, under the title *Mōdōken Kuiiru no isshō* (Quill: The Life of a Guide Dog) and written by Ishiguro Kengo, attempts to put this tragedy into greater perspective. Like Gunji, Ishiguro takes readers through the ins and outs of guide-dog training, if along a broader trajectory. Unlike Gunji, he focuses on the dog's pain over that of his user, emphasizing the vitality of the "goodbye moment" and linking back to intersections of animal captivity and traumality.

I elaborate upon two points here. First is the "outsiderness" taken on by those who associate with guide dogs, including those who tell their life stories. Following the history of visual impairment in Japan, one finds that blind people have been relegated to the role of storyteller. During the Tokugawa period, blind people were typically associated with, if not coerced into, the arts, primarily as the itinerant minstrels known as *biwa-hōshi* (Stevens 2013: 27; Namase 1999). These *biwa-hōshi* did not receive their status from a higher power, but forged it through adroit personal mythologies (Miles 2000: 612; cf. Matisoff

1978). Furthermore, blind female spirit mediums, or *itako*, of the northeastern provinces were believed to possess inherent shamanistic ability. Fears of proximity to death relegated *itako* to the margins, flagging them as social outcasts while also cloaking them in relative safety. *Itako* gained viable positions in their local communities because of their ability to see in ways that the sighted could not. The “otherness” of their impairment was enough to validate their actions (Miles 2000: 614; cf. Blacker 1975: 141; Wright 1966: 162). In her own discussion of the *itako*, Marilyn Ivy focuses on Mount Osore, a place for pacification of and communion with the dead and “a powerful site for the enactment of allegories of loss, a staging ground for practices that linger on the verge of vanishing.” The *itako*, Ivy goes on to say,

become critical in these allegories of loss and recovery through their spirit recollections, *kuchiyose*, meaning “to call by mouth.” Through their bodily voicings of the words of the dead—and through their other vocation of predicting the future—the *itako* enact scenarios of losses momentarily confronted, remembered, and mourned, allowing Japanese to confront both personal and historical pasts, often in ways that come to terms with Japanese modernity and its disappearances.

(Ivy 1995: 142)

Purveyors of guide-dog stories in contemporary Japan provide the same function. Their narratives are likewise “callings by mouth,” which through the written word enact allegories of loss—whether of abilities, freedoms, or loved ones. The fact of Quill’s trainer being known as “The Magician” and thought to be “more canine than human” (Ishiguro 2001: 62) pegs him as an outsider—as someone, like the feared *itako*, who shuttles between reality and a world incomprehensible to the rest of us.

This brings me to a second point, which is that guide-dog narratives are part of an intensely visual culture geared toward the sighted alone.³⁴ As opposed to deafness, which

³⁴ Case in point: None of the books I discuss here are available in Braille editions.

is sometimes called a “hidden disability” (see Nakamura 2006: 11), blindness may be supplemented by the visual excess of an apparatus or assistant. This draws attention to the impairment, and to the nullifying of it, by prosthetic extension, but also to the fact that the able-bodied person is also disabled by the ideals of social conditioning. As Wolfe, building on Jacques Derrida, claims, “it is the blind, the *dis*-abled, who ‘see’ the truth of vision; it is they who most readily understand that the core fantasy of humanism’s trope of vision is to think that perceptual space is organised around and for the looking subject” (Wolfe 2008: 114). Without resorting to labels of hierarchical organization by which the subject is defined through excess of ability, normalcy may be defined through apparent deficiency as a means of unraveling blinding social habits. Contrary to popular belief, it is not that the blind *hear* better for having to compensate for their lack of visual capacity, but that they may actually *see* better for being disencumbered of visually minded presumptions.³⁵

Just as important to recognize about Quill is the comparison I make in his narrative’s contextual realization. I begin my former article by comparing reactions to major media reactions toward Aum Shinrikyo cult leader Asahara Shōkō, none of which made any specific mention of his blindness, to reception of Quill’s narrative, which was met with seemingly unanimous sympathy and interest. My argument in pointing out this discrepancy of reception is that Quill is a straddler of worlds. In the same way that he inhabits the world of disability by proxy, becoming an extension of his user’s condition, he also “makes up” for it by providing assistance. He is a companion and worker in one. His endearing animality allows for easier discussion of blindness, while Asahara’s blindness deters people from its realities, as it might lead to unwanted sympathy.

³⁵ Such an idealism, however, is shaky at best, for it will differ depending on whether the subject in question was born blind or became blind later in life.

The guide dog's role is not to erase disability so that a blind person may navigate daily life just as any other, but to call attention to the fact that the user is blind. The guide dog's very existence is therefore as much for the benefit of outsiders as for the inner circle of its intimate servitude. The communication between guide dog and user is primal and codependent, and allows the user to display his or her disability to the world. The guide dog is not a "seeing eye" animal but an animal trained to be seen by the eye. Overromanticizing the guide dog's relationship with a user is therefore harmful to both parties. Quill's story shows us just how lonely a guide dog's life can be when his user dies after only a short period of loyal service. By this point, he cannot be passed on to another and must live out the rest of his life in productive solitude. He becomes an ambassador for the school at which he was trained and for blind people in general, but carries with him to the end that grief for his dead master. He has become a tool for awareness but not so much of change.

Training of guide dogs involves no training of attachment. Only dogs of special temperament may be chosen for the job, but the trainer's authority, like that of the user, is fallible and needs constant reinforcement. Without training, the dog will habitually ignore the tasks it must perform to enable a user to function in the world. The guide dog is a product of intense manufacturing, and of the languages used to shape specific abilities into functional being. Part of that language is also to be found in the stories which tell of a guide dog's willingness to assist. Guide dogs exist only to be commanded and to follow the orders of their masters. Because of this, they are always in subservient positions when out and about, regardless of how they are treated at home. In making disability so visible, they allow ignorance to push it away.

Few discussions of disability per se are being invoked by and within the pages of stories like Quill's. Quill's role as teacher, by force of his trainer, comes from a place of admiration for his abilities, but the focus is so much on accommodating blind people to sighted society that ill reactions toward blindness as a disability are left undebated. Rather, we marvel at Quill's service when his master was alive, and at his continued loyalty when he was not, but leave in the shadow of our marvel the problematic lack of acceptance of disabled people in everyday society. One would think that, when the dog is disabled, things would change, but this is not so. If anything, resistance to discussion of disability has grown only more vehement.

A Disappearing Dog: The Case of Tarō

In late autumn of 1995, while walking Buddhist temple grounds on the outskirts of Munakata City in Fukuoka Prefecture, a concerned citizen discovered a box of puppies abandoned near a public toilet. Many dogs and cats had been left for dead at this very spot, and the woman had cared for nearly 100 of them in the past year alone. Unable to bear the thought of euthanasia, she had made a practice of rehabilitating her finds and bringing them to local Komori Animal Hospital for care and placement. Among them was the titular subject of *Shōgaiken Tarō no mainichi* (Day by Day with Tarō, the Disabled Dog). Sasaki Yuri's 2007 biography tells of how Tarō, for all appearances born without defect, suffered a rare necrosis that all but ate away his limbs, ears, and tail.³⁶ Though not as extensively marketed as the exploits of Berna and Quill, Tarō's tale of survival has made him a beacon of hope for those who doubt the power of will. Yet underneath Tarō's touching story lies a disturbing, unspoken subtext that encourages only superficial engagement with disability.

³⁶ Tarō's condition is rooted in a combination of circulatory disturbances brought on by thrombosis and vascular disease.

Tarō's story and others like it serve a populist agenda, favoring unfettered emotional glitter over the darker realities faced by disabled persons in contemporary Japan.

Because Tarō was one of countless throwaway (*shobun*) pets destined to perish, one may read him in terms of vanishing. The very idea of his flesh-eating disease, which earns him the nickname “the dog with an incomplete body,” may be more visceral than the physical manifestations of it, as the designation of an incomplete body emphasizes the normalcy of a complete one. Despite managing to function in human society, Tarō's value as an animal is proportional to his usefulness as a symbol. His brush with certain death is an affirmation of human life and the generative ideal of sentient expression that accompanies it. Unique about Tarō is the fact that, rather than assisting someone who is disabled, the dog is himself the disabled subject. And yet, in the same way that *Quill* drops the ball when it comes to critical reflection, Tarō's biography deflates the potential for cognitive refreshment in favor of an airily inspirational approach that ignores the re-inscriptions of which it is a part.³⁷

Tarō's biography confirms assumptions of normalcy that went into its production. For proof of this, one need only regard the book's obi, which reads: “By simply living a normal life, Tarō is bringing good cheer to all” (*Goku futsū ni ikite iru dake de, Tarō wa hito o genkizukete iru*). The obi further boasts the endorsement of Quill's biographer, Ishiguro Kengo. The very idea of a “normal life” is fraught with ableism, for it assumes a consensus understanding of its terms. In reinforcing that consensus, the book sets up expectations of the status quo before the front cover is even opened. Tarō is overdetermined

³⁷ *Berna's Tail* stands alone for at least addressing discriminations at a crucial point in modern Japanese history, but these are scarcer shadows in the floodlight of Gunji's overtly articulated message.

by his aspiration to able-bodiedness, and in his mental surpassing of it. His story shifts emphasis from one end of the spectrum to the other, framing the disabled as “superhuman,” better than the average person. Classic model minority thinking.

This makes even more interesting Sasaki’s wholehearted, if cursory, attempts to place Tarō’s story in dialogue with animal welfare. As the most recent of the three books I detail here, it has the benefit of hindsight. Sasaki goes into some depth about Japan’s pet boom, to which she attributes a rising awareness of animal sentience and moral value. As an abandoned stray who was, “against the fashion of the times, an utterly worthless mixed breed from the perspective of a trend-conscious society” (Sasaki 2007: 9), Tarō upsets the purebred paradigm of widespread pet-keeping that was then a recent cultural adoption.³⁸ Despite Sasaki’s dig at what she calls a “trend-conscious society” obsessed with designer breeds, clothing, and lifestyles, it is difficult to assess the strength of her critique when she quotes Dr. Komori Taiji, who praises Tarō for being a “genuine mixed breed,” or *shōshinshōmei no zasshiken* (ibid., 8), thus replacing one notion of purity with another.³⁹ And so, while *Day by Day with Tarō* may outline the pet boom as a skeletal context for true dog narratives, its veneer of social awareness hides a conundrum: With the validity of animals’ sentience comes an anxiety over neutralizing their subhuman status. I would go

³⁸ Sasaki also cites the lack of TV dramas about dogs at the time of Tarō’s discovery as a contributing factor to ignorance about them, whereas by the time of her book’s publication in 2007, the situation was quite the opposite.

³⁹ Sasaki (2007: 8) is rare for pointing out that with Japan’s pet boom came mounting interest in the value of purebreds. As I describe in this dissertation’s Introduction, only the purest dog breeds have made it off the cultural production line as tokens of representation and political bartering. Japan’s pet boom extends this process by upholding a notion of national ethnic purity through its animals, if only because animals constitute a political safe zone in which to do so. Though one may read Tarō’s abandonment as a symptom of Japan’s obsession with purebred companions, his genetic ambiguity is also his badge of honor.

so far as to say that readers crave these kinds of stories. Psychological evidence exists to support this cynical view.

Bill Pollard distinguishes between two understandings of rationalization of “virtuous” action: first as “a process of *reconstructing* prior workings, which were present, if only subconsciously, to the agent at the time of acting,” and second as “a process of creatively *constructing* an account of how the agent’s action in its immediately worldly context coheres with her overall world-view, motivations, projects and so on” (Pollard 2003: 424, original emphasis). Pollard’s definition of virtuous action comes about through its lack of deliberation over reasons or possible outcomes. Clea F. Rees and Jonathan Webber, however, argue that “this distinction between whether and how to act should be replaced with a distinction between initiating and modifying motivations” (Rees and Webber 2014: 89n), the latter of which they define as “one that is continually active throughout the action it modifies” (ibid., 83). The pathology of rescue practiced in the stories above fits the former profile in both instances, which is to say as impulsive actions given heroic meaning through narrative reconstruction. This does not undermine the desires of its actors, but nevertheless stokes the ego that may come with habitual animal rescue.

Classic studies of altruism, as those by Samuel and Pearl Oliner (1988) and Kristen Renwick Monroe (1996), have drawn profiles of rescue through traumas of the Nazi Holocaust. The Oliners theorize distinct forms of motivation for rescue. Their major contribution to this debate is a concept they call “normocentric” rescue, the motivations of which are tied to group behavior or self-enhancement (Oliner and Oliner 1988: 188, 204). In that same line of discourse, Philip P. Hallie sees the act of selfless rescue not as one of

brute force but of “undramatic compassion and hospitality” (Hallie 1997: 235). I detect a hybrid of these motivations at work behind the traumas in this chapter.

It is against this backdrop that Sasaki describes Japan’s fading wilderness. Land once trodden by animals has given way to walking paths for dogs (Sasaki 2007: 73), reflecting gentrification of the Japanese landscape and its impingement on animal populations. Recognizing the impact of human expansion, Sasaki sees Tarō as one who moves between realms, who can never be any one subject but many at once. Devoid of fixed identity, he may be read as progressive, when in fact he is presented as a reinforcement of speciesist thinking. His subjectivity is as ambiguous as his body. A constant threat of disappearance is key to his persistence. This is why Sasaki (*ibid.*, 69) refers to Komori as a “savior” (*inochi no onjin*). Not only does he *save* life;⁴⁰ he *imparts* it of his own volition.

Komori’s instinct is to help Tarō attain his “species-specific norm of flourishing” (Nussbaum 2006: 365), trying his best to preserve as much of Tarō’s canine self so that he may earn his rightful place in human society. Komori wants to rehabilitate Tarō as both a physical *and* social body. In this sense, Tarō is prosthesis for Komori, who uses the dog to justify his own beliefs and personal transformations. Komori’s attempts to rehabilitate Tarō

⁴⁰ When Tarō is first brought to the clinic, Komori considers euthanasia, but opts for amputation instead. The fact that Tarō would have died without surgical intervention underscores the power of medical science and prompts Komori to give the dog renewed purpose by lecturing with him at public schools, a fate that seems to follow many such “outsider” dogs. Tarō’s value is thus rooted not only to his will to live but also in his repayment by way of loyal ambassadorship. Such educational work primarily benefits humans, but also animals for being more kindly treated, even as it fails to interrogate the hierarchy of pastoral care.

connect back to his own.⁴¹ As Nussbaum reminds us, such a process entails more than “blending in” by virtue of function:

For dogs...with rare exceptions, there is no option to flourish in an all-dog community; their community is always one that includes intimate human members, and so it is obvious that human support for their capabilities is morally permissible and in some cases required. Moral individualism says too little to guide us in such matters.

(ibid., 366)

Recognizing that dogs are already a part of the human social landscape undermines the need for any serious awareness of their specificity in a human-centered context.

Interlude: Limb for Limb

Due in part to television coverage⁴² and Sasaki’s well-received book, Tarō has earned comparison to well-known memoirist and sports journalist Ototake Hirotsada, who was born with tetra-amelia syndrome, a congenital disorder that rendered him essentially limbless. Ototake’s autobiography, published in 1998 as *Gotai fumanzoku*, and two years later in English under the title *No One’s Perfect*, is told from the perspective of the subject himself, not vicariously through the language of another species. The clever pun of his title⁴³ indicates a willingness to be self-deprecating and emphasizes total acceptance of his “deformity,” which he sees as anything but, for it is all he has ever known.

⁴¹ Even as the dog learns to hobble around and do his necessities on his own, Komori feels the need to make something more of him. He experiments with replacement legs, trying out various styles and combinations of materials without success. This biomechanical urge underscores Tarō’s hybridity. Not unlike guide dogs—themselves results of human training, bred for human assistance and valued in human terms—Tarō’s being is defined through the level of intervention made on his behalf. As if to emphasize this, Fukushima Miyuki, a canine disciplinary instructor who left her job as a cram school teacher after meeting Komori for the first time, asserts that pets’ personalities are largely determined by the environments in which they are raised (Sasaki 2007: 108)—a rather subversive way of deflecting the proportion to which environment may be coerced by human presence and activity.

⁴² Tarō’s story was introduced on the popular program *Genius! Shimura Zoo*.

⁴³ Upon birthing a child, a parent in Japan might invoke the phrase “gotai manzoku” to indicate the simple blessing of having a child with limbs intact. Ototake’s use of the negative prefix *fu* turns this aphorism on its head, so to speak, by connoting a child devoid of them.

Ototake's story shares much with those above.⁴⁴ It has shades of Oscar in its blurring of corporeal borders. When, at age 10, Ototake's bones threaten to rupture the skin with new growth, he requires special surgery that mirrors Tarō's life-saving procedures. Moreover, a V-shaped scar left on his back from earlier treatments gives him a certain sense of pride. "Instead of being hard to bear," Ototake writes, "that scar began to seem more like a medal" (Ototake 2000: 54). This admission finds explicit parallel in Quill, whose defining birthmark—a dark blotch on his side that his earliest caretakers interpret as a sign of his uniqueness—likewise indicates a capacity for extraordinary things. That said, Ototake never wishes to feel "special" but a fully invested part of whatever is going on around him. His indefatigable spirit makes him very popular. Ototake never sees himself in terms of disability, but includes it as a given in his self-imagining. The endearment of Ototake's character lies not in his boasting of personal accomplishments. Rather, he finds greatest joy through the imagination he instills in others and the optimism with which he does so.

Companion animals break down what Ototake calls "barriers of the heart" (ibid., 215), while those same animals are also exploited to reinforce them. For those unprepared to accept disability on human terms, animals offer a safer way to ease into its multifaceted realities. And while Ototake does concede to the importance of conditioning when he says, "I always think that with the right environment, a person with physical handicaps like mine

⁴⁴ Even Ototake displays intertextual awareness when he speaks of his condition thusly: "How many people get a shocked reaction just by being born? Probably only Momotaro, the fairytale boy who was found inside a peach, and me" (Ototake 2000: 7). The legendary Momotarō, sent from Heaven to a childless family inside a peach, is a staple of Japanese mytho-history. He befriends a trio of sentient animals—dog, monkey, and pheasant—on his way toward battling demons on a faraway island. With them, he fights and overcomes adversity, bringing fortune to his family. The story parallels Ototake's in his overcoming of apparent infirmity toward great fortune, and strengthens the dynamic of animals as prostheses for disabled inclusivity.

would not be disabled” (ibid., 214), he knows such an environment can only exist where people are willing to give equal regard to all species and environments. The only true handicap is attitudinal, never physiological. This realization shifts disability discourse beyond the model of inclusion into one of interrelation. Insistence on where one body begins and another ends, on what the body contains versus what it exchanges and shares, ceases to matter.

One consequence of *No One's Perfect* is that readers will undoubtedly interpret his story as affirmation. How inspiring, they might say, it is that against all odds he is able to overcome the obstacles of an “incomplete” body and live a “normal” life. The merit of the disabled is only inspiring and thought-provoking when lived in pursuit of an ableist ideal. It is appropriate to say that “disabled” people are, like the boxes of normalcy into which others try to fit them, a fiction. We may assert our knowledge of these imagined beings, whose “incompletion” renders them amenable to being filled in by overcompensations of sympathy, but fail to see that the dog and the man can be connected by their apparent disabilities. If Ototake seems an elusive character for being able to accomplish day-to-day tasks with surprising ease, it is because we see him as especially talented. But if it requires talent to hold and eat with a pair of chopsticks, why are able-bodied people not praised for it every day? Focusing on Ototake’s ability to adapt to a lifelong condition actually disables *us* from realizing this is exactly what connects us to him. In our astonishment over his basic survival skills, we forget that the most appropriate response might be unremarkable cohabitation.

People are just as likely to read Ototake’s story with animal interest as they are to read Tarō’s with human. Ototake and (presumably) Tarō do not see themselves as disabled,

because their disability has always been their ability. Ototake's perseverance may look to the able-bodied like wild animality showing through the skin. It is as if, in the face of the arbitrary constructions of human society, which are not typically built for disabled navigation, some primal urge to survive is showing through the surface. This makes him more animal than human, and contributes to people's marvel over his ability to be "one of us," as it were. Tarō, on the other hand, as a nonhuman, gets the "benefit" of seeming more human than human, willing as he is to overcome his disabilities when he doesn't even need to. But in adapting to our ways, his humanity is praised above his animality as a trait of quiet strength.

Because a disability like Ototake's is so visual, one can never ignore it as the basis for judgment and scrutiny. It will always boost his actions to a level of perseverance that able-bodied people can only imagine. He will always be a wonder. He reminds us to keep our own reactions in check, but in perceiving him that way we never let go of his disabled status, even if he harbors allegiances to that mode of thinking. In a manner of speaking, we are the ones who must train ourselves out of habits that are ingrained into our bodies from birth. This sort of muscle memory, as it were, is difficult to shake and is where the real perseverance must come if we are to see an end to those habits.

Tainted Commonalities

Peter Singer was among the key 20th-century philosophers to widen considerations of sentience and morality to include nonhuman animals, thus nuancing once-binary debates around the topic of animal welfare. I join feminist scholar Eunjung Kim in agreeing with Singer's foundational approach (see, e.g., Singer 1990), but also in her deviation from it on the point of passivity, which for her is central to corporeal imagination. Under terms of

Singer's philosophy, disabilities bar certain people from their own humanity, which may be one reason why disability scholars have avoided talking about animals (Kim 2012: 94). Yet Kim would say that no autonomous agent is free from the controlling forces of passivity (ibid., 104), and that the conflation of passivity with worthless nonbeing is just as problematic as the conflation of agency with active being. So long as the possible spaces in which bodies may interact and retract, communicate and self-isolate, injure and heal, remain dependent on socially constructed limitations of normalized bodies, those bodies will continue to be their own boundary.

Rethinking what constitutes the body involves rethinking what the body constitutes in turn. The normal(ized) body is predicated on an ideal of wholeness. It achieves wholeness through the robustness of its activity and functionality, and in its promise of furthering the species. To destabilize the divide between subjects and non-subjects is to doubt the integrity of subjecthood as the pinnacle of social mores. When a prosthesis—be it a wheelchair or guide dog—is nothing more than a passive receptacle for ableist desire, its vitality is unacceptable. The disabled body and its prostheses are not simply objectified, but sworn to the “specific mode of intelligibility” (ibid., 105) that confers upon them the status of objects by way of failure to see passivity as generative. Kim's philosophy of objects revolves around a “passivity as agency” (ibid., 95) model. As partners in a permeable and hybrid being, guide dogs and their users flow through each other in a *yin* and *yang* of embodiment and disembodiment that redefines humanness “so that it is based on the effort to fuse with objects, not on autonomous capabilities and sociability” (ibid.,

104).⁴⁵ In one sense, the prosthesis embodies dominant expectations and stereotypes of disabled people. In another, it embodies disability's agentic powers to transcend the stranglehold of stereotypes. The human partner is therefore as much prosthesis to the guide dog as the other way around. It is one reason why relationships between humans and guide dogs may seem strange or even perverse to those who would never entertain them: Few self-respecting people would ever hope to assume the identity of prosthesis.

The disability narrative—insofar as it is the product of a genre-oriented market—is itself prosthesis. On the one hand, the intimacy of guide-dog literature speaks to something transformative in the human-dog relationship and echoes Rod Michalko's assertion that the quality of a blind person's life is only as good as the individual makes it out to be. Each of the books I profile above contains a story of triumph in the absence of foreseeable hope throughout which protagonists serve as agents of breakthrough. This is the potential of biography to challenge the ableist paradigm (cf. Titchkosky 2006). But Tobin Siebers (2011: 102), invoking the feminist-queer concept of "masquerade," is critical of the need for overt visual markers of "disability." In the same way that heterosexuality may be compulsory, so does able-bodiedness function in seeing-eye literature as the unwavering norm to which both human *and* animal protagonists must subjugate themselves if they are to navigate the social landscape as fluidly as they do. Yet the communicative potential for masquerade comes with a price:

Many representations of people with disabilities...use narrative structures that masquerade disability to benefit the able-bodied public and to reinforce the ideology of ability. Human-interest stories display voyeuristically the physical or mental disability of their heroes, making the defect emphatically present, often

⁴⁵ Given that she muddies the waters of object-oriented ontology by rejecting claims to pure autonomy—which is, as far as she is concerned, nothing more than a consensus fantasy—Kim distinguishes herself from Jane Bennett's "thing-power" (Bennett 2012: 244).

exaggerating it, and then wiping it away by reporting how it has been overcome, how the heroes are 'normal,' despite the powerful odds against them.

(ibid., 111)

The dogs in each story function in precisely this way, as surrogate heroes. Simultaneously assuaging and embodying fears of impermanence, they are mechanisms of levity against the anxieties of a nation still recovering from a string of earthquakes, tsunamis, and nuclear meltdowns. Their palliative function weaves teleology of passivity by their common threads.

First and foremost, the above narratives share an indefatigable belief in destiny. Quill's story takes this notion to eugenic heights through overt interest in blood, breed, and hierarchical positioning. Ishiguro's biography makes it a point to stress that Quill and his purebred siblings have "guide-dog blood" (*mōdōken ni tekishite iru kettō*) in their veins (Ishiguro 2001: 22). Purity is thus transformed via the canine body from an ideal to a norm: for a blind person to function in society, s/he must put trust in a vessel of purity which society has provided for that purpose. This has the hypocritical effect of reinforcing the *impurity* of the impairment and the need to rectify it through radical intervention. Gunji is similarly interested in Berna's breeding and in the purpose of her life. As she writes toward the end of her recollection, "Berna, with whom I'd shared these past 13 years, was a 'guide dog' from head to tail" (Gunji 2002: 297). That Berna can only be identified in full embodiment by the purpose for which she was bred and raised underscores the centrality of her handling. A discussion of breed in the prologue of Tarō's biography likewise emphasizes the fact that purebreds should get the distinction of assisting disabled humans, while Tarō's genealogy is as covert as his disability is overt.

Symbols and representations of disability undergo constant reformation, sometimes decay (Miles 2000: 616). Hence a second commonality of the dogs featured in these stories:

their unstable status. Quill, for one, goes from being the runt of his litter to beloved puppy to partner to orphan. Throughout, he maintains the stubborn demeanor of one who is determined to please. Berna, for another, goes from service dog to child to older sister to partner. Her transitions between stages are determined largely by her ability to integrate into her user's family life. And then there is Tarō, who is, in the most literal sense, a work in progress.

Status changes occur at key points in these texts, with Tarō provoking the most difficult questions of character among them. Learning to cope with his infirmities to the point of ignoring them shows that his will to live is as strong as a guide dog's will to assist. Between the two extremes of his status change from discarded trash to vital agent exists a spectrum of purpose. Because so much of his inner development runs on a mechanism of self-preservation, Tarō turns the gift of life into agentic reality. One gets the sense that he is very much aware of his changing status, as evidenced by the determination with which he sets his mind to learning tasks inimical to his species-norm.

A third commonality lies in human traumas. Growing up in the Niigata countryside, Gunji spent much of her childhood outdoors. While walking to kindergarten one day, a large dog came bounding out of the snow and pounced on her so suddenly that she almost fainted with fright. Though she was not hurt, "the fear I experienced then burned deep into my heart. That memory will never leave me" (Gunji 2002: 14). When she loses her sight at age 27, the possibility of getting a guide dog is, at first, far from her mind. Consequently, she attributes initial troubles in training with Berna to her hatred of dogs. To overcome this anxiety, Berna's trainer encourages Gunji to stick her hand into the dog's mouth. When

Berna does not bite her, Gunji realizes that she is kind and gentle. Only then does the training begin in earnest.

Komori harbors a deeper trauma. As the child of a farming family, he observed his elders setting animal traps. One day, he got it into his head to set up a trap in the mountains behind his house, where he successfully snared a partridge. He snapped the bird's neck, as he had witnessed his father do on many occasions, but even as he proudly brought his catch home he could not help but wonder to what end he had done so. Overcome by remorse for eating the bird at that night's dinner, he buried the remains and paid his respects. "But," the text goes on, "the taste left on his tongue was as indelible in his memory *as a stain*" (Sasaki 2007: 65, my emphasis). As with Quill's birthmark, the blemish of Komori's recollection manifests as empathy for the subhuman. Though described as a "rite of passage" (*tsūkagirei*) for any young boy brought up in the country, Komori holds on to the guilt of it for the rest of his life. These experiences dissolve barriers between species. It is to the writers' credit that they should be included at all, and that their engagement should come across so productively.

A fourth and final commonality among these narratives is the social ambassadorship that each of these dogs comes to perform. In this capacity, Quill averages ten demonstrations a year at public schools across Japan, leading blindfolded children through obstacle courses and the like. Gunji, for her part, lectures with her guide dog as a way of teaching children to respect them as working professionals who genuinely care about the safety of their users.⁴⁶ Komori starts giving yearly elementary school lectures in

⁴⁶ Gunji concludes by asking children to keep four promises: 1. Don't call or pet a guide dog if you see one out and about; 2. Don't touch a guide dog's harness; 3. Never, under any circumstances, feed a guide dog; 4. Never do anything bad to a guide dog (Gunji 2002: 262).

1998. His talk, entitled “Tarō and an Old Man’s Dream,” portrays Tarō not as a victim of disability but as one resigned to his fate (ibid., 97). Komori leaves no doubt as to the moral thrust of his message. He openly laments the tragedy of youth suicides, attributing these not to teasing or childhood torment but to a deficiency of education, which sometimes fails to stress the importance of living. Tarō’s sheer, unadulterated desire to live, he claims, shows that moral worth is hardwired into all living beings.

Komori’s thinking on this matter reflects a national agenda to promote life values in Japan. Anyone following Japanese news during the summer of 2014 may remember the tragic case of a 16-year-old high school student who murdered and decapitated her 15-year-old classmate in Sasebo, Nagasaki prefecture. The murderer said she wanted to see for herself what it was like to kill and dismember someone (“*Hito o koroshite kaitai shite mitakatta*”), echoing the words of an Aichi boy who admitted to killing an old woman for the same reason (“*Hito o koroshite mitakatta*”) in 2000.⁴⁷ That the girl also wanted to see inside a body (“*Karada no naka o mitakatta*”) indicates the morbidity with which one might commonly imagine the transcending of bodily barriers. The girl had been living alone in an apartment set up by her estranged father, who she once tried unsuccessfully to murder in his bed, and had “practiced” for the murder she did end up committing by killing a cat and putting it in the freezer, thus proving the accessibility of animals as intermediary sites of experimentation for transcendence. In the wake of this incident, NHK news reported snap “welfare” sessions held in public schools by which students could be reminded of the value of life and the futility of taking another.

⁴⁷ <http://bylines.news.yahoo.co.jp/fujiiseiji/20140804-00037967/> (accessed 12 January 2015).

The relegation of discussion around outlying identities and social problems to classroom lectures, while not unique to Japan, implies a social ailment regarding the use of time, space, and energy devoted to messages of change. Animals can, and do, positively affect the ways in which children learn to understand their relationships with nonhuman species, and with the multifaceted natures beyond their immediate urban experience. In his Tarō lectures, Komori reminds audiences that increasingly more schools are getting rid of class pets (typically rabbits), depriving children of the lessons they might learn by caring for an animal. Tarō’s inspirational story, he hopes, can go a long way in making up for that loss (Sasaki 2007: 100). In calling it “education for the heart” (ibid., 100), he takes up Ototake’s call to do away with barriers of the heart.

Over outreach I would suggest some form of “in-reach” as an effective way to learn about the possibilities between humans and companion animals. This process entails at least three lines of self-revision. First, it necessitates a fresher understanding of the relationship between blind persons and their guide dogs as one of hybrid rather than hierarchical design. Second, it invites a search for channels of continuity through shared traumas or adverse experiences with animals as pointing toward a greater spirit of inter-species community. Third, it invites unscrambling of social programming around disability in recognition that just as we are all animals, so are we all disabled in some form or another.

Postlude: The Totality of Impairment

All the cases I cite above, with the exception of Ototake Hirotsada, deal with people or animals born “normal.” Along this line of difference, I have charted a variation of tolerances and engagements with their respective disabilities. Intriguingly, the more severe the disability, the more “acceptable” the subject becomes. Tarō and Ototake expend

relatively little effort to be welcomed by society at large. Amazement at their overcoming of even the most minor obstacles outweighs kneejerk discriminations.⁴⁸ Able-bodied observers see Ototake as one possessed not of *dis*-ability but of *hyper*-ability, living in ways that many would find frustrating.

Ōno Tomoya saliently corrects this dichotomy in his 1988 book *Shōgaisha wa, ima* (The Disabled, as of Now), in which he discusses Yoshimori Kozue and Shirai (then Tsuji) Noriko, victims of a birth defect epidemic resulting from thalidomide poisoning. Yoshimori and Shirai established a foundation called “Cornerstone,” which conducted research on Japanese born with thalidomide-related defects. Of the 307 they interviewed, 60% answered “No” when asked, “Have you ever thought of yourself as a disabled person?” (Ōno 1988: 21). This percentage indicates a radical rethinking of the very nature of disability. To stress this point further, in a film version of her life (from which Ōno derived his book’s title) called *Noriko wa, ima* (Noriko, as of Now), the character of Tsuji Noriko says, “I’ve never known the feeling of having hands. It’s never bothered me not having them, though I’ve sometimes wondered what it would be like” (ibid.). Her body is “impaired” only when interpreted against its norm of flourishing.

People with innate impairments are less likely to see them in those terms. “In other words,” Ōno goes on, “a handicap is not a disability, but is rather an idea born of social entanglements with urban and industrial structures and people’s own consciousness” (ibid., 22). Similarly, impairments like blindness are better conceptualized as idiosyncrasies. Ōno

⁴⁸ Ototake is extremely popular throughout his formative schooling. He even admits to his power wheelchair giving him a “sense of superiority” (Ototake 2000: 27). Noticing this, an astute teacher “dethrones” a young Ototake to help develop his muscles and mobility, to integrate him as seamlessly as possible into the tasks of daily life that the able-bodied take for granted. It is a decision to which Ototake retrospectively attributes great developmental importance.

sees disability as affecting everyone, disabled or not, and advocates *fureai* (“inclusion”) over mere *rikai*, or “understanding” (ibid., 42-45). Yamashita Tsuneo likewise claims that the mere existence of an impairment as a matter of embodiment (*shintaisei*) is not enough to explain discrimination against it, but that it operates at a higher level of fear and detestation of disability in and of itself (Yamashita 1984: 62-63).⁴⁹

In the face of this confusion, Wolfe offers a dose of clarity, reclaiming disability as a positive, “indeed *necessary* condition for a powerful experience...that crosses not only the lines of species difference, but also of the organic and inorganic, the biological and mechanical, as well” (Wolfe 2008: 117, original emphasis). Wolfe’s optimism bodes well for the future of trans-species awareness. Our conceptions of animals and people with disabilities

are forced to work within the purview of a liberal humanism...that is bound by a quite historically and ideologically specific set of coordinates that, because of that very boundedness, allow one to achieve certain pragmatic gains in the short run, but at the price of a radical foreshortening of a more ambitious and more profound ethical project: a new and more inclusive form of ethical pluralism that is our charge, now, to frame.

(ibid., 118)

Despite the staying power of the Japanese narratives I have critiqued above, they promote messages of inclusion while obscuring the strategies by which even the most engaged readers might potentially make that inclusion a reality. Because the distinction between behavior and treatment as sites of moral inquiry rides the line between passivity and agency, I propose that, rather than focus on the agency of disabled subjects (their triumphs, challenges, and advocacy), one might effectively see the passivity embodied by all subjects

⁴⁹ The notion of “embodiment” upsets the monolithic able-bodied person (*kenjōsha*)—literally a “person of good health.” The latter term’s ableist implication—i.e., that the disabled individual is somehow unhealthy—severely undermines a notion of embodiment.

across species lines, and to practice ethical action with neither the need for nor expectation of reward, recognition, or reciprocation.

The popularity of these narratives highlights two functions of literature, offering the poignant management of an entire life in a compressed format while strengthening universality between and among species that may (or may not) lead to productive thinking on the enmeshment of all biological life. Those who develop disabilities later in life necessarily envision themselves before and after those turning points, thereby emphasizing that “becoming disabled not only alters our physical state, but may also alter our conception of time and life course progression” (Iwakuma 2001: 223). Narration of disability is therefore transparent and tends to that transparency by dismantling human hubris. Going a step further entails that one also consider what is to be constructed in place of that hubris by considering not the nature of the subject but what, in Wolfe’s words, “comes after the subject.”

We must think also of what comes *before* the subject, to scrutinize the fields into which prejudices of subjectivity are sown. Doing this recognizes that respect between and for animals depends on the autonomy of both parties. Seeing the dogs profiled above as recipients of love is to deny their fundamental rights. They must obey commands and respect their living spaces and companions just as their human counterparts. Love comes from the telling and retelling of their stories. It comes from the reportage of incidents, the management of expectations, and endurance of emotional distances. To say all this is not to destroy their poignancy, but to recognize that our role in training and loving them is rooted not in the management of inner natures but in the disavowal of real authority.

Disability is not something one “has,” but the representational intersection of competing factors drawn from social life.

It is not clear to me how useful it is even to say that our sympathy for Tarō is a form of humanization. It is, rather, a wish that we might all possess such perseverance beyond the things we do as a given. We desire to be abnormal in the sense of doing something extraordinary that stands out from the rest. We live vicariously through the successes of these animals, holding on to the belief that we can achieve these traits if only we can get in touch with something fundamental that we have lost. We might therefore better parse the word “disability” in the following way. The prefix “dis” comes from the Latin meaning “apart” or “in a different direction,” so rather than the separation of ability, it is the abling of separation. To be “abled” in the world means to go in a different direction from it, to assert one’s individuality over the pervasive forces binding everyone and everything.

The wrench in the machine is that this process of attribution comes from a genuine place. We see ourselves as bringing goodness to all animals by recognizing their potential for overcoming obstacles. But if this comes at the sacrifice of involved thinking, then one must wonder who gains the most advantage: animals or the ones praising them? For indeed, to praise animals in this manner makes “us” look as good as “them.” By recognizing the social benefits of animals, we gain those same social benefits. This gives us all sorts of advantages when it comes to outlining, and putting into action, legislations of animal rights. At first, the relationship seems equal. In accepting animals on their own terms, we feel on an even keel with what is in their best interest.

Herein exists the profound difference between reading an animal and reading *about* an animal. The former collapses cognitive dissonances to the point of harmony between

the two; the latter engenders a general understanding and respect for, but not *with*, the animal. This is the area in which animal studies loses steam, when it comes to ignoring the oppression of overcompensation. Extending extra sympathy toward the disabled of any species constitutes both an act of courage and weakness. The schism between these two states is where you will find the stuff of error growing as if by cellular division. To choose one side or the other without acknowledging that schism is to be in denial of their integration, and to misrecognize the stuff of this study as merely an attempt at reconciliation, when in truth it is about realizing that we seek power over that which has power over us.

Regardless of whether Berna, Quill, and Tarō are just being dogs, without conscious regard for their stations in life, their transformations into death matter, for then their essence is subjected to the productive errors of retrospection. Discussions of disability elide error as a mechanism for change, except to say that its gaps must be filled by ideals of consummate function. To do away with barriers between species in shared life, I invite the reader to join me in exploring a shared death. This will be the subject of my next chapter, in which I scrutinize the intricacies of disembodiment in the works of two major horror authors toward the realization of practical hybridity.

CHAPTER 3: SKIN AND SOIL

Prelude: The Myth of Spectacle

Filmmaker Louis Malle once said, “What we see as spectacle is in fact a ceremony” (cited Kerekes and Slater 1995: 5). He describes his chosen medium as one of sacred strategy, by which, as a crafter of worlds and characters, he enters a state of meditation or prayer. In this state, the filmmaker is implicated in every action and reaction on screen. As an agent of ceremony via the spectacle of terrifying events, the horror author is susceptible to the same characterization. The attraction of horror, because it is a genre that seeks control over the anxieties and traumas occurring under its label, is the opposite of escapism in that it lures the spectator into an assured position of dominance. This puts the spectator in an intimate relationship with the spectacle of horror, and is why animals appear so frequently in its confines.

As if catching burrs in the socks of our intellectual wanderings, animals cannot be reckoned without drawing blood. Animals in horror must be catalysts for violence and trauma, because they are seen to be repositories for those very things, so that when they confront their human counterparts, those traumas reappear, magnified through explosions of hard truth, even if those humans are never able to return to who they once were. Horror literature in general, but especially that in which animals play a central role, is themed around transfigurations. Rarely do these transfigurations lean toward divinity, pushing instead into darkest corridors of the maleficent. Animals in horror are likely to be representations or manifestations of the supernatural. The only way to deal with them is to excise them, thereby putting unimaginable physical and spiritual strain on the part of

protagonists who must suffer at the edge of death if they are to escape with their lives, even if those lives are forever scarred by the act of doing so.

Due to the boundary crossing of which they are so resolutely capable, animals make harm explicit. They are double agents between good and evil, able to crush human naivety just as easily as they can enhance it. To clarify this point, I have chosen two fictional narratives which encapsulate the traumality of the human-pet relationship in ways that illuminate problematic nuances of ownership. The first of these is the short story “Heimen inu” (Flat Dog) by Otsuichi—about a girl, Yū, whose tattoo of a dog comes to life on the arm on which it was inked before mysteriously disappearing, thus forcing Yū to rethink her notions of body and border. The second is *Pet Sematary* by American horror master Stephen King. Whereas Otsuichi’s story primarily deals with *disappearance*, King’s novel deals with *reappearance* when its protagonist, Louis, finds a way to bring the dead family cat back to life. Doing so makes him question his understandings of life and afterlife, and gives him a semblance of dominance in his own domestic sphere, where his authority has withered.

The parallax of “Flat Dog” and *Pet Sematary* yields an equation of self-awareness. Where Otsuichi navigates variables of personal responsibility, King denies access to that responsibility to begin with. Yū may be initially repelled by her tattooed dog’s disappearance, but as her knowledge of their connection grows, so does her love for the dog without whom she can no longer imagine life. The dog *is* her life, incarnate in all its fickle yet affirmative unpredictability. King’s protagonist, Louis, travels in the opposite direction, falling from the grace of a loving family to a mockery thereof. Louis is anything but resigned to the hand dealt him, and tries his utmost to jam the pieces of his misshapen

puzzle into realignment. But by the time he realizes the magnitude of his folly, he has dug himself into a pit with no rope.

Before getting into the stories proper, I offer a thumbnail sketch of horror as a genre in Japan, and where King and others of his ilk fit into its streams of consciousness. As the reader will discover, King has a deep, if inadvertent, connection to horror in Japan, where his works have enjoyed wide appeal and influence. The connections here are of great value to the scholar who wishes to unpack the implications of animal consciousness and occult connections as played out in these stories. Animals in these two stories approach the same idea from opposite ends without ever meeting in the middle, where something more ineffable and frightening calls their authors into narrative service.

Animals in Japanese and American Horror

Japan has had a long fascination with horror. Folktales and the kabuki theater repertoire are replete with mysteries, illusions, and supernatural deceptions. Horror stories printed for mass consumption grew to prominence in the Edo period (1600-1868). Graphic novels during this time were especially popular, and fell under the category of *kaidan*, or ghost stories. Readers in the west will know some as the so-called *Kwaidan*, as collected by Lafcadio Hearn, but these represent a mere fraction of tales compiled in the old capital, where “bizarre-but-true” stories and urban legends shared pages with long-established mythologies. At the same time as *kaidan* were being devoured, so too were animal narratives becoming a part of the literary landscape. Ghost stories about horses (see Kanehira 2015: 135-152), monkeys, cats, otters, snakes, and especially foxes (Tsunemitsu 1999: 42) proliferated, and many would become immortalized on the theatrical stage.

But it was not until Edogawa Rampo that mystery became intertwined with horror as such, as it did also through the fiction of Edogawa's idol, Edgar Allan Poe, in the west. It was Poe, in fact, whose influence reigned supreme during the Meiji and Taishō periods (1868-1926). By the 1920s Poe had become a major influence for Japanese writers of that era, whose aesthetic interest in the grotesque hitched a ride on Japan's catapult into modernism. Poe would also see a revival in the 1970s and 1980s, when popular motifs from his fiction began to infiltrate Japanese visual culture through the media of manga and video games (Lippit 1999: 135). It should come as no surprise to anyone reading these pages that the most popular of Poe's first stories to be translated in Japanese—"The Black Cat" (trans. 1888 by Aeba Koson) and "The Raven" (trans. 1891 by Motoko Tadao)—revolved around animals. For readers accustomed to taking animals as ciphers for human vice, Poe's characterizations were an easy sell during a time of great transition.⁵⁰

Within Japanese mythology and contemporary literature, animals have always played a symbolic role. In Buddhist parables, for instance, every animal signifies one from a list of human traits—the fox cunning, the fabled tanuki mischief, the monkey wisdom, and so on. Animal representations have carried over into contemporary horror, as related to me in an interview with occult author Asamatsu Ken. In Asamatsu's writing, prototypical in this regard, animals are no less symbolic. For him, they represent the fury

⁵⁰ In her study of the fantastic in modern Japanese literature, Susan Napier (1996: 81) notes that women writers of the postwar era were prone to writing in the mode of horror or the supernatural fantastic (Meanwhile, male postwar writers such as Ōe Kenzaburō and Ibuse Masuji tended to look no further than the war itself, building their literature on the horrors of real life.) Enchi Fumiko and Kurahashi Yumiko in this regard were enamored with *The Tale of Genji*, in which the supernatural played a key role, especially in a famous episode of spirit possession involving Genji's great love, the Lady Rokujō. Napier also notes the vividness with which revenge can be expressed in terms of horror. Whereas the most vindictive ghosts of pre-modern folktales and kabuki theater were typically female, postwar authors had found way to reclaim that position from an authorial perspective.

of nature.⁵¹ He borrows many mysterious creatures from Ainu folktales, which he then arranges in idiosyncratic fashion. But the one ruling over his dark menagerie is the dog.

Asamatsu's interest in dogs goes back to childhood, when, in his words, a "truly ferocious" Shepherd-Ainu dog mix who lived next door "scared the hell" out of him. In his adulthood, Asamatsu has found a way to work through this traumatic memory by controlling it through the apparatus of literature. That he is so keenly aware of it means his interest in the dog is, in fact, *more* than symbolic, resonating as it does in the darkest recesses of his personal history.

Asamatsu expressed to me the evil with which dogs have been associated. As servants of wickedness, they twist a loyalty more commonly associated with a positive human-animal bond into something of great menace. In the novel *Maken shōkan* (Summoning the Black Hound), he introduces the titular character as a familiar invoked through black magic, a symbol of the violent power of the magician's cunning and influence. The dramatic entrance of the black hound in *Maken shōkan* through incantation reflects a conscious choice on the part of the author to introduce a distinctly western ceremonial rite of black magic into Japanese horror. Until that point, most horror writings, including his own, had drawn from domestic sources or motifs when it came to the supernatural. The black hound has since become a running character in Asamatsu's fiction, and especially in the trilogy of which *Maken shōkan* is the first installment. Asamatsu borrows his motif from tales of the British Isles, where the "black dog" once lurked in the fearful whispers of locals as a harbinger of death. "In addition to being a grand symbol for

⁵¹ Animals were not uncommon in the heyday of mondo cinema (see Kerekes and Slater 1995: 113-133), in which not only the supposed savagery but also the lethality and fatality of nature is shown.

nature rising against conceit,” says Asamatsu, “it expresses the power of the *supernatural* born of an occult technology.” His reasons for choosing the dog are equally insightful. “At the end of World War II,” he explains,

“the Japanese military was eagerly devising ways to fight British and American forces using Shinto and Buddhist sorcery. Even as priests in Japan were putting deadly hexes on Roosevelt, the Nazis were researching the military potential of the occult. When I was working as a writer for an occult magazine, I heard tell of a section in the Japan Self-Defense Force that was studying these things, and so I took this as a manifestation of violence for my series. Aum Shinrikyo founder Asahara was also very much into military use of the occult, and I was surprised to learn that he had lured actual members of those same Self-Defense Forces into his cult.”⁵²

The bond between black magic, animality, and the trauma of war is as airtight as it is inevitable.

In the west, animals in horror have likewise been symbolic, starting with Poe and continuing in the occult fiction of H. P. Lovecraft. Such animals are typically demonic, possessed, or otherwise altered by black magic or supernatural forces. But nowhere has the pet become such an iconic agent of horror as in the fiction of Stephen King, who became a major influence on Japanese horror authors when his novels began to be translated into Japanese in the late 1970s (Inoue 2012: 117). Like his Japanese contemporaries, King situates animals squarely in the most fraught zone of modernity, which “[i]n supernatural terms... finds animals lingering in the world *undead*” (Lippit 2000: 1, original emphasis). Their appearance is always something that *should not be* in a world that *can only be*, an impossibility made true through suspension of disbelief.

⁵² It is, I think, no coincidence that Asahara’s name should crop up again (see chapter 2). As someone whose occult interests were blasted all over the world in the wake of his deadly sarin gas attack in 1995, he was easily shunted into the category of animalized human, therefore making the narrative of his cruelty that much easier to accept as something outside of society’s influence and responsibility.

Hidden in the Midden

Otsuichi, a young and prolific author of mostly short horror fiction, in 1996 made his debut at age 17 with *Natsu to hanabi to watashi no shitai* (Summer, Fireworks, and My Corpse). Much like Stephen King, he presents fantastical elements as everyday fact, integrating them into the lives of ordinary people as catalysts for change. His characters deal with the consequences of change by pursuing solutions to their most exhaustive, logical ends. Governed by no shortage of resourcefulness, they seek to undo what has been done to them, only to find that traces of some trauma or disruption in their lives linger on. These characters learn to cope through twisted resolutions, achieving closure in open wounds. Noteworthy about Otsuichi's oeuvre is that he writes entirely in the first person, breaking from Japan's *shishōsetsu*, or "I-novel," tradition in that his work, while confessional, is rarely autobiographical by its impossible occlusions.

To date, too few in the academy have paid attention to Otsuichi, in part because of his age and relatively new introduction into the English-language market by way of a small handful of translations. My choice to write about Otsuichi is therefore twofold. First, to fill in that scholarly gap. Second, because though there are plenty of well-established horror authors to choose from (Asamatsu not least of all), thematically the story chosen here is of great theoretical use for my project. Otsuichi's characterizations are as symbolically oriented as the traditions of horror on which he draws, even as they invite the rigor of exposition and analysis. In providing my own, I hope to spark further interest in his work.

The title of Otsuichi's short story "Heimen inu," plays artfully with the theme of planes (*heimen*) throughout, the first and most literal sense of which comes out in the disorienting first sentence: "I'm raising a dog on my arm" (Otsuichi 2003: 257). The "I" in this instance is Suzuki Yū, a high school student whose physical reality is disrupted by this

cryptic discovery. The absurdity of possible scenarios in which this statement might hold true gives way to Yū's clinical explanation: "It's a blue-haired dog, about three centimeters in length. Name: Pocky. Male. Not what you'd call handsome, but he's charming enough and holds a white flower in his mouth" (ibid., 257). The dog, if not already obvious, is a tattoo, and his presence sets a most unusual tale in motion.

The second refraction of the titular "plane" manifests in the circumstances under which Yū receives the tattoo. Yū's best friend, Yamada, dreams of becoming a tattoo artist like her father, who owns his own studio. One day, during an afternoon hangout session with Yamada at said studio, Yū is enchanted by a beautiful Chinese woman who is finishing her last day of apprenticeship. The woman offers Yū a tattoo at no charge. Yū picks a photorealistic dog out of a magazine, but ends up with the cartoonish dog described at the tale's beginning. Despite her initial disappointment, she feels fate at work as planes of mindfulness and intention fracture and intermingle. Like Venn diagrams, Yū and the mysterious tattooist overlap just enough to show affinity, even as their outer regions butterfly toward less definable infinities.

For the next few days, the tattoo itches intensely. Yū bears no grudge over getting the wrong tattoo. "I felt that the image and I had become one" (ibid., 267), she reveals, and later admits to feeling "married" to the dog (ibid., 279). Not only does she feel at one with Pocky; she also senses the dog is alive. His smell becomes discernible, his barking wakes her up in the morning, and his pose changes in subtle ways, until the dog disappears from her arm altogether, reappearing on her midriff. That the book in which this story appears is jacketed with that very image (see Figure 4 below) emphasizes the importance of this

change: Pocky has a life of his own, but never apart from Yū's body. Yū suggestively reveals him in a way that privileges the viewer over even her closest family members.



Figure 4: Cover illustration for the 2003 Shūeisha edition of *Heimen inu* by Asano Takahiro

Here we find a third, paratextual plane of representation. The cover art is a selective reveal, itself a manufactured skin “tattooed” with an emblematic image. It incites expectation (“Heimen inu” concludes this eponymous collection of four standalone stories), encouraging readers to wait until the end before understanding the image’s

haunting implications. One may already read aliveness into the artist's brushwork. Yū stands before a cloudy sky, dislocated, floating in a liminal space where she seems unafraid of her canine sigil. Though her face is unknown to us, the dog looks up at her with regard,⁵³ tail wagging contentedly. A gentle confidence pervades the scene.

Back in the realm of her troubled tale, however, Yū hides the tattoo from all but Yamada. Amid this secrecy, she comes to face a gruesome reality as, one by one, everyone in her immediate family is diagnosed with some form of terminal cancer. At this point, Yū suspects that Pocky has cursed her family with this round of death sentences. Yū's parents, meanwhile, are more worried about family finances. They harp on the likelihood of her being alone and unable to support herself in their absence.⁵⁴ Forced to resign herself to impending tragedy, she begins working at a convenience store in preparation for the inevitable slog ahead.

In addition to her parents' imminent death, Yū must deal with the immediacy of Pocky's life. Like any dog, Pocky eats to live, and Yamada is more than willing to help in this regard. By tattooing slabs of meat on Yū's arm, she accomplishes two tasks at once: Pocky gets his meals and Yamada gets the practice she needs—tattoo artists are best schooled on human skin—to improve her skills, thus turning Yū into a “human guinea pig” (ibid., 293). At first Pocky leaves tattooed bones on the skin, which eventually disappear. Much to her dismay, Yū never knows where Pocky hides them: the location of his midden is a mystery. This fact blurs the edges of self-understanding and turns her body into an alienated landscape. Yamada's solution is to tattoo boneless meat, waste free.

⁵³ This comportment, of course, echoes the Spaniel in Carpaccio's *St. Augustine in His Study*, discussed in this dissertation's introduction.

⁵⁴ Yū sees it differently: “But was I really going to be alone? No, in fact, I wasn't. I had my dog to keep me company” (ibid., 291).

The increasing realism of Yamada's tattoos is a reduction of the body to its fleshy components and an indulgence of error toward practical sustenance. By treating Yū's flesh as a canvas on which to inscribe images of more flesh, only now severed and lifeless as food, Yamada is in effect turning Yū's corporeality inside out. It is as if this meat were being drawn out of Yū's own flesh, rather than being added to it, in sacrificial offering to Pocky. As Yamada improves her artistic skills, she takes advantage of the learning potential of error and uses it as platform for her own commitment to this new reality she now shares with her best friend.

As it turns out, Pocky is a voracious eater. So much so that Yū sees him as a cipher governed solely by instinct for consumption. He devours the white flower that once decorated him, even swallows a mole right off Yū's face, along with another off her arm (these foreshadow a revelation mentioned below). Despite the makeover, she comes to see him as a dog with "no redeeming qualities" (ibid., 299) and compares him to the archetypal Lassie, of whose cleverness, she wryly notes, Pocky possesses a mere 1/100th. This narrative moment emphasizes my contention that error is not an ontological flaw but an opportunity for learning. "Without error," as Pettman (2011: 195) would have it, "we could not function, or rather, we would *merely* function." In this sense, Pocky comes seemingly preloaded with instincts that will never change, grow, or evolve. And yet, he foils those very developments in Yū and Yamada, who capitalize on Pocky's fantastical presence to bolster understandings of the world they live in. He enables them to grow by being stuck in a perpetual, ageless state.

Still, the tattoo is no mere metaphor of species but possesses its own persistence in intersection with Yū's own. Pocky's existence comes with great pains, both physical (in

Yū's yield to the needle) and emotional (in Pocky's apparent connection to family crisis), and proves to be far more invested in vitality than Yū first surmised. Pocky is even more alive for being a two-dimensional, glyphic representation. Hence the eventual obliteration of Yū's entire family, whose own vanishing act parallels the animal's own down a river's flow of past and future impulses. It would be unproductive to dismiss Pocky in Otsuichi's story as a receptacle for Yū's trauma. On the obverse, this interpretation recognizes that animals are aware of traumas (hence Pocky's lifesaving qualities) while on the reverse treating them as passive depositories for those of human counterparts.

Pocky shows his true colors in this regard when Yū accompanies her mother for a full day of tests. Yū wanders the hospital while she waits, buys a comic book from the gift shop, and sits reading it on the roof when Pocky begins to bark furiously, directing her attention to an elderly man who has fallen on the premises. Yū alerts the staff just in time to save his life. In response to the man's gratitude, she pulls up her sleeve to reveal the tattoo, saying, "It's *him* you should be thanking." The man stares wide-eyed as he is carried away on a stretcher (Otsuichi 2003: 300-301). Even as Yū reconsiders Pocky's determination as a sentient being, she decides that their relationship, such as it is, is too stressful for her to handle. After careful thought, she vows to transfer ownership of Pocky to someone else, her only option being to physically transplant the tattoo, skin and all, to another body. With Yamada's help, she finds an internet community of tattoo enthusiasts and posts a request for a recipient. There she learns that the old man from the hospital, having neglected to ask Yū's name, has been searching for her since their fateful encounter.

This decision produces a unique problem of refraction as, sensing his time has come, Pocky vanishes, as much a part *from* her as he is *of* her. Desperate to rid herself of

Pocky but unable to locate him, Yū asks Yamada to tattoo a “dummy” version of the dog on her left arm to convince the hospital administrator who has agreed to arrange a meeting with her potential recipient. When this plan fails (the new tattoo is not quite the same), Yamada tattoos a leash and collar on Pocky when he reappears to keep him from running away. At last they meet the old man, the president of a large company who values his longevity, and of whom they know nothing more. Yū feels satisfied with his desire for the dog and believes, as does he, that it will prolong his life. But then he asks Yū about her family. When she confesses that her parents know nothing of the dog, the man shakes his head grimly:

“It’s just not right. A tattoo isn’t something to take lightly. After all, your parents gave you your body as a sacred gift,” he said like a teacher to his student.

“Maybe you’re right. Maybe I *did* get this body from my parents and maybe it *is* sacred. But it’s also my own. I know it was an impulsive decision, but I wouldn’t take it back even if I could.”

“I’d never want to see you defile your body with such an image. I’m sure your parents would agree.”

The old man continues down his moral track:

“I’m sure it seemed ‘cool’ at the time, but I’m also willing to bet that, years from now, you’ll regret it whenever you look down at your arm. Not that you’d know much about responsibility at your age, anyway.”

(*ibid.*, 325-326)

This last comment angers Yū, even as it makes her realize how much she loves Pocky, without whom she can no longer imagine herself. As she storms her way to the exit, she realizes she has been something of a Pocky all along to her parents, hiding when they needed her most. She resolves to spend more time with her family, while there is still time to do so. She asks the receptionist for a box cutter and, in a sequence eerily recalling the final scene of Michael Haneke’s 2001 film *The Piano Teacher*, cuts a centimeter-long gash

into her arm to free Pocky from his leash and leaves in triumph as the dog bounds happily around her bleeding arm.

This act of self-mutilation breeds a fourth iteration of planes, these of inner (element) and outer (spirit). Yū's violence is her greatest "error" of all. In puncturing her own skin, she has broken the barrier between the interior and the exterior, between the truth of her animal core and her initial denial of that core.⁵⁵ Pocky's separation anxiety eliminates any doubt over his function as both giver and receiver of care, a fact underscored by a key disclosure of the story: the moles eaten by Pocky were symptomatic of a skin cancer that would have killed Yū if left untreated. The dog has dealt her a royal flush against the bad genetic hands folded by the rest of her family, and the knowledge confirms her symbiosis with the dog in bittersweet terms. Yū has one more meeting with the Chinese woman, who touches up Yamada's dummy as a female, dubbed Oreo. In an epilogue, written as a letter of catharsis in anticipation of Japan's annual Obon festival, Yū discusses her life as an orphan and ends with a humorous postscript: "Only now I've got a serious problem on my left arm. These puppies just won't shut up...!" (ibid., 336).

It is worth noting that the Chinese tattooist, a mystical and exoticized figure, manifests a fifth planar reality. Not so much racially as she is geographically significant, the mysterious tattooist necessarily comes from a physical space far outside Yū's insular social world, that she might better reiterate the value of error. The reader will remember that Yū's enchanting savior does not give her the dog she initially wanted. And yet, from that error arises an inexplicable magic. And here is where one must mark the profoundest break from Calvino's animal portraiture, with which I began this dissertation. Whereas

⁵⁵ One might say she has effectively, if not affectively, embodied Agamben's "essential disruption."

Calvino focuses attention on an indefinable “openness,” which has the contradictory effect of closing off the observing animal from the promise of transfiguration, Otsuichi presents us with fuzziest lines of access, by which Yū and Pocky become an entanglement of human and animal signatures. This is not to say they truly are one (this sentiment remains the projection of Yū’s romantic idealism), but that there is at least something of each in the other, a give and take of skin and sentience.

Pocky’s navigation of Yū’s bodily landscape amends the notion put forth by Stephen Laycock (1999: 274) that human understanding seeks knowledge through difference—in a word, through error—by stressing the urgency of self-alienation (hence, wandering). The closer a species is in genetic or behavioral constitution, the more likely that species is to reflect the human. For Otsuichi, the subjectivity of animate life is not ineffable but undecidable (cf. *ibid.*, 276), which means that to solidify it as *purely* one thing over another is to prevent the very sort of error one might do better to embrace. Otsuichi’s Pocky is a reminder that animals are anything but reflections of the human, as confirmed by Yū’s failure to dominate him. “Flat Dog” is a posthumanist story insofar as it foregoes the animal as a moral prop in favor of acknowledging the animal as species-being unto itself. Not quite hybrid, “Yū-Pocky” defies the taxonomic re-inscriptions of classical animal modeling in favor of stickier boundaries.

Though branded as a horror author, Otsuichi in his “Flat Dog” walks a greased tightrope between genres. Still, we may comfortably analyze the story under the label of “horror,” because of the ways in which it values rupture. Like all effective horror stories, “Flat Dog” renders the frightful conceit of error into an opportunity for self-understanding that no real-world circumstance might ever allow.

Interlude: Animortality

Watch any number of films that contain violence and you are likely to hear few complaints, beyond a general moaning over excessiveness, regarding human victims.⁵⁶ But throw an animal into the mix, and suddenly red flags go up. According to Baudrillard, seeing an animal treated as a human being in death repels us because we see ourselves in the animal: “In the hanged animal there is, by way of the sign and the ritual, a hanged man, but a man changed into a beast as if by black magic” (cited Pettman 2011: 64). Is it simply that humans are animalized in death and animals are humanized? While we saw some of this self-projection in my discussion of Bandō Masako, surely there is more at play. Our willingness to accept the death of fictional humans stems from their having died for a reason. Because animals are not seen as individuals, they are taken to be universals, as they are also on the printed page. Just as characters in a film are “shot,” so are those in a book “captured.” Writing therefore becomes synonymous with the death of the animal.⁵⁷

Death is neither end nor beginning. It is not a metaphor, but a process that illuminates the porosity between, and enmeshment of, arbitrary fundamentals of “animal” and “human.” Death also unravels stalemated debates between individuality (particularism) and communality (universalism). With the page as his projection screen, Otsuichi demonstrates the chameleonic nature of one’s engagement with mortality. Locations of and within, respectively, the particular and the universal are more prone to

⁵⁶ If anything, the more gruesome and outlandish the death, the more likely it is to be admired.

⁵⁷ “Personages in books, the titles of books, and books themselves suffer something like burial or cremation. Inhumation most often characterizes their fate: they are buried on shelves where they return to dust or burned in piles out on some fanatic’s courtyard. Even when they are read, they are ingested. If read attentively and ingested fervently, they reveal the still-haunting presence of the living dead. This is the finitude of what we call survival, which, for books too, is without sovereignty. ‘The book lives its beautiful death’” (Krell 2013: 61).

change within their social bubbles than without them. Death may be a process that connects all life, but it can never serve as a launching pad for liberation or egalitarianism in a world of disparate politics.⁵⁸

Many is the dog owner who has seen a beloved canine go somewhere quiet to die alone. The poignancy of the image is vivid and tells its story true enough: dogs must be far more in tune with death than we are to approach it with such peace and resignation. Famed “Dog Whisperer” Cesar Millan confirms this hypothesis when he claims, “Human beings are the only animals who actively fear death, who actively dread death, obsess over it, and grieve over it—that is, *before* it happens. Dogs have so much to teach us in this area” (Millan 2006: 265). The many abused animals who accept their beatings as a fact of life, not to mention the dog who famously licked the hand of the man who vivisected him (Darwin 1876: 70), would seem to confirm this, yet one could just as easily interpret this surplus of compassion as a sign of thoughtlessness. “Dogs celebrate life, and they’re okay with death,” Millan concludes. “In fact, they are much better with death than we are. We need to look at them as our teachers in this department. Their natural wisdom can help us find comfort when we are facing our own human frailty and death” (Millan 2006: 264). Because we live so closely with these sages in disguise, their minds should not be closed to us.

Animal mortality, or “animortality,” is a related concept that permeates what I like to call the Three Cs: containment, captivity, and capture. Each is a technology to be found in the apparatus of literature, but which proceeds by process-oriented

⁵⁸ Death therefore serves purpose in this chapter as an analytical stepping-stone toward spatial and temporal understandings of earthly biota and becomes relevant only because the geographical contexts in which I situate its discontents make it so.

indeterminacies. As one theorist puts it, “Our pets are no longer wild. They are our captive audience and best students. Yet they have not lost their need to know us intimately. That knowledge has remained a matter of life and death to them” (Olmert 2009: 109). Through this acknowledgement of literature as capture, we might begin to dissolve the boundaries between “us” and “them” and more sensitively address the import of our allowance (cf. Steeves 1999: 145). Animortality activates traumality when animal death is literarily portrayed. Through egomorphic projection, we see ourselves in the dying animal, *as* the dying animal (cf. Pettman 2011: 64). Yet these are not moments to be feared, but productively embraced.

It is telling to consider how animortality is invoked in certain contexts. Imagine the bullfight, among the more popular forms of entertainment in which the knowing harm or killing of an animal draws epic following. In such fights, “the sense of conquest humans feel in the death, defeat, or dispiriting of the animal depends on the prospect that the animal can *feel* our victory and its own loss” (Fellenz 2007: 14, original emphasis). The bullfighter does not interact merely with the bull, but with a multiplicity of sensorial cues and improvisations. Similarly, the pet “is precisely the place where those divergent senses link up and dissolve into one another, merging as well with the dusky odor ghosting around him like a cloud. Perception *is* this very comingling of different senses in the beings we perceive” (Abram 2010: 252-253, original emphasis). Lippit (2000: 172) makes a point in this regard when he says that, “[b]ecause animal being is not thought of as singular, the death of each individual organism is survived by the entire species. All animals of a given species are, according to this logic, extensions of one another.” Though indoor pets are welcomed into the family, the sheer volume of abandoned, abused, and neglected pets euthanized every

year would seem to indicate that individualization of their deaths is not the norm. Rather, they are “added to the pile.”

Pets have no temporality of life progression. Their death creates opportunity for narrative hindsight: the dead subject’s life can thus be traced along any given arc. One cannot simply escape the obligations of life through a giving up of its ghost. In the words of Judith Butler,

perhaps there is some other way to live such that one becomes neither affectively dead nor mimetically violent, a way out of the circle of violence altogether. This possibility has to do with demanding a world in which bodily vulnerability is protected without therefore being eradicated and with insisting on the line that must be walked between the two.

(Butler 2004: 42)

We might also see creative language as exactly that: a language that creates rather than destroys its referents. The literary death becomes not an ending but a beginning, an opening of possibility through the magic of narration that lends testimony to the evolving subject through and beyond death as window.

To be sure, death profoundly links humanity and animality and has potential to undo their arbitrary separation. It is not simply an act of posthumanism that seeks to enmesh these categories, but also one of post-mortality that equates death with nature, with the past and future of all things: “Death itself is more a transformation than a state; a dying organism becomes part of the wider life that surrounds it, as the hollowed-out trunk of a fallen tree feeds back into the broader metabolism of the forest” (Abram 2010: 269). Abram’s cosmology here works death into something more porous and multidirectional than a theoretical event horizon: death as rift, not endpoint. It is, as Derrida might have put it, “an immanence *without* horizon” (Cavalieri 2009: 30). In the case of companionate species, and in relation to this dissertation’s spotlight on pets, death remains a looming inevitability

to which all life succumbs yet which is also an activating force that opens as much as it closes. All of which means that our habit to nuance any animal's death via understanding of our own mortality is false, for death does not exist in us—its consummation means obliteration of thought and therefore ethics.

The hard-hitting emotional qualities with which human-pet relationships seem inherently endowed cast companionate species as subjects vulnerable to overwhelming desire. And so, when Baudrillard asks,

Why this fantasy of expelling the dark matter, making everything visible, making it real, and forcibly expressing what has no desire to be expressed, forcibly exhuming the only things which ensure the continuity of the Nothing and of the secret? Why are we so lethally tempted into transparency, identity and existence at all costs?

(Baudrillard 2001: 13)

we might look to Otsuichi for one possible answer: Because it gives us the illusion of control. Though one might just as easily attribute our fear of death to a stubborn willingness to forget it (see *ibid.*, 27), one might also see that as itself a form of control.⁵⁹

Keeping Up Appearances

Where Otsuichi's "Flat Dog" deals with animal disappearance, Stephen King's 1983 novel *Pet Sematary* mines primal, far more pessimistic anxieties over animortality. Though Otsuichi's disappearing dog is frightening to Yū at first, he proves to be a redemptive part of her. In King's novel, resurrected pets strip their owners of all possibility of redemption but leave those owners addictively bonded to their impossible new lives. Furthermore, whereas Otsuichi's dog is anomalous, the forces which allow resurrection to occur in King

⁵⁹ According to Freudian psychoanalysis, our death drive is simply a nostalgic desire to return to our pre-individuated and pre-sexuated states of being, thereby *relinquishing* control to others, which if achieved would be a form of control again.

are omnipresent. They are the spark of life in its darkest hour, pulled several rungs down the ladder of their autonomy to a state of morbid normalcy.

Like Otsuichi, King has always been an author fascinated with how ordinary people act in extraordinary situations, and goes to extreme narrative lengths to see how things will pan out. In being confronted with crises, his characters reveal their truest selves. Pets have played various roles throughout his latter works—as alien hosts (2001’s *Dreamcatcher*), as outlets for anger directed at humans (2009’s *Under the Dome*), and as foment to a crumbling marriage (“L. T.’s Theory of Pets,” a short story published in 1997)—but with nowhere near as much primal fortitude as his 1981 *Cujo*. This tale of a good dog gone bad is among his more chilling, because the eponymous Saint Bernard is driven to kill not by supernatural forces but by rabies. His rage, though seen as evil, is no more than the result of a disease, and as such lures malevolence from the unknown depths of nature. Though *Cujo* tears his way through nearly everyone who stands in his way, we take comfort in the fact that those who have survived his wrath will never succumb to another attack. Not so in *Pet Sematary*.

Pet Sematary follows the demise of Louis Creed from respected father and medical professional to a failure on both counts whose meek humanity primes him for the iron grip of malevolence. The Creeds are enjoying their new life in Ludlow, Maine, where Louis has been newly appointed as head of student health services at the nearby state university. Unresolved tensions of their move from Chicago linger, particularly in traumatic memories of Louis’s trailing spouse Rachel, but at first their daughter Ellie, her infant brother Gage, and Church, the family cat, are impervious to the dislocation. When Church dies and Louis finds a means to bring him back to life, the cat’s return sets in motion a horrifying chain of

events. The undead Church blurs distinctions not only between animate and inanimate, but also between that which is animated and that which animates.

The second of those dichotomies manifests express discomfort, as it undermines the validity of agency against a baseline of passive life. *Pet Sematary* thus strips human—by way of animal—characters of their agency at the whim of a sentient evil with its own agenda. The only escape from this evil, and one’s enslavement to it, is willful death. Toward grappling with this trade-off, this section of the chapter discusses the ways in which themes of animation and control erase the divide between humans and othered subjects/objects. The relationship between the animating and the animated is central to *Pet Sematary* and emphasizes the equally fine line, as King sees it, between embodiment and disembodiment. Reanimation imagines an impossible realization of memory and points to a form of omniscience to which the novel’s dramatis personae have no access. King’s fixation on conviction-poor subjects relies on shadows, wherein rules of natural law are broken to terrifying effect. I employ the word “animation” both as a rhetorical strategy to re-conceptualize the threat of undead autonomy and as a literal function of the text.

King’s undead invalidate arbitrary schisms between humans, animals, technologies, and environments. They preclude the possible existence of an animator by substituting the possibility of being *only* animated—in essence, imagining Pettman’s errorless life. I read the “pet” of the novel’s title not as noun but as adjective, describing less the ones buried in the cemetery and more the intensity with which characters in the novel covet the powers it obscures. To be sure, King’s cemetery is a physical space: a forest of makeshift tombstones and misspelled epitaphs left by children moving on from what are likely their first encounters with death. And yet, the cemetery, along with the life-restoring

burying ground beyond it, is itself an object of adoration, and gains power over all manner of species in the novel. Any attempts on Louis's part to reconcile indiscretions in relation to raw animus leave him lost in the travesty of his search for solutions.

The absurdity of the *Pet Sematary* conceit—that a cat would return from the dead—becomes for Louis not a path to restoration of interpersonal harmony but a magnification of his lack of control. His bending of natural law, so far as he understands it, throws into question what he believes about human identity by ejecting it from an insular, social hierarchy and into a dialectical relationship with nature at large. He fears not that his cat has come back to life but that his cat has come back *without the need for life*, subsisting instead on the nutrients of tainted soil. The resurrected figures of King's novel are therefore as uncanny as they are evil, for the uncanny both repels *and* attracts. The resurrected Church is thus alluring for the restoration he embodies, horrifying for the aura of wrongness that pervades him.

As Sigmund Freud would have it, the horror of the uncanny (*umheimlich*) is its frontloading of repressed desires. “The source of the uncanny,” writes Lis Møller on the topic, “is not the manifest element...but the latent—repressed or infantile—content this element leads back to” (Møller 1991: 131). And yet, Møller would surely agree that Louis's resurrected cat is no mere manifestation of repressed impulse, but rather one possessed of its *own* content. It is the double of a dead signifier, the uncanniness of which “pertains to the fact that the primary narcissism in which it originated has been surmounted” (ibid., 132). Louis knows his actions go against the social norms into which he has been indoctrinated. His medical expertise assures the importance of maintaining those norms in his contributions to a healthy, ordered population. Still, he unwittingly abets a “narcissistic

desire to reproduce life and thus to deny the power of death” (ibid.), both an idealistic extension of his profession—doctors save lives, sometimes against odds—and a challenge to it. What unseats Louis is the return of that which he has habitually denied in himself.

Pet Sematary sidesteps ontological distinctions between living and nonliving bodies (cf. Knight 2005: 1-4) in ways that exempt animals from the subjective comforts of a privileged human species. Human-pet relations in the novel are firstly interactive and loving, secondly reactive and repulsive, and serve to prefigure parent-child relations, which are the novel’s ultimate focus. King’s interest as a writer lies in his willingness to navigate the darkest corridors of reanimation by confronting Louis with animation in its barest form. What makes his brand of uncanny so unsettling is its integration of pseudo-realistic bodies with autonomous function. In *Pet Sematary*, these anxieties find clearest expression and mediation through animals and children.

Though pets are an integral part of modern American life, *Pet Sematary* imagines what might happen if they could exist outside of that security, self-sustaining and, as it were, “off-leash.” By extension, King expresses interest in this same dynamic as it plays out between Louis and his children.⁶⁰ By way of abreaction, Louis discovers the key to his family’s precarious unity in Jud, a friendly longstanding citizen of Ludlow who is more than happy to ease the newcomers into unfamiliar surroundings. Jud warns Louis of the heavily trafficked road that bisects their properties. “When a good animal gets run down in the road,” he proselytizes, “a kid never forgets” (King 1984: 29). Prophetic words, these, in ways Louis will come to understand all too well. Before long, Jud introduces the Creeds to the pet cemetery that lies at the edge of their property. Local children have maintained

⁶⁰ It is significant, too, that children should have built the eponymous cemetery of their own accord, thus flagging them as the novel’s most selfless keepers of the dead.

the cemetery for decades, and Louis is astonished by the time and care gone into its construction.

Jud describes Pet Sematary in nostalgic terms, having once buried a treasured pet in its confines. Ellie, on the other hand, brings home from that place an interest in death she had never entertained. Fearing the prospect of Church falling prey to that same fate, she quizzes her father on the mysteries of life to exert control over Church's own. Louis tries his best to quell his daughter when, after Jud's wife Norma suffers a fatal heart attack, Ellie asks Louis about Church's mortality. To his feeble attempts at comfort she screams, "He's my cat! He's not God's cat. Let God have His own cat! Let God have all the damn cats He wants, and kill them all! Church is *mine!*" (ibid., 51). In likeness to Yū's relationship with Pocky, possession lies at the heart of Ellie's relationship with Church, and of her dawning awareness of the cat's, and her own, finite existence. Louis consoles her with half-baked secular wisdom, drawn at the intersection of his allegiance to science and his desire to placate a child's firing mind with images of an afterlife, hoping she will let the matter drop. A vivid desire to connect to Ellie's childhood innocence, to return to that state of naivety when he could not be held accountable for his failures, compels him to deflect the question.

His artful dodging of mortality fails him when Jud phones one cold morning with sad news: Church has been hit by a tanker-truck and lies dead, a veritable popsicle, in his front yard. At this point, King (ibid., 121) clues us in on Louis's insecurities: "Church wasn't supposed to get killed because he was inside the magic circle of the family." As luck would have it, Louis's family is visiting the in-laws (who detest him) for Thanksgiving when this tragedy strikes. Faced with unavoidable truth, and out of a desire to help a man

in whom he sees much of his younger self, Jud directs Louis to the Micmac burying ground some three miles beyond Pet Sematary. Louis buries Church in accordance with Jud's fervent instructions and returns home, unsure of what he has done or why he has done it. And just as he is prepared to break the news to Ellie, Church reappears, never to be the same again.

Church hisses when Louis comes near, acts erratically, and, in stark contrast to Pocky's disappearing acts, *appears* where he should not. Upon returning from Chicago, Ellie comments on his ever-present stench. What was once a warm companion in her bed is now a discomfiting presence. Church is no longer the cat he once was, his resurrected form now trapped, as David Oakes (2000: 107) describes it, "between the no-longer and the not-yet." Jud admits to knowing full well this power of the burying ground, claiming its pull is too visceral to resist once one knows it. The thrill of bringing back the dead never completely fades because one cannot ever disconnect oneself from it. He tells Louis of how he once used its powers to bring a beloved dog back to life, sharing both his concern for its lack of mind and the fascination of its altered presence. At any rate, Ellie ignores her intuition and accepts the deception, and life continues uninterrupted. That is, until an even greater tragedy strikes.

Gage dies. A few unsupervised moments during an afternoon play session are all it takes for the newly mobile boy to fall prey to another passing tanker. Louis's solution is predictable, if only because any parent might do the same in his predicament. After the funeral, he sends Rachel and Ellie back to the in-laws on the pretense of recuperation. Jud, however, knows better, and urges Louis to banish the possibility he is contemplating, assuring him that "sometimes dead is better" (King 1984: 166). Against Jud's protestations,

Louis grave-robs the boy and reinters him in the burying ground. He waits for the inevitable, not knowing that his actions are about to have drastic results. Back in Chicago, Ellie has nightmares of her father's deed. These are enough to prompt Rachel into action. By the time she gets to Ludlow, however, Gage has murdered Jud, and kills his mother in turn. Louis must then destroy his own son, and the cat, to staunch this chaos once and for all. And yet, because grief is the "battery that burying ground survives on" (ibid., 395), he cannot resist bringing back Rachel at the story's conclusion, leaving an uncomfortable implication hanging in the air.

King may speak little of animality in *Pet Sematary*, but it is a central ligament of the story for pulling into flexion Louis's recourse to human reason and his relationship with his son. The immediacy of the undead body signals a shift in logic of discovery to one of presentation. The blood flow of this logic pumps strongest throughout the burying ground and in the legendary Wendigo said to haunt its spoilt earth. This mythical creature, a (dis)embodiment of cannibalism taboos among Algonquian peoples up the Atlantic coast into Canada, is responsible in the world of the novel for cursing the burying ground, condemning any interred there to an existence bound by hunger for human flesh (making up, perhaps, for the Wendigo's lack thereof). And so, it is not the burying ground that activates Louis's considerations of reanimation, but rather the Wendigo, who makes of Jud and Louis outlets for his bidding. As Jud confirms, "The Micmac didn't discriminate, you know. They buried their pets right alongside their owners." This image sends Louis into a thought spiral, which makes him "think of the Egyptians, who had gone that one better: they had slaughtered the pets of royalty so that the souls of the pets might go along to whatever afterlife there might be with the souls of their masters" (ibid., 135).

The Micmac may not have discriminated between humans and animals, but Louis has grown up in a society that does, and so his recourse to Jud's romantic notions of resurrected life makes him feel guilty for bringing suffering to the innocent animal—and, later, to the innocent child. Church's walking death provides enigmatic resolution at best. Louis nevertheless treats it, as he describes it to Jud, as "something that was *meant*" (ibid., 162, original emphasis). Again, this echoes Yū's realization that she is bound to Pocky by fate. In both instances the (re)animated pet is not a reflection of its owner's indiscretions, but rather refuses status as an object of psychological manipulation, becoming instead something frighteningly real, primal, and shed of its domestication. Either way, both Louis and Yū use their pets for their own purposes.

The Wendigo, as an abominable error of species, cannot be exclusively labeled as human or animal, but flits somewhere, disconcertingly, between. The Wendigo is for Louis more than a figure to which he may anchor his compulsions, as it manifests beyond that an interspecies blending surely taboo to a mind trained in modern western medicine. The fact that the Wendigo is hidden from him until he sees its floating head as he transfers his dead son from the human cemetery to the burying ground again suggests that Louis does not deal well with appearances. And so, while the Wendigo may be a powerful force in the tale, it is a symbol for the weaknesses of its characters. Just as powerful is Jud's role as enabler. On the one hand, he recognizes the dangers of resurrecting humans, having himself resisted the urge to bring his wife back from the dead, yet—wittingly or not—lives out that dream vicariously through Louis. The burying ground exerts influence because it requires human intervention to manifest itself above and beyond its immediate perimeter.

The novel's mythological backbone in this regard emphasizes the theological implications of Church's name, which one might see as a divine signal warning Louis against tampering with God's domain. The tragedy surrounding Church is multivalent, involving at one level the mere fact of his death, at another the promise of a salvation in which Louis refuses to believe, and at still another the fact that Louis can only become aware of that salvation by distancing himself from its grace through profane acts. Though he may commit said acts with the hope and expectation that his loved ones will live again, free from the sinfulness he so vehemently denies, to do so he must bow to the Wendigo, his counterfeit God. It is because of Church that Louis first considers letting Gage lie in his grave, so that he and his family might start over again. But because Louis has already developed a taste for the Wendigo's power, he convinces himself that releasing Gage from his life would be tantamount to murder (ibid., 299). He cannot bear, knowing now that reanimation is possible, to be twice complicit in the boy's death. There is, however, a profound difference between the human child and the animal adult, for Gage shows a glimmer of innocent self-awareness at the moment of his second death (ibid., 402), while Church remains malevolent to the last. That Gage's discorporate self might somehow flicker into renewal gives some hope of an afterlife, and makes his re-killing even more tragic.

If anything about *Pet Sematary* makes it a horror novel, it is Louis's realization that he is not an animator but the animated, enslaved to the very force that long ago compelled Jud to witness the soil's power for himself. The Wendigo is an active puppet master, a species of death who defies biological categories. The possibility of something beyond both human *and* animal posits a third, upsetting category that evades definition yet takes

incontrovertible and fatal form through Louis's actions, which assume ritual logic insofar as they activate his fascination with the power of creation. Each of these figures—the cat, the boy, and the wife—stands like a trophy in the dimness of his uncertainties. As a set, they are vital because: a) they render visible the traumatic errors and ruptures of human injury that inform Louis's moral aptitudes and awareness of self-limitation; b) their displacement from the domestic sphere moves them beyond the radar of capture and into a glaring reflection of irresolvable turmoil; and c) the more these subjects achieve autonomy, the more Louis loses his sense of humanity.

In a family where distance is an emotional staple, Louis can only express his inner life through the deaths of those he loves most. Despite attempts to rectify wrongs of which he becomes aware at the point of no return, the story's outcomes fall on powers he will never fully understand. He injects the living dead with his surrender—quite literally through the barbiturates with which he kills his son. King's insistence on the “evil” tendencies of reanimated beings is therefore not the prescription of a sadistic literatus, but the strategy of an astute one who, like Asamatsu, makes a crucial point: The servants of evil will always be expendable once they have fulfilled their purpose. Considering the uncanny circumstances under which the novel's relationships distort beyond easy parsing, one can no longer be sure where one role ends and the other begins. The resurrected Church may not have come to be without Jud's urging, but the cat is anything but a slave to the man's will. He is the essence of his feline bearing, out of human reach. Through Church, Louis comes to realize that the body is “at the mercy of psychological forces under imperfect control at best” (Innes 1998: 123). Gage and Rachel bolster false promises of supreme control, while Church remains Jud's secret ante to the deal. Reanimation thrives

on a commitment to “abstract emotional states” over “live emotions,” the “generalized or generic, rather than individual terms” of their nature (ibid.). Louis’s cat and son, once-subjective beings culled from a stable reality, transcend that very reality, “holding the mirror down to nature,” to borrow Edward Gordon Craig’s phrasing (cited ibid., 183), thus reflecting what Louis refuses to see—that death is nature personified.

Of all the frights King has purveyed, *Pet Sematary* was the one that disturbed him to the point where he found it difficult to finish. As he writes in an introduction to the 2002 Pocket Books edition, “*Pet Sematary* is the one I put away in a drawer, thinking I had finally gone too far.... Put simply, I was horrified by what I had written, and the conclusions I’d drawn.” What is especially frightening about *Pet Sematary* is that there is nothing extraordinary about it. It is, in a sense, “intraordinary.” The novel’s undead are animus incarnate, and Louis seeks control over them because through them he can only pantomime self-control. It is a deceptive vision that blinds Louis to the death encroaching on his dwindling worldview. This does not mean that any understandings of autonomy are doomed to morbid ends, but that the objects we infuse with those understandings may just outlast us.

Postlude: Vanishing as Belonging

Otsuichi and King have much to say about the morbidity of error: its penchant for rupture, open wounds, and self-mutilation. Its intimate relationship with animortality. Then again, one presumably engages with writers like Otsuichi and King for affirmation of life. In reading about and imagining their horrors, one becomes accustomed to their rhythms and learns to change their minor keys to majors through transpositions of hope and reflection. After becoming aware of Yū’s coming of selfless age or Louis Creed’s deadly cycle of

God-play, we can only marvel at the inconsequential nature of our own reality, and at the fragile purchase of our own identities.

The concept of vanishing appears centrally in the work of John Berger (1980: 26) and Akira Mizuta Lippit (2000: 1; see also 190). Berger, for his part, sees animals as subjects in a state of perpetual vanishing. Lippit strengthens this characterization by calling animals “spectral” (ibid., 1) or, more awkwardly, “cryptological artifacts” (ibid., 189). These theories under-appreciate the fact that perpetual vanishing is only possible when animals exist in a state of perpetual (re)production. It is not that the methods by which animals appear have been curtailed, but that the sheer scale of their proliferation disallows us from processing them all at once. The imbrication of appearance and disappearance is necessary to life in linear time. Otsuchi and King are constantly killing and reviving animals not only as collateral damages of modernity, but also indivisible foundations of it.

For a philosophical, if circular, account of vanishing, one need only look so far as Heidegger, whose unpacking of Friedrich Hölderlin’s “Stimme des Volks” (Voice of the People, ca. 1800) provides relevant instruction. Heidegger focuses on the poem’s first two strophes, translated as follows by William McNeill and Julia Davis:

Unconcerned with our wisdom
The rivers still rush on, and yet

Who loves them not? And always do they move
My heart, when afar I hear them vanishing
Full of intimation, hastening along not
My path, yet more surely seaward

(Heidegger 1996: 27-28)

The poet describes rivers as “vanishing” and “full of intimation.” Their movement is constant and flows without need for human touch or provocation. “They are thus remote and foreign to humans,” says Heidegger (ibid., 28) of their rushing spirit. And yet people

depend on rivers for sustenance, travel, and habitation. Animals are lit by the same pilot light, their presence self-determined and lacking need of human presence yet necessary to humans as sources of food, transport, and shelter. In addition, we depend on animals for fashion, beauty, creativity, and, above all, language—the latter not least of all because animals were visual building blocks of the earliest writing systems.

Humans may follow animals and nature, but Hölderlin's rivers do not follow humans. Rather, "The rivers' intimate vanishing along their own path is like an abandonment of the realm of the human landscape" (ibid., 28). This balance of intimation and vanishing finds parallel in Otsuchi's story, in which the dog's penchant for concealment and the strategy of his becoming speaks to a "both-and-neither" scenario. The intimation comes in Yū's growing attachment to her tattoo, to the lives it destroys and bears. Pocky is simultaneously a remnant of the past and a harbinger of the future. As Heidegger likewise notes, "the vanishing of those who vanish is not simply a crude vanishing into whatever is finished and bygone. Vanishing can also be an inconspicuous passing away into what is coming, into a decisive belonging to whatever is coming" (ibid., 29-30). Pocky's playful disappearances entrench his connections with the yet-to-be, giving Yū the full brunt of his phenomenological being.

Heidegger delineates another helpful intellectual frame. Looking at two complementary versions of Hölderlin's poem, he concludes that

the essence of poetry is joined to the laws which strive to separate and unite the hints of the gods and the voice of the people. The poet himself stands between the former—the gods—and the latter—the people. He is the one who has been cast out—out into that *between*, between gods and men. But first and only in this between is it decided who man is and where his existence is settled.

(Heidegger 2000: 64)

One might see the literary act as, too, a way of boxing the animal as both agent of human interest and intermediary to a great unknown. Of course, the human may also stand at a crossroads, destabilized by the illusory universality of language, as intimated in Otsuichi's obsession with Pocky's errorful wandering into Yū's lesser knowns. Yū's only reaction to Pocky's disappearances is silence. She has no words for the alternate realities of her own body and requires the privilege of storytelling to make retrospective sense of this unbelievable episode in her life.

Mechanisms of vanishing impute the construction of language, which in turn alienates the subject as part of a universal order—in fact requires alienation for universal membership. What sounds like a paradox in theory unifies through practice. In Hegelian terms, narrative acts feed illusions of universal belonging, into which the subject effectively vanishes, nameless and secure in the knowledge of self-preservation. In one scholar's estimation,

[t]his movement of self-preservation through others is the movement of universalization through perception. Death initiates this movement of preservation through annihilation. From the experience of its reality language emerges seemingly out of nowhere. The mysterious relation between language and death is contained by this paradox of perseverance through disappearance.

(Oberst 2009: 120)

The failure of language to communicate the ineffable—as read here, the animal—is also its most colonial aspect, making the division of time and space appear for all intents and purposes natural, beyond human, of an incomprehensible afterlife. By the same token, only through language can humans constitute indivisible being.

All of which further emphasizes Otsuichi's story, newly significant because its vanishing point has been shifted “off screen” (i.e., off skin). The vanishing point now exists somewhere within Yū, and comes to define her in relation to that which she cannot see.

Pocky's trickery denies Yū as a viewing subject while also wholly embracing her as a part of his totality, just as he is now a part of hers. Self-directing yet molded by Yū's maturation, Pocky is her conceptual focus. He serves to animate and define those things reaching toward, and issuing from, her body. The vanishing subject thus becomes its own pet. It takes on a theory of vanishing as mantra, finding strength through repetition and intimation. Yū's self is an accordance of becoming, which plots its being in a continual redrawing of coordinates. Where vanishing—in the sense that Berger and Lippit uphold it—is for animals a form of captivity, for Heidegger it serves as a trigger of intellectual freedom in the human subject (Tran 2011: 106). This is where the “magic” of literature begins to undo the laces of the anthropocene.

Heidegger disinters one further clue in the similarity of his interpretation of the river to animal life. “It is precisely that which tears onward more surely in the rivers' own path,” he writes, “that tears human beings out of the habitual midst of their lives, so that they may be in a center outside of themselves, that is, be ex-centric.” He goes on: “The sphere proper to standing in the ex-centric middle of life is death” (Heidegger 1996: 28). This recurring theme of death throws light on the arbitrary schisms between humans and animals and supports the above discussion of Otsuichi and King, both of whom break up the street of mortality—which should be one way—and repave it as a two-way thoroughfare.

It is with this analogy in mind that I move to my final chapter, in which I offer the strangely optimistic *Kame-kun*, an astonishing science fiction novel by Kitano Yūsaku, as an example of the destructive and healing properties of the cyborg. In actualizing duality of purpose, the novel's artificially intelligent protagonist treats death as a new beginning,

as a catalyst for constructive thought and building of world-self. In this regard, Kitano has written an anthem for the future of human-animal relations, making for a fitting place to conclude our journey through interspecies terrain.

CHAPTER 4: SHELL IS OTHER PEOPLE

Prelude: The Self-Protective Cyborg

Among 21st-century Japanese science fiction novels themed around artificial intelligence,⁶¹ Kambayashi Chōhei's 2004 epic *Hadae no shita* (Under the Skin) stands out for its moral aptitude. Though the last of Kambayashi's *Kasei San-bu* (Mars: Third Sector) trilogy, it is chronologically the earliest of the series. It tells of a future in which humans, salvaging what little order they are able following a nuclear holocaust on Earth, have re-established themselves on Mars, where most live underground and a select few patrol the surface in the protective custody of androids. One of those androids is Keiji, a special class of biomechanical warrior who, during a tactical maneuver in the novel's opening act, protects his own life at the expense of a human comrade's. This impulsive action—one for which he was never programmed—results in a strict observation regiment by doctors and psychiatric evaluators, who in the wake of the incident are unable to puzzle their way through his sudden desire for self-protection.

In hospital, Keiji is introduced to the wife of the man he was commanded to protect. “How is it that my husband is dead,” she asks with as much composure as she can muster, “and you're still alive, sleeping away in this nice warm bed?” His noncommittal response enrages her. When she tells Keiji he would be better off dead, he responds, “Ma'am, I'm not sure if my dying would bring you the satisfaction you desire. Then again, I wasn't created for your satisfaction to begin with. Your husband taught me that” (Kambayashi 2004: 103). By this, Keiji means to say that, in his newfound self-awareness, he is cognizant of having been created and groomed for the satisfaction of military-industrial

⁶¹ Notables include *Purizumu no hitomi* (2007) by Suga Hiroe, *Ai no monogatari* (2006) by Yamamoto Hiroshi, and *HAL* (2005) by Sena Hideaki.

interests, and that his own interests were never considered. Nonplussed by this statement, the woman leaves him to roast in the afterburn of their exchange.

Realizing he must free himself from the systems of his human creators if he is ever to fan the spark of individuality now glowing inside him, Keiji looks back fondly to his creation, a time when things were yet green in his developing neural pathways. He reminisces about the days spent with his first and only pet, memories of whom come surging afresh when he encounters a military police officer with a search-and-rescue dog not unlike his “childhood” companion. The dog’s touch and smell make him yearn for the innocence of basic training, because at least at that time he was unaware of the truths he now knows. The animal has triggered recognition of a chasm dividing technology and sentience, one which he can only hope to cross in his quest for autonomy.

Because Kambayashi portrays Keiji’s self-interest not as a choice but as a psychological inevitability, the actions of life-loving androids appear to manifest the evolutionary teleology of survival mechanisms. That the specter of accountability so viscerally haunts Keiji means that—in Kambayashi’s world, at least—morality is as automatic as instinct. The latter runs a dotted line down the superhighway of self-awareness, onto which vehicles of moral aptitude frequently merge. Whether sacredly or secularly designed, affect nuances the act of self-preservation in and among social networks, even as the mind struggles to fit the self into a wider matrix of politics, geographies, and histories. But the emotional waterfall within Keiji drops far enough away so that he can approach the repercussions of his actions without immediate remorse.

For all its future casting of the military-industrial complex, and despite outing the animal as a facet of Keiji’s precision-born errors, the novel leaves the dog behind as an

ephemeral symbol. Keiji's attempts at cosubstancing with animal are graciously eclipsed by a brilliant character from the annals of Japanese SF: Kame-kun. The eponymous protagonist of Kitano Yūsaku's 2001 award-winning novel, a translation of which I published in 2016 as *Mr. Turtle*, redraws the intellectual parameters and phenomenology of AI being around this very question of animality and created consciousness. Kame-kun's nonhuman appearance and non-allegorical temperament separate him from other symbolic "animals." He inhabits a fictive event horizon, beyond which float issues only tangentially engaged in the work of Kambayashi, if on a far more intimate, inter-dimensional scale. Exploring the conceptual framework of *Mr. Turtle* while also teasing out its author's approach to enmeshments of humanity and animality at once presents a compelling possibility for, and cautionary tale of, the trajectory of human-animal relations.

Writing the Animal in(to) Science Fiction

Bruce Shaw's 2010 monograph, *The Animal Fable in Science Fiction and Fantasy*, was innovative for concretizing the role of animal mythologies in SF through a gallery of its sub-genres. Van Ikin begins a foreword to that same book with an intriguing claim: "Animals are aliens, of a kind" (in Shaw 2010: 1). In the book's conclusion, Shaw concurs: "Are we alone in the universe? No, because there are animals who share our lives with us and stimulate our imagination, as I am sure we do for them" (Shaw 2010: 222). Tongue-in-cheek though it may be on their part to characterize animals as aliens among us, the practical value of this simple framing is dubious. And while Shaw at least tries to put humans and animals on an even keel, animals still feel subordinate to me in his worldview, forever peripheral to the human center. To see animals as aliens is to see humans as the

sole inheritors of a planet that, if evolutionary science has anything to say about it, predated our emergence with far longer genealogical chains of robust species.⁶²

Whether surpassing their human enablers as the enhanced dolphins of David Brin's "Uplift" cycle or seeking to destroy humanity in a quest for world domination as the hormonally triggered animal warriors of Robert Repino's 2015 *Mort(e)*, animals in SF tend to be enslaved or devalued subjects desirous of ascendancy.⁶³ And whenever human characters encounter legitimate, nominal alien life forms in SF, these necessarily organic entities often assume animal form.⁶⁴ The end effect of this tendency is twofold, distinguishing aliens from terrestrial humans by building off the otherness of animals on Earth while also hollowing out conduits for reader sympathies. As misunderstood subjects, animals map well onto alien species whose inner lives may be just as vast and mysterious as the light-years of traversal required to reach them.

A sizable portion of Anglophone SF's great animal narratives, in addition to having been written by women (e.g., C. J. Cherryh's "Chanur" saga), assumes a feminist slant. Margaret St. Clair's eco-political *The Dolphins of Altair* (1967) and Carol Emshwiller's witty allegory *Carmen Dog* (1988) degauss the boundaries of gendered subjects in earthly crises whereby entire social orders stand on the brink of destruction. The go-to solution to total fallout is a dramatic reshuffling of failed hierarchies, for which animals become convenient placeholders for uncertain futures as humans struggle with the challenges of

⁶² Historian Felipe Fernández-Armesto flips the script of human primacy when he writes, "the discovery that there are lots of cultural animals is the most significant new science of my lifetime...because it transforms our sense of who we are. We are not alone" (Fernández-Armesto 2015: 101).

⁶³ Sena Hideaki's *Parasite Eve* (1997) takes this notion to its most extreme, telling of a sentient strain of mitochondria seeking autonomy and freedom from its symbiosis in the human organism.

⁶⁴ Reptilian, crustacean, and feline traits being the most common among fictional extraterrestrials.

the present. Despite the salient identity politics of these and other animal-themed SF narratives, few authors ever dedicate page space to folding any awareness of their own appropriations of animals into the batter of the stories themselves.

Aware of this hypocrisy far ahead of the game, Donna Haraway offered her influential “A Manifesto for Cyborgs,” therein challenging Judeo-Christian creationism, and even strands of mainstream feminism, for leaning too heavily on allegorical formations without addressing true, boundary-crossing relations with animals and technologies, through which the centrality of the self might be undone. Yet even as she sought to loosen categorical restrictions, Haraway (1994: 90) outed the cyborg as a tool of masculinist warfare. In this respect, she defined the cyborgian reality as a domestic one—which is to say, as a mental construct that must confess its physiological ties to a patriarchal nervous system if it is ever to fashion a body politic of its own.⁶⁵

If SF narratives rarely deny the fixity of the animal as category, it is because they have yet to reconcile the fluidity of the human. Animal symbols remain stable anchors by which authors might find traction in an otherwise slippery human landscape. Far too often, animals are little more than stand-ins for their human counterparts, of whom they function as universal signifiers.⁶⁶ Even Olaf Stapledon’s *Sirius* (1944), one of the most plausible extroversions of caninicity in all of fiction, is a thinly veiled commentary on World War I.⁶⁷ As a laboriously detailed character study, Stapledon’s tragedy of the cerebrally

⁶⁵ Social reality, however, was for Haraway “a world-changing fiction” (Haraway 1994: 83), and her rejection of it may have been premature (cf. Coole and Frost 2010). Reality still matters, because it *is* matter, and manipulation through the literary apparatus proves its malleability.

⁶⁶ While normally the term “universal” might be read as “applying to all species,” in the context of science fiction it must also be taken to mean “of the universe.”

⁶⁷ In his introduction to the 2011 Gallancz “Masterworks” edition, Graham Sleight (echoing Brian Aldiss) cannot help but describe *Sirius* as the “most *human* of [Stapledon’s] books” (Stapledon 2011: viii, original emphasis).

enhanced dog who loves a human woman shares too many parallels with the author's own biography to be seen as anything more than allegorical fantasy.⁶⁸ The alterity of animals within a human-defined landscape is more than a result of the "cognitive estrangement" so famously attributed to SF by Darko Suvin (1979: 3). It is a gaping black hole that obscures readers from the posthumanist potential of the human-animal story to inhabit species so fully that they breach.

It is impossible to characterize SF without acknowledging the vital roles animals have played within it. On the one hand, their ubiquity allows readers to recognize the limitations of humans' daily imaginations. On the other, it reinforces the otherness of animals by treating them as our very own backyard aliens. But if the only unifying factor of the genre is its reflection of the human, then how can it possibly alter relations between species? To answer this, one need only uphold the vast philosophical developments of SF, its proliferation of expansions, divisions, and hybridizations alike. It is an "evolving mode" (Seed 2011: 2) of life itself.

So much of SF, including that from Japan, is a variation on the theme of hybridity. Few stories demonstrate that hybridity with as much tact as *Mr. Turtle*. In addition to its simple richness, Kitano's novel is unique for displaying a turtle on its cover (see Figure 5), and for maintaining the pulp aesthetic of its absurdity while attending to its underlying themes with the respect they deserve.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Notes Shaw (2010: 5): "Writers of science fiction and fantasy whose work is inspired by the animal fable of old reflect the societal fears of their socio-cultural milieux, as well as drawing on their personal troubles."

⁶⁹ Shaw's abovementioned survey of animals in SF features canines, felines, rodents, and sea-faring creatures, but, aside from brief mention in John Shepley's 1962 short story "The Kit-Katt Klub" (see Shaw 2010: 67), no turtles.

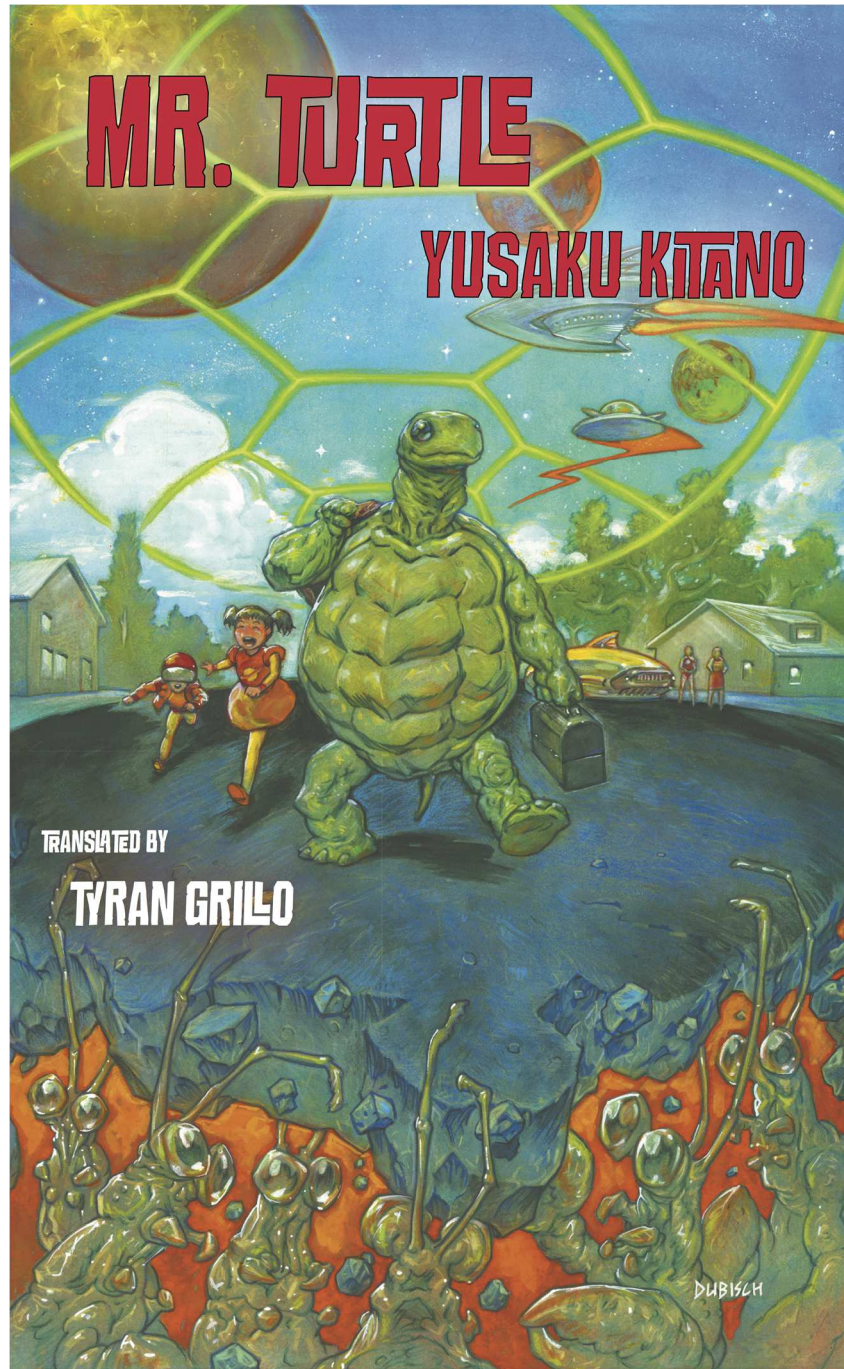


Figure 5: Cover art of the 2016 English-language edition by Mike Dubish

Kitano revels in the semantic potential of his species of choice, as evidenced by the neologisms that pepper the novel, and which constitute a story unto themselves. The first part, entitled “Replican[t]urtle” (*repurikame*), epitomizes Kame-kun’s hybrid physicality.

The portmanteau fully and concisely expresses his semi-constructed life. The second part takes the title “Robo-Turtle” (*mekame*), underscoring Kame-kun’s functionality as a machine. The third part, “Turtle Recall” (*kamemorii*), picks the scab of a traumatic backstory. Finally, “Turt[le]tters” (*kameeru*) signals Kame-kun’s penchant for writing and electronic communication. By mere introduction of these terms, Kitano engages the illocutionary power of naming to suit a future in which humans and animals may not only co-exist, but also co-*consist*. Each term is a window into Kame-kun’s phenomenological world. As a machine produced by and for humans yet modeled after his turtle counterparts, Kame-kun takes on characteristics of both of his creators and his dominant representational reptile. Each of these species worlds is a mirror of the other, the infinity of reflections between them serving as playground for Kitano’s authorial tumbling. Through his rudimentary understanding of creation, Kame-kun forges a personal philosophy of mind and body in relation to space as his world morphs into a self-magnifying spiral into which the reader becomes pulled by association.

Such dynamics are familiar to the Kitano fan, who will have encountered a variety of animal subjects in 1994’s *Kurage no umi ni ukabu fune* (Adrift in the Jellyfish Sea), 2001’s *Zarigani man* (Crayfish Man), 2002’s *Ika seijin* (Planet of the Squid), 2011’s *Kitsune no tsuki* (Fox Possession), and not least of all his six-part series of animal picture books for children, published in 2003. Enlivening these works is a special interest in respective animal worlds, whereby a protagonist conceptualizes her or his own reality as much through the mind as through the body, all while clarifying a need for disembodiment in a future of compromised borders. As Istvan Csicsery-Ronay has it, such technologically minded utopianism “has obviated the need to use animals as willing slaves, a function that

they may no longer need to serve, given the arrival of machines. Their continued existence benefits human science now rather as texts to be read and rewritten” (Csicsery-Ronay 2008: 253). In this sense, we might say that the specificity of Kame-kun lies in his artificial intelligence. Though at its most ideal level, AI promises autonomous and victimless technology, in practice it seems a seamless means of justifying enslavement. Kame-kun confirms the textual metaphor with idiosyncratic style by way of the honesty with which he unpacks himself. His status as a biomechanoid christens the vessel of his animality with a bottle marked “INDIVIDUALITY,” even as it docks him for being a human creation. Connecting these arbitrary opposites is his defining shell, which functions as the novel’s quintessential boundary. And if anything can be said to unite SF under one motivic umbrella, it is space—both outer and inner—and the ways in which it engenders the affective tendencies of inter-technological—and, in this instance, interspecies—relations.

Meet Kame-kun

Mr. Turtle tells the story of a cyborg turtle of the same name who is assaulted by horrific, if vague, memories of fighting a war on Jupiter, after which his memory was wiped and he was integrated into human society in anticipation of the next interplanetary conflict. In the interim, Kame-kun lives among humans doing human things. He works a blue-collar factory job, rents an apartment, and enjoys going to the library, where he even makes a human friend. But he is constantly wondering about life and takes long walks to ponder the mysteries of his place in the grander scheme of things. All this time, he must deal with constant discrimination from a hostile society, in which his kind are a social pariah, a reminder of a war no one wants to think about. His life continues in this way until he is

found by his manufacturer, who prepares him for another reset so that he can be redeployed on Jupiter.

It is a bittersweet story, one skillful in garnering sympathy for its strangely endearing hero, and from which the author emerges with an optimistic message. Though Kame-kun will be inevitably recycled into the symphony of war, his instrument—his self-questioning AI—proves that even matter deemed inanimate except by human intervention must express its own will to power. Kame-kun’s interest in life and afterlife, love and hate, materiality and immateriality—all of it comes from a consciousness that grows as he grows. What we haven, then, is a strangely endearing character, and Kitano’s ability to build a meticulous world around him, only to tear it down at a keystroke, is masterful. What at first appears to be a youth-oriented fable of a turtle fending for himself in a human world turns into a treatise on schemes of reality and the place of intelligent life within those schemes. Questions raised by *Mr. Turtle* are not only thought-provoking, but soften human-animal barriers in ways rarely seen even in even the most speculative literature. And while SF is not necessarily the only realm in which techno-species assemblages may flourish to this extent, Kitano’s insight accepts the voice of his cherished assemblage with an open ear. Such attention to animal stands it apart, for its novum not only moves but also speaks.⁷⁰

Said novum comes in the form of an army of cyborg turtles, Kame-kun among them, once sent to Jupiter to battle a legion of giant crayfish. The crayfish resulted from massive human error, when a film production company created them as biomechanical

⁷⁰ “Novum” is a term coined by Darko Suvin, who in his 1979 *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* defined it as a “totalizing phenomenon or relationship deviating from the author’s and implied reader’s norm of reality” (cited Hiller 2015: 80n). It is the logic of the story in question, for while it may not match the reader’s experience, it makes sense in the world of said story. That the idea is repurposed from the utopian philosopher Ernst Bloch (for more on this, see Csicsery-Ronay 2003) will become significant, as I later subject *Mr. Turtle* to a Marxist analysis.

“dummy” victims of realistic onscreen killings for *kaijū* blockbusters. Knowing that more than one might be needed for alternate takes and sequels, the designers installed a self-propagation mechanism in the crayfish, who managed to jump into a wormhole and propagate themselves into an innumerable army of real-life nemeses. Thus, what began as a virtual war became a real one. Kame-kun represents Japan’s military response to this threat, but his knowledge of this history is digitally honeycombed.

Barring these fantastical turns of events, Kame-kun’s Japan, amplified though it is, feels stuck in a post-bubble, neo-capitalist nostalgia. It is a nation still caught in the throes of a stereotypical obsession with technology and innovation, but at the same time—if the novel’s utter lack of transnationalism⁷¹ is any indication—yearns for the insularity it enjoyed in former centuries. And while its block apartments, shopping districts, and crisp topography are no far cry from the present day, its dilapidated urban sectors and reliance on virtual technologies for travel speak of a war-torn society. This atmosphere is something of throwback to postwar literature, in which the realm of Japanese SF assumed understandably vivid configurations following the devastating nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Abe Kōbō’s 1958/59 serial *Dai-Yon Kampyōki* (Inter Ice Age 4) being a landmark example. The more-than-obvious implications thereof activate an authorial awareness of what Csicsery-Ronay calls the “nuclear sublime”—the awe-inspiring capacity for our most destructive technologies to obliterate creation at the molecular level:

Once the entire biosphere becomes vulnerable to engineered destruction...the most destructive physical might has been appropriated, and the once-sublime domain of nature seems to exist on human sufferance. The nuclear sublime is the catalyst for...awe and terror at the prospect that the war machine develops autonomously

⁷¹ In its place, Kitano presents readers with a trans-*dimensional* conundrum that fragments the very idea of Earth as a sovereign entity in the universe.

from mundane social concerns. Chained to the logic of the arms race, human engineers are no longer privileged actors at the forefront of history, but rather passive agents of techno-evolution's unfriendly experiments, only partially aware of what they're doing

(Csicsery-Ronay 2008: 159)

Csicsery-Ronay uses this term a little differently than Perry Miller's famous "technological sublime" (see Nye 1994), evoking not so much awe over as increasing immateriality of technological development toward ever more cerebral, internal, invisible configurations. If Kame-kun incarnates the fear of technological autonomy, it is no wonder that, as the remnant of a war fought by robots in place of humans for their own mistake, he should inspire discriminatory responses from the very species that created him. Because he was built primarily as a weapon, his later integration into society crosses a taboo line between producer and product and flags human motivations for war and violence.

Upon witnessing the bombing of Nagasaki, journalist William L. Laurence "saw the mushroom cloud as a prehistoric monster, and speculated that after a nuclear war, modern humans would devolve into an animal-like existence" (Hendershot 1999: 77). If we can imagine these sentiments being felt on both ends of the explosion, then the people of Kitano's near future must reconcile the trauma of sending biomechanical stand-ins to air their dirty laundry with the agency of those very instruments as they are re-synched with the rhythms of everyday life. Kame-kun's continued presence, long after fulfilling its tactical purpose, actualizes Laurence's fear of de-evolution. Kame-kun is a reminder to all who come to know him that, though wars on the outside come and go, those on the inside are eternal.

Kame-kun is a creature of habit. The point of his existence is to wonder about the point of his existence. Daily walks are among his favorite activities, allowing him time to connect the dots of his meager life into a recognizable image of earthly goings on, while

also revealing the workings of his android mind.⁷² Kame-kun criticizes humans' penchant for invention, bolstering as it does the illusion that humans are Earth's only caretakers, even as he feels kinship with humans, who are designed in the image of the divine without being themselves divine. As a high-tech creation, he easily empathizes with this condition, and from this perspective spins a web of inquiry toward multifaceted understanding of the self and its possible meanings in worlds beyond.

When we first meet Kame-kun, he is between jobs and moving into a new apartment. Throughout the novel, such attempts at fitting in among humans disclose Japan's fundamental social resistance to his kind (even his landlady must check her own prejudices before handing him a key). After moving in, Kame-kun goes for a walk to familiarize himself with the neighborhood and happens upon a riverbank just past the local train station. A group of ragtag kids sidles up alongside and kicks a soccer ball in the hopes of knocking him over. Kame-kun sustains the blow with his carapace and sends their ball into the river with the flick of his tail. Impressed by his strength but upset over losing their ball, one of the boys says, "[G]o back to Jupiter, you stupid turtle" (Kitano 2016: 4).⁷³ This is our first hint of the epic war on Jupiter in which Kame-kun was once involved, but of which he recalls vaguest fragments. More important for the moment is the dual discrimination this association engenders. Not only is Kame-kun derogatorily marked by his apparent species, despite being an artificial simulacrum thereof, but also by his warring past. The river⁷⁴ comes to represent a lost consciousness destined to empty into the ocean

⁷² A pertinent example: "As he walked, a new map was forming in his head. He enjoyed the sensation of it being maintained, updated, and growing little by little" (Kitano 2012: 24-25).

⁷³ "*Mokusei ni icchimaie, bakagamee*" in the original.

⁷⁴ See "Postlude" of previous chapter.

of collective memory. The river's ecosystem is familiar to him—or at least should be, given his reptilian make—but harbors as many mysteries as remnants of a life submerged.

Along with experiencing discrimination, Kame-kun knows that humanity has co-opted animality to egotistical ends. In a chapter entitled “Shell,” the reader learns of a recent trend among female high school students who wear turtle shells on their backs. Oddly enough, they favor the simple, single-keeled housings of the Japanese pond turtle, and point derisively at Kame-kun for sporting the three keels characteristic of the Chinese pond turtle, which they deem to be out of fashion. That they go to such verbal lengths to classify his traits confirms a hierarchy of species and proves that superficial appearance has much to do with the level of insults received. Later it is explained that not only are girls *wearing* shells, but are also experimentally *bonded* to them in the hopes of increasing their lifespan. Kame-kun can only wonder whether his own shell might not have had a previous owner and whether the flickers of his memory might not clothe themselves in another's residuals.

Kame-kun's push for knowledge troubles the waters in which humans admire their own reflections, and asks whether the human subject must first lay claim to some form of consensus being to overcome that consensus, or whether the species, as a human concept to begin with, is just a distraction from the molecular sameness of things. Kame-kun does not represent the future, but enacts an honest look into the past. Even though he walks upright and works with his hands, he is not a humanoid robot, being no more human than the shell-toting high schoolers are animal. He is neither a traditional hero nor a goal-oriented individualist. The reader encounters him in a liminal state—not a point along a line but a line without a point. He does not represent the human, catalyzing instead a

breakdown of the human and, through his relentless information gathering (the result of his inherent desire for growth), reduces the aura of life to a data stream. He sees the world not as a series of biorhythms, but as one technological innovation in an eternity of others.

Mr. Turtle acknowledges invisible forces of integration and the social quest to dominate them through diffusion of human exceptionalism. For though humans continue to be the dominant species in *Mr. Turtle*, their fear of animals is so great that biomechanical production of them is the only method to which they can resort to keep them in check (even this backfires, as the crayfish so ironically demonstrate). If any dialectic can be said to be operative in Kame-kun's everyday life, it is not so much "human vis-à-vis animal" as it is "inorganic vis-à-vis hyper-organic." Kitano's novel practices a peculiar brand of "transanimalism,"⁷⁵ whereby the primacy of animality as tangible, re-creatable being dissolves barriers between animals and technology, and wherein the organic functions as an adaptive language of behavioral consequence in characters who come and go like so many lines of code.

As one born from war and who to war must return, Kame-kun embodies the mutual exclusion of agency and passivity. His autonomy depends on the bio-engineered energy of his able body, on both the active and inactive ingredients of his sustenance, on the physics of this planet he calls home. His very existence—a life consisting of little more than eating, working, and frequenting the local library to fuel his knowledge production—problematizes the equation of passivity with worthless nonbeing, and shows that Kame-kun's everyday activities harbor power by their inaction. They also deny the equation of agency with active being (cf. Kim 2012: 104). Furthermore, his pariah status expands the

⁷⁵ As opposed to transhumanism, which seeks to modify the human entity, intact yet augmented or enhanced, through technological, scientific, or biological intervention.

possible spaces in which bodies make contact and retract, communicate and self-isolate, injure and heal beyond the circumscription of normalized bodies. In being so actively objectified, he passively disables the locks of anthropocentrism that have rusted around him.

Interlude: Knowing One's Species World

One night, Kame-kun wakes up and looks out into the courtyard of his apartment complex. There, made visible by the light of the full moon, he sees a mass of rod-like objects sticking out from the ground, each fitted with an eye. Confronted by the gaze of some indefinable life form, he finds himself forever changed. Already the object of public scrutiny from speciesist humans, he is inspired by this mysterious, nocturnal encounter to delve further into the annals of recorded knowledge to better understand the reasons behind his creation. Yet his quest for personal truth is no mere analogue to our own, even if it does share a certain contradiction of self-enhancement and -destruction.

Kame-kun's sense of self is distinctly chelonian. He sees the world as an accumulation of countless hexagons, which like those of a turtle's shell cleave an inner and outer realm. Because his shell is all he has, he believes that when he moves, the world moves with him. "God was to humans," the narrative voice muses, "as shells were to turtles" (Kitano 2016: 16). Kame-kun reaches this epiphany during one of his walks near the library, which sits on an island in the river. The bridge leading to it is made of hexagonal stones, and the *déjà vu* of their shell-like appearance consumes him as he crosses it. It is no coincidence that Kame-kun is quite fond of the library, a place where he can learn about himself through knowing the world. The library is for him an entity with its own color,

scent, and kinesis. Through nothing more than reading books and watching videos, he gains gradual knowledge of how things work.

He grows fond of everyone who works there, especially a part-time archivist named Miwako, with whom he strikes up the novel's healthiest—and perhaps only—relationship. It so happens that Miwako is writing her graduate thesis on turtles, and so in some respects understands Kame-kun better than he understands himself. When they first meet, she scans his shell and discovers that it consists mainly of silicone and ceramic in thin, alternating layers. “It grows on its own, like crystal,” she informs him, “in proportion to memory” (ibid., 20). This soberly reminds Kame-kun of the fact that he remembers nothing of the distant past, not least of all his relationship to the multiply referenced war on Jupiter. Miwako surmises that those memories are locked, due to their military secrecy.

Miwako's expository gifts to the reader are as profound as her emotional ones to Kame-kun. Through her, we learn that our hero is a composite of manmade materials and living flesh. As someone who is “neither just hardware nor software” (ibid., 96), Kame-kun is in a unique position to break a fourth wall that most animals, on human terms, cannot break. His unspoken mission is to give voice to the voiceless subject, translating his inner animal for any who might benefit. His wisdom flourishes to educate himself before others—a key distinction from the purely allegorical animal. Though built as a weapon, Kame-kun cannot help but indulge in the privilege of loading his mind and soul with less tangible ammunition.

Kame-kun's way of life emphasizes the tendency among humans to, by observing animals, become hyper-aware of, and locked into, their own worlds. The biosemiotic triggers by which his behaviors unfold are rooted in both physiological and psychological

signs. From his perspective, life is a soft contradiction. He must hold down a job to eat and pay his rent, but is aware of the impositions of his work. Around him normality is static, anti-progressivist, and keeps him enclosed in a box branded with the traits of his species. Kame-kun follows the blueprint of existence as laid out for him by his creators, even as he manages to elicit incredible diversity within its cartographic restrictions. Kame-kun reframes his purview as nothing more than speciesism in a minor key, carving out a special niche for human reasoning within his own. The latter is more than a human implant, because it thrives on self-generation. He is not, for the moment, conscripted into bare life. Instead, he lays life bare.

Kame-kun is always in the middle of things. The very term by which Kitano refers to him is proof of this. He is neither replicant (*repurika*) nor turtle (*kame*), but replican[t]urtle (*repurikame*). His affect is both an internalization of effects from the outside and an externalization of effects from the inside. Being a turtle, he is always in his shell looking out, unable to transcend that half-domed world. At the same time, he knows there are endless worlds in other shells within him, just as he exists in another shell in another, ad infinitum. The novel's narrator—which, later we learn, is Kame-kun himself—shows great awareness of his species world, even as he transcends it through the mechanism of trauma (something that cannot be pre-programmed). Jakob von Uexküll's elucidations are helpful here:

No animal will ever leave its [own] space, the center of which is the animal itself. Wherever it goes, it is always surrounded by its own...space, filled with its own sensory spheres, irrespective of how much the objects change. Man [sic], on the other hand, when he wanders, tends to cut loose the space he moves in from his sensory spheres and thus to extend his paths in all directions. The vault of the sky gets higher and higher and the center of the world under the heavenly cupola is no longer himself but his home. Man does no longer move with a space that follows him faithfully, as his senses tell him, he moves instead in a space at rest, a space

that is cut loose from him and has its own center. Space has become autonomous as have the objects within it.

(Uexküll 2001: 109)

Kame-kun turns this conception on its head by embracing that very awareness of infinity Uexküll privileges to humans alone, and by navigating between human and animal realms with instinctive beauty. He need never intellectualize these transitions, but cultures them in himself and in others through the gifts of his thinking, his desires, and, perhaps above all, his work. As a cog in a larger machine, he challenges the myth of alienation through an intimate knowledge set, by which he proves time and again that there is no such thing as space at rest.

Laboro, ergo sum

When first introduced to Kame-kun, the reader learns he has been laid off due to a company buyout, and that the new management refuses to entertain keeping on a replican[t]urtle among its human employees. Prior to his forced resignation, Kame-kun receives a laptop as a parting gift from his manager. The laptop becomes the technological leitmotif of the novel and is, in fact, the very machine on which he has written it. Because Kame-kun does not talk,⁷⁶ the laptop is his primary means of communication. With it he can e-mail, record his thoughts, and apply for his new job online. Without it, the narrative would not exist.

Upon arriving for his job interview, he proceeds through a landscape in ruins, crumbling with vestiges of a world before the war. The area indicated on his application has fallen into use as a warehouse district. He rings the intercom. A middle-aged secretary answers and ushers him down a wan passageway to be interviewed by his future boss, Tsumiki. The interview is curt. All Tsumiki wants to know is whether he can use a forklift.

⁷⁶ There is no logical reason for a weapon to have the capacity for verbal communication. It receives commands, but does not give them.

It so happens that Kame-kun has plenty of forklift experience, and so Tsumiki puts him through a trial run. Once Kame-kun slips into the pod that serves as a driver's seat, the hatch closes and everything goes dark. It reminds him of being inside an egg, a feeling he realizes he has always known. He recognizes the usual controls, and along with them meters, panels, and screens he has never encountered. He feels like he knows these, too, and gets so lost in his oneness with the machine that he blacks out the first few times he operates it.⁷⁷

Like its titular subject, *Mr. Turtle* has a complicated relationship with technology. On the surface, it is practical and bare: forklifts, barcode scanners, and laptops speak of a world that, despite technical leaps in warfare, still operates on a practical level not dissimilarly to the early 21st century. The most advanced technology, in fact, seems to have been encoded into Kame-kun himself and those he was bred to fight. He might easily have been programmed with all sorts of worldly—universal, if you will—knowledge, but arrives on the scene of his daily life a blank dam barring small cracks through which his past trickles with mounting force. He wonders why everything feels so familiar, as it did during his previous employment. The seat of his first forklift accommodated the curvature of his shell as if it were made for him, if not the other way around, and was the first indicator of a former life. The smoothness of his operational skills so amazed his human coworkers that they applauded and welcomed him into the blue-collar community. He excels comparably in his new work, even as his labor picks at the scabs of a traumatic history.

⁷⁷ This is a common theme in “mecha” anime and manga as well. Ikari Shinji, the human hero of *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, for one, blacks out when the cybernetic robot known as EVA Unit 01 lapses into berserk mode the first two times he tries to pilot it.

As a genre of estrangement, SF sheds valuable light on the working economies of its speculative realities. In his 1844 “On *The Jewish Question*,” a young Karl Marx criticizes the (Christian) state for valorizing estrangement over man. Marx’s seminal essay draws a line between his early and later thinking along the issue of species-being, a concept that as such would fade from his more famous work, though its basic principle—that workers produce their own deterioration—would continue to be his red thread for decades to come. For Marx, productive life is species-life (i.e., humans being conscious of their species, a concept drawn from Ludwig Feuerbach). Animals produce only to satisfy their immediate needs, without ever engaging in “abstract” labor, while humans lubricate functionality with their own aesthetic gel. Humans are thus distinct from animals for producing an actual material life through means of subsistence, yet in doing so are alienating their lives as species. Technological determinism, however, is only the dark of Kitano’s novel, the light of which bears out in the fact that, as a product himself, Kame-kun has an “insider’s view” of material life. Kame-kun’s labor is abstract for producing no commodity but having social value through its protective mechanisms and allegiance to a homogenous history (cf. Gidwani 2004: 531-533).

Kame-kun’s cyborgian reality as a use-oriented body rounds Marx’s sharper thinking on the point of labor economy. As Haraway (1994: 85) predicted, cyborgs “are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism. But illegitimate offspring are exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential.” And while for feminists the master’s tools may never destroy the master’s house, the cognizant, laboring cyborg proves that not only can the master’s house be destroyed but can also be transcended through mechanisms of agentic

being. If Hegel wanted only liberation of mind, and Marx that of real human beings, then *Mr. Turtle* extends the trajectory by asking: What happens when products of human labor flirt with their own liberation?

For Marx, species-life is not the life of a species, as determined by genetics and physical advantages. Rather, the species-life of human beings is the consummate political state, wherein human beings sacrifice a direct connection to self through the alienation of their labor, in turn supporting the superstructure that enables it. Species-life exists in opposition to material life, reflecting the *potential* of human nature and the ability to constitute one's own life activity. The animal throws a wrench into this thinking. As Sherryl Vint observes, "If we take seriously animals' capacity for social relations, then reducing their existence for beings-for-capital is a violation of their species-being as much as reducing humans to labour-power is a violation of ours" (Vint 2009: 124). More problematic for Vint than the reduction of labor-power is the proliferation of a system that would reduce *any* living creature to commodity status (*ibid.*, 127). And so, the vicious cycle of production and alienation appears to occur along a line not unlike that of Kame-kun's shell: a liminal space in which the statuses of producer and produced are coterminous.

A detriment of this self-imagining is a lack of ability to imagine the self. The more one accedes to the parameters of species-being, the more one defers to the idea that a higher rate of production leads to a higher state of knowledge. Species-being is what Marx calls "estranged labor" in another formative essay of the same name. Like the estrangement of SF, Marx's estrangement is from our human bodies, our fellow laborers, and the commodities we produce and consume. Workers cannot be too consciousness of themselves. This would be counterproductive, for their consciousness has been harnessed

into the activity of labor, alienated from the products (which, to workers, are hostile) they help create. When labor itself comes to be alienated from production—that is, when activity itself becomes alien—species-being has prevailed. Its truth is its fantasy: that we are universal and therefore free. Kame-kun actualizes a *conscious* relation to laboring beyond that of subsistence, all the while destabilizing the subject-object divide that weakens the integrity of subjecthood as it is optimistically defined in accord with social effects.

Eunjung Kim (2012: 105) reworks this sentiment elsewhere when she says, “Certain bodies are oppressed not by ‘thingification’...but by the specific mode of intelligibility with which the thing and other things are treated.” We might therefore see the imposition of integrity on bodies as an objectification that fails to see the generative power of passivity. There is a necessary cocktail of agency and passivity in a discriminated subject like Kame-kun, who is perceived to be a “less-than” in relation to the “must-haves.” His passivity regarding labor is just as active as his desire to uncover repressed memories and understand the fallacy of his species-being. Returning to Marx (“Estranged”), we find that “[m]an is a species-being, not only because in practice and in theory he adopts the species (his own as well as those of other things) as his object, but...also because he treats himself as the actual, living species; because he treats himself as a *universal* and therefore a free being.” Conversely, being for all intents and purposes an animal, Kame-kun has no access to the same sort of universality as his human coworkers. He must find his own creative, pseudo-scientific solutions to existential crises.

As a cyborg, Kame-kun challenges the notion of a universal personhood. Given his thoughts on humanity and God outlined above, he is far more interested in the philosophical radiations of his in-built practicalities, and in the neural mechanisms that push him to seek

regular employment, than in the fate of humankind. In such a context, Marx's communism cannot proliferate around the eradication of personality in favor of a collective self, but an abolition of private property.⁷⁸ Kame-kun is aware that the true alien, "to whom labor and the product of labor belongs, in whose service labor is done and for whose benefit the product of labor is provided, can only be *man* himself" (ibid., original emphasis)—or, in his case, the *turtle* himself. Kame-kun's lack of interest in commodities nudges the theory that buying products (commodities fetish) is about reinforcement of the estrangement of labor.⁷⁹ The secret, as Marx would have it, of private property is that "on the one hand it is the *product* of alienated labor, and that on the other it is the *means* by which labor alienates itself, *the realization of this alienation*" (ibid., original emphasis). Whether consciously or not, Kame-kun lives this secret to the fullest.

Kame-kun is an unwanted other—what Marxists might call a "stateless creature"—destined to a life of never fitting in. The fact that turtles once manufactured for war are "allowed" to become functioning members of human society would seem to hint at an ethical aversion to destroying them outright, when in truth they are being kept alive so that they might be deployed at a moment's notice for future conflicts, as happens in the novel's final act. The state thus exploits replican[t]urtles to bandage its flaws. Though Kame-kun may not see himself as a product of capitalist development, he knows that capitalist development co-opts the animal sphere by polluting and destroying the natural environment, if not in those terms. He is triply alienated by work, self, and society, and in

⁷⁸ Remember that, for Marx and Engels (2005: 60n), private property refers to private control of economy, not personal possessions. For Kame-kun, this means the ability to dictate the channels of labor into which he has been plugged insofar as they would not function without his service and inchoate knowledge of highly specialized, symbiotic machinery.

⁷⁹ Aside from food to nourish his tested body, the only thing he ever buys in the novel is a pair of slippers.

that last vein hyperbolically re-imagined by way of anti-turtle discrimination. As Haraway (1994: 97) suggests, however, “[t]o be constituted by another’s desire is not the same thing as to be alienated in the violent separation of the laborer from his product.” Because the fluidity of sociopolitical life in Kitano’s Japan depends so much on the actions of cyborgs, any alienation felt by Kame-kun can only come from within, because he turns every life event in his mental hands like a Rubik’s cube until its colors begin to show indications of unity.

In Marx’s estimation, “the more universal man (or the animal) is, the more universal is the sphere of inorganic nature on which he lives,” meaning man embraces both organic and inorganic objects as part of his totality of conscious being, and that

[t]he universality of man appears in practice precisely in the universality which makes all nature his *inorganic* body – both inasmuch as nature is (1) his direct means of life, and (2) the material, the object, and the instrument of his life activity. Nature is man’s *inorganic* body – nature, that is, insofar as it is not itself human body. Man *lives* on nature – means that nature is his body, with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die. That man’s physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature.

Marx goes on to say, the worker “only feels himself freely active in his animal functions—eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal” (Marx “Estranged,” original emphasis). Speculative fiction approaches this text from another angle. Whereas the industrial world is beset with fears of humans becoming, or being treated as, nothing more than a collective machine, the hypermodern world harbors fears of machines becoming human. Kame-kun’s hands are therefore described as being not like those of a real turtle, but as precision instruments designed to handle various tasks with ease. His laboring body

resonates with skills analogous to those of humans, whose own skills are in turn modeled off nature. It is not that Kame-kun becomes something other than self, but that his autonomous self threatens to replace the worker-being he was created to be. He confines this fundamental contradiction to one body.

Determining what constitutes the alienation of labor for a cyborg turtle in the world of *Mr. Turtle* requires one to redefine the Marxist concept of labor when the laborer is neither human nor animal. It cannot be that his labor is external to him, because as an agent of nature he carries labor internally as it is programmed by human creators using presumably more advanced machines. Neither can it be that his labor is forced, because as one calibrated to excel in it he is inseparable from his need to work. He is living proof that “animals can be alienated from their species-being as much as humans can be from ours” (Vint 2009: 130). His desire is the work itself, which cannot be anyone else’s but his own. His paradigmatic functions align with Marx only when he is being used as a weapon of mass destruction, when his labor is external by force. Kame-kun is more than an animal, which in Marx’s view “is immediately one with its life activity” whereas “[m]an makes his life activity [read: species-being] itself the object of his will and of his consciousness” (“Estranged”). The cruel allure of estranged labor is that it tricks human beings into thinking their consciousness allows them to lay their own life path as a way of justifying existence through self-sustenance. For Kame-kun, it is no mere dichotomy between externality of production versus internality of self-constitution, for if political economy hides estrangement of labor, then personal economy can turn a black light on it and make it glow. The worker and worker’s deterioration are also being produced in the labor process and, in Kame-kun’s case, are courting repressed trauma as the flower courts the bee.

In volume 1 of *Capital*, Marx says that “sensuous characteristics” must be absent in the product, so that the end products seem to us “abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties” (cited Vint 2016: 104). Indeed, Kame-kun echoes the idea that “[t]he worker can create nothing without *nature*, without the *sensuous external world*. It is the material on which his labor is realized, in which it is active, from which, and by means of which it produces” and that, by the same token, increased appropriation of nature leads to negation of self. Consequently,

the more the worker by his labor *appropriates* the external world, sensuous nature, the more he deprives himself of the *means of life* in two respects: first, in that the sensuous external world more and more ceases to be an object belonging to his labor – to be his labor’s *means of life*; and, second, in that it more and more ceases to be a *means of life* in the immediate sense, means for the physical subsistence of the worker. In both respects, therefore, the worker becomes a servant of his object, first, in that he receives an *object of labor*, i.e., in that he receives *work*, and, secondly, in that he receives *means of subsistence*. This enables him to exist, first as a worker; and second, as a *physical subject*. The height of this servitude is that it is only as a *worker* that he can maintain himself as a *physical subject* and that it is only as a *physical subject* that he is a worker.

(Marx “Estranged”)

It is under the sign of these cosmologies that Petrus Liu follows the logic of cultural hegemony in the formation of the subject, seeing the intersection of cultural and economic forces not in the laboring body but in the units of time under which that body’s productive activities come to be measured. Because there is no universal conception of time or value attached to time, one must not be mistaken in thinking that all labors are “morally equivalent” (Liu 2012: 71), as demonstrated by the novel. In this spirit, Liu questions the irreconcilability of the young and mature Marx, from liberal rationalism to communalist humanism, freedom from to community within (Liu 2012: 72-74). It is not, he says, a simple matter of pitting humanism against antihumanism (or, for that matter, against *posthumanism*), for not only is the human objectified, commoditized, and mechanized

through labor processes, but there is also an attendant reverse anthropomorphism, “an ideological process whereby unequal relations between human beings take on the appearance of an equitable exchange between things” (Liu 2012: 75), and whereby material things are humanized to divert consumers’ attention from their origins.

This is what Liu is getting at when he writes, “Since the human is not a universally identical condition but a privileged status differentially and hierarchically produced across temporal and spatial sites of power, it has become politically and ethically imperative for poststructuralists to pluralize the human” (ibid., 76). In short, poststructuralists have largely failed to reflect upon the detriments of their disinterest in humanity. When self-reflection is knocked from its perch, its wings become useless. As a novel that is decidedly about Japan, *Mr. Turtle* thrives on its disruption of Eurocentric humanism, and reframes a fundamental query: It is not whether independence granted human subjects is available or not to nonhuman subjects, but that independence is not even available to human subjects to begin with, so long as they are enmeshed in a capitalist, patriarchal system that fuels the illusion of independence and freedom available to all.⁸⁰ Kitano reminds his readers of Kame-kun’s subhuman status as a cognizant relic of war, while touting the replican[t]urtle’s ability to overcome estrangement under capitalism by being, in essence, a sentient form of capital.

Kame-kun walks necessary lines of difference. His social construction is living proof of the dialectical relationship between industrial capitalism and socialism, as well as between species and technologies. Similarly, labor processes are both natural and social,

⁸⁰ Jacques Lacan, in fact, saw machines to be freer than animals. The latter were already locked into their own programs, unable to proceed past a certain point of variation (see Johnston 2008: 68-69).

for while past labor is not always present in the labor process, it comes back to haunt Kame-kun with a vengeance. He may use machines to aid his production, where the machine would normally reorganize the demands of the human body in relation to work, but as a machine himself Kame-kun is not so much reorganized but awakened to the fullness of his military past. Machinery creates no new value but transfers value, as within him the past into his present.

Technology not only reveals the relationship between humans and nature; it mediates that relationship. But when the worker is technology incarnate, he signifies an awareness of his own becoming and necessitates that awareness by existing. Like a tape recorder set to document the sounds of its own internal mechanisms, he archives the inner voices of his living narrative through various interactions with the physical world and others living in it. Kame-kun is therefore an unwitting agent of what Thomas Hobbes called *bellum omnium contra omnes*, “the war of all against all,” when the novel begins to frame his work as “combat.” Kame-kun wonders about this. The company secretary explains to him the fundamental danger, and purpose, of his work: While inventorying every container that arrives at the warehouse, he is to summarily destroy any large crayfish-like biomechanoids found waiting inside, as these were his sworn enemy during the war. Considering the mastery with which he dispatches these creatures, Kame-kun can no longer deny he has ever been to Jupiter.⁸¹

But at what yet-to-be-defined point does the “natural” become “unnatural”? How far can one take the metaphor of naturalness before it begins to crumble? If all unnatural

⁸¹ He learns from a library book that many turtles died while orbiting Jupiter, and that many are still torpid and un-retrieved, in permanent states of hibernation. Even now, in Jupiter’s rings there are many turtles and their shells being recovered. One can only imagine the equivalent number of crayfish husks mingling among them.

(i.e., manufactured) objects begin as raw materials drawn from earth proper, at what point do they become “unnatural” through modification? This is, I think, the point Marx was trying to make when he described human bodies as bearing traces of their physical and socioeconomic pasts. What does it mean to say that everything is unnatural? Does this not simply reverse the scale without recalculating what is being measured? *Mr. Turtle* is not about transcending humanity, but about the persistence of depending on technology-as-animal to absorb—and inflict—the very consequences of its own errors (cf. Pettman 2011: 198).

Kame-kun embodies dominant social expectations and stereotypes of the working class, but also the power of the android to transcend the stranglehold of those same expectations and stereotypes. Because replican[t]urtles are programmed to be impervious to death, making them more effective in battle, Kame-kun’s forklift is itself a giant robotic turtle, hardwired to hunger for the enemy crayfish it so wildly devours, to the extent that Kame-kun likens the aftermath of his vicarious gorging to a battlefield. That he can approach these “savage” acts from the vantage point of self-reflection in the context of controlled labor means his cognizance is bound to privilege, secondhand though it might be, upgraded from thoughtless (re)actions of the battlefield. Labor resonates in a collective national trauma, as when Kame-kun needs an air conditioning unit in his apartment fixed and returns home to find the electricians wreaking havoc with the unit they have come to fix. As they kick and maim the hapless machine, which crawls by means of living legs, they explain that its former owner had stolen it from a military research facility. In taking out their aggressive feelings on the machine in mock battle, they are diffusing their own responses to the war. These incidents, despite being comic relief, are outlets for repressions

and show that at least some wounds of the war are still fresh in the dermis of the larger social imaginary.

By its end, *Mr. Turtle* may be read two ways from a Marxist angle: either as a cautionary tale of neo-capitalist angst or as undermining Marxist values through the transformation of alienation into hybrid futures that are anything but utopian. The crayfish Kame-kun daily battles are a crisis of production, a parthenogenetic nightmare in which he is the assured victor. Like the scripts he must follow, piped in from the film studio who designed those crayfish to act within certain narrative parameters, he counts his value by the word, even as he veers from what's written in acts of bold, personal expression, but always toward the completion of every task at hand.

Storehouses of Memory

Ideologies in *Mr. Turtle* are plastic. A quintessential example of this is Kitano's so-called "Tower of Progress" (*shinpo no tō*), a monument made in the image of a man for an international expo, and which has since been converted into a museum. Only after working at the warehouse for some time does Kame-kun realize that his place of work is connected to the museum. Tsumiki explains it was once called the "Tower of Progress and Harmony," but that the war has broken any illusions of peace such a name entails. The tower manifests its public power most visibly in the museum, the name of which has also changed, from "National Museum" to "War Museum." The museum is so vast and random that even Kame-kun gets lost in its corridors. His job is to inventory the underground storehouses under a curator's watchful eye. Kame-kun conducts his work as methodically as possible, so as not to disturb the museum's patrons. On days when no goods arrive, he sorts various exhibition materials, having no idea on which laws or rules their organization is based. An

unruly AI system handles all the exhibition materials and is, in fact, one of them—having been once used, like Kame-kun, as a tactical weapon.

A new museum installation called the “Great Battlefield Panorama” means to recreate for patrons as faithfully as possible the war on Jupiter. Debate continues to rage among the exhibition advisors, who see the war as finished but the dealing with it everlasting, and consultants who see the war as an ongoing reflection of unilateral aggression. They reach a compromise in the form of the final exhibition, which offers simulated experiences of takeoff, battle, and hypersleep. Once confronted with this exhibition space, and in being a part of its archival memory, Kame-kun becomes acutely aware that he was once deployed as an instrument of war on Jupiter to battle the crayfish he regularly encounters in the workplace, and that he has been indirectly aiding in making this experience more real, as the raw combat data of his crayfish encounters is being fed into the panorama’s mock combat engine. Perhaps, he muses, this has been the real purpose of his new job all along.

The text explains, however, that there is no such thing as “real” anymore, because we surround ourselves with electronic gadgetry designed to store data and run everything in a virtual space. Even in the novel’s near future, no one can say for sure whether virtual reality is consummate or an empty mirror of our own. “On the other hand,” the story goes on, “by managing this virtual space, one can affect reality” and “all acts of war have come to be played out in virtual space” (Kitano 2016: 74). From a television special, Kame-kun further learns why his was the chosen form:

Reason #1: They can hibernate.

Reason #2: Their shells allow them to withstand high speeds and impacts.

Reason #3: They are long-lived. Many get to be older than humans. As a result, they are especially patient.

Reason #4: They will eat anything.

Reason #5: They're aesthetically pleasing. Even those who profess to hate reptiles tend to be fine with turtles. They're also popular among women and children.

(ibid., 118)

Replican[t]urtles differ from real ones in that they walk upright on their hind legs and use both hands (to aid in various tasks), and in the composite construction of their shells. The narrator on the video explains that replican[t]urtles like apples so much because it supplements their inherent vitamin and fiber deficiencies.

When Kame-kun arrives to work one day, he notices Tsumiki talking with a man unknown to him. Tsumiki introduces him as someone from the turtle manufacturer who saw Kame-kun on TV and was curious to see him in person. After confirming that Kame-kun is in working condition, he tells Tsumiki, “Because he’s in reset mode, so long as he doesn’t overexert himself I foresee no problems allowing him to stay on here—until such time as the next mission can be determined” (ibid., 135). The library-as-storehouse meanwhile gives Kame-kun an opportunity for Kitano to indulge in his own fascinations with the canon of SF. Because of her interest in turtles, Miwako has been studying Kame-kun’s shell with the intent of mapping what’s inside of it. While waiting, Kame-kun reads up on classics. He takes out two books. One is Arthur C. Clarke’s *2010: Odyssey Two* (1982), and the other is the making of the film (1986, dir. Peter Hyams) of the same name. He stays at the library until all the patrons have gone to allow Miwako to conduct her experiment. She attaches probes and electrodes to his shell, feeds these into a laptop computer, and activates them. His shell becomes warm and he begins to see things, as if dreaming. He has a vision, in which Miwako removes her clothes and stands before him naked, baring a shell on her back in the shape of two folded wings. Mention of Clarke is no coincidence, for like his classic *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), *Mr. Turtle* valorizes the past in ways that many SF narratives do the future. It is a traumatic past, one which has no

concept of future but only the violence of the moment. And just as the ending of Stanley Kubrick's 1968 film adaptation was a regression into our ultimate, pre-birth past (cf. Seed 2011: 20), so too does Kame-kun regress into (and beyond) the inner world of the turtle shell, mapping layers of himself onto Miwako's body.

Kame-kun comes to realize that his memories belong not to him but to his shell—or, more precisely, to whoever wore the shell before him. Recollections overlap with his present reality until the two become indistinguishable. He remembers how to hibernate and begins preparations for that process. He does this to preserve and maintain himself, for he has been programmed this way. The knowledge of another world has been hibernating inside him all along, and it has taken only a dream to awaken it. In an induced dream state, sentences from his laptop float before him, each describing one mundane aspect of his life after another. And as everything comes crashing down on him, he realizes that the world inside his shell is being quickly overwritten.

He receives an e-mail from another turtle. It gives only a date and meeting place and says that he must prepare for hibernation. He wonders if the message did not come from inside his shell after all. He moves out of his apartment and quits his job, remembering almost nothing of his life beforehand. When he goes to the library to return his books, he finds out that Miwako is on indefinite leave to focus on family and research. This surprises him, but makes his immanent transition far easier to accept. As outlined in the e-mail, he is being deployed to a launching site at Tanegashima, he gathers, to enter a state of hibernation and be rocketed off to Jupiter. Rather than feel used by the system, Kame-kun looks forward to the prospect of meeting other turtles.⁸²

⁸² Kame-kun is a waste product that still functions, a bruise on the skin of elitist production. In the same way that Marx, in volume 1 of *Capital*, says that “human waste” is necessary evil in the

The last possession he removes from his bag is his laptop. He opens the screen slowly, caresses the keyboard, and types out the first heading of the novel itself: “Chapter 1: Replican[t]urtle.” And from there he keeps typing, telling everything we have just read before it vanishes from his memory bank. He walks as far as the library and drops the laptop into the return slot, then turns away empty-handed. Because he utters not a single word throughout the novel, it is the only way in which he might still be recognized for his sentence, his will to live, and his worldview.

Between (Electric) Animals and Androids

In the third section of *Mr. Turtle*, Kame-kun takes kindly to a cat that has been hanging around his apartment complex after being scared off by a military operation not far away. Upon noticing Kame-kun looking up information about cats at the library, Miwako proceeds to tell him at some length about a part-time job she once had, meticulously tracking and recording cat populations living on a small island. “The domesticated cat,” she explains, “is a creature of habit. It will rarely deviate from an established routine” (Kitano 2016: 80). Kame-kun sees his life in the same way: as a matter of routine. Miwako tells him that cats love chicken breast, so he buys some to lure the cat into his apartment, and when he lays out his futon, the cat gets into bed with him, snuggling against him so tightly that it feels as though the cat is trying to slip into his shell.

It is around this time that Kame-kun ramps up his interest in recovering memories from Jupiter. Miwako tells him those memories are locked somewhere inside his shell, like a dream he cannot recall. In response to this, Kame-kun types a single sentence on his

capitalist system, as exemplified by the class gap (see discussion in Mazierska 2016: 194), Kame-kun represents the best interests of Kitano’s Japan. There is clearly more than enough government funding to enable (read: require) redeployment, and the excitement with which he approaches the unknown would seem to reflect a self-worthiness in Kame-kun’s inner world.

laptop: *Do turtle shells dream of turtles?* Peering over his shoulder, Miwako chimes in, “*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*” (ibid., 102), naming Philip K. Dick’s 1968 classic SF novel, without which *Mr. Turtle* might not have been written.⁸³ It is more than coincidence that Dick’s novel (1996: 2) should begin with the following anecdote republished from a 1966 issue of *Reuters*:

Auckland: A turtle which explorer Captain Cook gave to the king of Tonga in 1777 died yesterday. It was nearly 200 years old. The animal, called Tu’Imalila, died at the royal palace ground in the Tongan capital of Nuku, Alofa. The people of Tonga regarded the animal as a chief and special keepers were appointed to look after it. It was blinded in a bush fire a few years ago. Tonga radio said Tu’Imalila’s carcass would be sent to the Auckland museum in New Zealand.⁸⁴

The reader has no initial context for this story, but soon discovers that real animals are hard to come by in Dick’s imagined future. Animals and their robotic simulacra are central to the story in ways they are not in director Ridley Scott’s 1982 film adaptation, *Blade Runner*. Protagonist Rick Deckard, an android bounty hunter, lives in an era where humans have become an endangered species. He and his wife are the dissatisfied owners of an electric sheep and pine for the day when they might have the real thing. Having an animal of either kind is a social necessity in the wake of the catastrophe known as World War Terminus, brought on by a toxic dust has pushed humanity off planet and all but destroyed low-class survivors from the inside out. Deckard’s sheep is like a living Natsume simulation, susceptible to sickness and starvation all the same. This fallacy of upkeep causes Deckard to hate the animal, which he sees as possessing the “tyranny of an object”

⁸³ Though the author himself, in a personal communication, claims to have been inspired more by the film than the novel.

⁸⁴ Furthermore, there is a reference to an electric turtle in the novel’s final pages (Dick 1996: 243-244).

(ibid., 42). He must nurture it or it will die, and along with it the illusion of his pastoral power.

Libraries in Deckard's world house its colonial past (see ibid., 151-152) and contain all that is left of times before. Their very existence is a trauma in and of itself, which, worse than the war, concretizes millennia of violence and now-useless action, the significance of which has been obliterated by Terminus. *Mr. Turtle* may not feel quite so dystopian, but it sympathizes with this point insofar as the library is Kame-kun's largest window into his own traumas. Just as Deckard ponders the significance of the electric animal, which he begrudgingly sees as either an "inferior robot" or an "evolved version of the ersatz animal" (ibid., 42), so Kame-kun balances advancement and constructed purpose on the fulcrum of his existence.

Kitano's protagonist shares another aspect with Deckard's victims. As one of the androids in Dick's novel puts it to the bounty hunter, "It's a chance anyway, breaking free and coming here to Earth, where we're not even considered animals. Where every worm and wood louse is considered more desirable than all of us put together" (ibid., 122). Overlaying this statement onto *Mr. Turtle*, we might conclude that Kame-kun's constant discrimination has very little to do with the fact he is a turtle—and this only because he was chosen to be one—and mostly to do with his status as a replicant. His existence alone flies in the face of nature, and he must watch as humans appropriate the sacred shells of his kind, wearing them as embellishments to an already-dominant species.

Dick's androids have it even tougher. As the "mobile donkey engine[s] of the colonization program" and, more derogatorily, "a menace to the pristine heredity of the [human] race" (ibid., 16), they must be aware of their own service to the human empire,

which has spread its social virus to the terra of Mars. Though both are the targets of discomfort and negative feelings, Dick's androids are resentful toward their own creation while Kame-kun is quietly resigned to it. What separates humans from androids and animals alike is their capacity for empathy, as opposed to intelligence, which "to some degree could be found throughout every phylum and order" (ibid., 30). Androids, Deckard concedes, are different from electric animals in that the latter are mere collections of circuits while the former are organic and alive. Kame-kun is unique for embodying both categories in one simultaneous organism. Within this triangulation, it is impossible to know exactly where humans fit.

The problem with empathy in this context is that it exists in opposition to what Dick calls a "flattening of affect" (ibid., 37), a sometimes-sudden emotional apathy that characterizes android countenance when confronted with the AI determination test administered by bounty hunters or, in extreme cases, imminent death. The mere labeling of empathy, however, discloses two specific problems. First, empathy implies ineluctable and hierarchical difference between the empathizer with whatever is being empathized. Empathy reifies that hierarchy and ensures it never crumbles in the face of violence (e.g., in the killing of rogue androids). Second, empathy serves to bolster the ideological underpinnings of its very definition. Because empathy in *Electric Sheep* has been pathologically reduced to a fixed number of quantifiable variables, it is firmly within the control of those it most benefits. Its underlying power structures can hardly be challenged in a system that rewards those who unquestioningly swallow it, even if, at heart, empathy best speaks to the vast interconnections between groups.

In the novel's latter half, when Deckard fuses with spiritual figurehead Wilbur Mercer via the so-called empathy box, Mercer tells him in a vision, "It is the basic condition of life, to be required to violate your own identity" (ibid., 179). In those words, Deckard has learned that true empathy must involve killing not only androids devoid of it, but also something of and in himself. Mercer's pseudo-religious rhetoric cradles a core contradiction: "As long as some creature experienced joy, then the condition for all other creatures included a fragment of joy. However, if any living being suffered, then for all the rest the shadow could not be entirely cast off" (ibid., 31). Only when suffering, in even the slightest form, echoes like a shout from a cliff does its transformative potential become possible.

Toward the novel's end, after Deckard has dispatched the androids assigned him, "In the early morning light the land below him extended seemingly forever, gray and refuse-littered. Pebbles the size of houses had rolled to a stop next to one another, and he thought, It's like a shipping room when all the merchandise has left. Only fragments of crates remain, the containers which signify nothing in themselves" (ibid., 228). This image presages the warehouses of *Mr. Turtle*, in which Kame-kun must sift through vestiges of destructive pasts and make of them a cohesive narrative for future generations. When Deckard, in a Mercer-induced vision, becomes aware of what he calls "inconspicuous life" (ibid., 238), he does not simply open an internal line of communication to other species; he opens an external channel of humility toward the world they inhabit. "Thus to be a living creature," says one interpreter, "to have real authenticity, to fulfill the demands of empathy,

and understand his humanity, Deckard must absent himself from his own being” (Berman 2008: 127). To understand the other, he must disconnect the self.⁸⁵

In Deckard’s lifetime, animals have become more sacred because they embody a rarity of frequency that in a carbon-copy world ascends to status of originality. The illusion maintained by mechanical animals, too, is sacred. Conveniently enough for their human caretakers, animals have only negligibly changed in social position (their increased currency exists only to stabilize the human). Neither has the presence or incorporation of androids into daily life changed the subhuman position of their organic counterparts. If anything, it has shored up that position (keeping the animal sacred keeps its position clear) as a subservient one, which despite the overcompensation of conservational tendencies again reinforces the human project through simultaneous disdain and economic need for artificial life. While Kame-kun is, as Dick would put it, an “organic android,” he is an amalgamation of human and animal signatures, and is endowed with a sentience, self-awareness, and capacity for communication and original thought, with which none of Dick’s animals is endowed. For while Kame-kun does experience discrimination, it is not, as I have already noted, against his animality per se, but more so against the function his animality has come to symbolize, by which it has shifted from the biological and become

⁸⁵ I also find Carol Adams’s idea of the “absent referent,” which forms the crux of her feminist take on human-animal relations, to be useful here. The absent referent is any metaphor in a text that seeks to give an animal “a ‘higher’ or more imaginative function than its own existence might merit or reveal” (Adams 1990: 42). The word “higher” is scare-quoted because this seeming elevation of intellectual status serves to dampen the overall effect of the animal’s individuality under the weight of advancing a particular human agenda. As a politically minded vegetarian, Adams provides food-related examples. For instance, claiming that we eat “beef” instead of “dead cow” creates a linguistic disconnect between the sources of our food and the final consumable form said food adopts through the agribusiness machine. The absent referent has no existence of its own, a point perhaps over-emphasized by Bandō, but is replaced or reformed by another.

politicized through dimensional conflict. In Dick's novel, war was needlessly fought as a means of assigning blame to a blameless compromise of human life by the radioactive dust belched from the very gut of the earth. Because nature is without discrimination, humans will fill that emptiness with denial and reactionary countermeasures. The war in *Mr. Turtle* is a typical one, even if we do not know its exact cause. Played out as a vicarious exercise, battles of animals are little more than self-projections of national interests.

Postlude: Tripping Points

The marginalization of any being or object is a denial or negation of its material reality (cf. Giffney and Hird 2008: 3). Regardless of whether androids can be said to be alive, their need for survival, ephemeral as it might be, spreads languages of agency across passive tongues. That androids may continue to function at the intersection of this seeming contradiction is testament to their perseverance of matter. These narratives, and *Mr. Turtle* especially, describe our relationship with technology as already posthuman. In a developed world where the habitus (or lifeworld, as phenomenologists would have it) reigns supreme, where even the uncanniest entities scream with familiarity, androids represent a viable method of emancipation.⁸⁶ Kitano is showing that humans continue to express prejudices that privilege "human" over "animal" without realizing they live in a world already saturated with the hybridity that Kame-kun embodies.

Even considering the Marxist critique above, by the medium of which I have attempted to sketch the arbitrariness of social dichotomies, no amount of deconstruction can erase the power of dialectical reasoning. More important than abolition is the blurring

⁸⁶ On this point, it is worth noting that Kitano makes no overt references in the novel to spiritual thinking, beyond obligatory visits to Shinto shrines around New Year's. Kame-kun seems to fill this lack with his internal musings on the nature of space and time.

of those categories through the ongoing process of identity (de)formation. The binaries are not expendable but constantly re-harmonized to the tune of circumstance. If the body can be a victim of biopolitics, it can also be a discursive agent thereof in a “potent field of operations” (Haraway 1994: 101). The cyborg, ever non-normative, can at best only be a political simulacrum, because its programming will always reflect the motivations of its creators, even if it makes choices within that system. Its identity will be light as a feather when weighed against the heft of its self-protective instincts.⁸⁷ This means that Kame-kun protects himself not to lock in his identity, but so that this incarnation of his identity might be remembered.

In this respect, *Mr. Turtle* makes a nuanced point about transhumanism, which burdens android populations with the classic human fear of death. By uploading the parameters for consciousness into biomechanical bodies, technicians are filling those internal arenas of artificial intelligence with vestiges of their own unresolvable humanity, traumatic modernities, and impossible dreams. Kame-kun is no stand-in for humanity but for animality, if not also himself. And while some have interpreted it as a thinly veiled allegory of work and retirement, the author begs to disagree and, in spite of the novel’s references to popular anime culture and mecha subculture, claims to have been evoking the integrity of the common novel more than the ethos of the anime generation (see Sasabe “Author Interview”).

Kame-kun’s story, more finely wired as it is than any circuit or microchip, is an artificially intelligent product. Its pathways verge and merge, evoking times and spaces

⁸⁷ I might interject here a debatable criticism of Haraway for unwittingly reinscribing a discreet difference between bodies and machines, as if the cyborg exists only when the two are blended through technological intervention. Is this, I wonder, because she does not want to see (certain) human beings as cyborgs already?

without physical interface. Like Kame-kun's typewritten diary, the story sprouts nerves of fibrous sincerity, signaling countless other lives in countless other universes. Memories may be wiped, bodies may perish and decompose, but the story moves until it finds new bodies to inhabit. Humans, animals, and things are equally subject to migration. They need not ever hurt one another, except by the accident of chance while tripping over their own reflections.

...TOWARD POSTANIMALISM
(A CONCLUSION)

In the preceding I have discussed ways in which one might read “productive errors” into contemporary Japanese literature. And the errors with which I have been most enamored are those that pull readers from their zones of safety into those of questioning, zones of ambiguous practicality nourished by risks of traumatic awakening to personal culpabilities. But error is not a key that unlocks total understanding. It is, rather, the hole into which that key is timidly inserted, a space that, depending on how one looks at it, might seem a smudge of darkness against the vastness of a door or an unfathomable abyss of possibility threatening to consume that door. The point of this project is not to solve problems (any such claim would extend the tracks of denial I have been at great pains to derail from) but to take responsibility for problems that have been otherwise ignored. In the imaginations of animal lovers, unanswered questions are an uncomfortable truth.

The writings I have subjected to scrutiny, stories whose forces promise to change readers’ lives for the better, pass like water through the very people for whom they are intended, yet who would rather turn away from deeper implications under blankets of ignorance. These stories constitute a composite genre by force of my suggestion, but from them emerges their potential to be taken as affirmative even in recognition of their damage. The writers behind these texts have done a brave thing. Rather than succumb to the deceptive staples of representation, whereby animals are romanticized to a point so far from their species that any traits inchoate in their species fade in favor of an anthropomorphic fallacy, they have gone willfully into the thick of resistance to see what might be gleaned from its bramble. No one among the authors I have profiled understood this better than Bandō Masako, whose “Killing Kittens” is a thorn not likely to be pulled out anytime soon.

A traditional reading of Bandō's essay would take it in the way it is presented: which is to say, as confession. Readers who have already made up their minds about animals, who dabble in respect for nonhuman life just enough to feel they have done their part, or who believe so wholeheartedly in the subjective importance of animals that for them animals possess enough agency to make their own decisions, thereby freeing them from human responsibility, will likely see this text as a terrifying admission and/or personal attack on their ethical worldview. In this respect, Bandō can only have been sarcastic when she wrote, "the pain and grief that come from killing are mine alone to bear" (Bandō 2009: 71), for her moral strategy is precisely the opposite. The pain and grief of killing, rather, cue the responsibility of all who read "Killing Kittens" to figure out how they fit into the grander flight hidden in its short wingspan. It is under the banner of this cause that Bandō's kittens, lifeless as they might be, uncover the hypocrisy of neoliberal sympathy. I read their possible demise not as a tragedy of ignorance but as a challenge to it.

Guide-dog literature occupies a corollary space on the trauma spectrum, in which one loves animals so much that their individuality is brightened to blinding levels. This literature shows a side of humanity that is at once loving and unwittingly abusive. The story of *Berna's Tail*, for instance, is on its own a poignant story. And yet, read in the context of Japan's disability histories, its moral imperatives lose potency. It is neither my position nor intention to blame Gunji Nanae for writing her autobiography, in which she shares the pros and cons of her dual affliction, being at once blind and reliant on a guide dog in a society ill-prepared to accept either. Those closest to her learn to deal with their own errors and see them as portals of insight into their own development as human beings. Whether or not

this literature has the power to repair the infrastructure of social systems toward inclusivity remains to be seen and warrants further study with this question in mind.

Otsuichi and Stephen King fall into the same trap from the other direction. Like the immovable Bandō, they realize that readers must recognize the terrifying aspects of human-pet relationships and the traumas one endures in taking those aspects to heart. For anyone who is frightened by the mere idea of, and therefore avoids, such stories—one who would shed thoughtful, and surely genuine, tears over the death of a pet whose life brought fulfillment to humans—the morose fulfillment of King’s reanimated cat must feel like an emotional root canal without anesthesia. At least *real* pets, one might say, live under the protection of love and give nothing less than love in return. While it may be futile to argue with this logic in principle, it does one well to recognize the truths activated by the relationships that King and Otsuichi have so vividly portrayed. Truly loving animals, they seem to say, is knowing when to let go of them.

It is our duty to respect the narrative lives of animals. Their authors have chosen these paths because they have been honest enough to recognize the importance of their task. Whether we choose to side with Bandō for opening our eyes to the contradictions of urban life or with Gunji for recognizing the immovable will of canine intelligence when it comes to human assistance and care, we can be sure they have gone as far as they can in exploring their proclivities to their logical ends. Stories that use animals only for symbolic purposes do not require this sort of intellectual labor, interested as they are in distorting reality so that it can be reclaimed as reality. This is the endurance of the archetype.

Kitano Yūsaku’s *Mr. Turtle* is therefore something of a rescue narrative. In Kamekun’s circuitry, inseparably enmeshed as it is with organic flesh and proteins, beats the

electronic pulse of one who lives to question himself. The more one reads of his quotidian life, the more one realizes that neither his humanity *nor* his animality matter. This is what makes his story so progressive and a fitting place to end things: Kame-kun shows us what questioning can look like when taking on a life of its own. Kitano's modest novel leads me to a questioning of my own about whether there is any necessity for animality to be so resolutely held on to as discussions provoked by this dissertation continue. Kame-kun meets head-on the intense values humans ascribe to speech, social contribution, war, and so on, but above all reveals an almost cult-like allegiance to memory and remembrance. Kame-kun himself cannot escape this urge, as he frantically types out the autobiographical sketch that is the novel before his memory is wiped.

It is a challenge because, while Kame-kun is subjected to a level of misunderstanding and discrimination rivaled only by his own self-scrutiny, he himself is rather content with his modest life. He takes greatest pleasure in the simplest activities—making use of the library, finding a warm spot for sunbathing, and such—and manages to develop a real connection with Miwako, whose interest in him may or may not be purely scientific. Even those closest to Kame-kun may see him as nothing more than what he is, but Kame-kun transcends those barriers of expectation when he fantasizes about Miwako as a love object. Most humans, in their fierce dependence on technology and communication, treat him like another machine—or worse, an animal.

That is, until he begins to “speak” their language through the prosthetic of his laptop. Armed with that tool, he begins to engender a sense of care in others, ranging from the admiration of his former and current manager alike, his landlady, and even the one who manufactured him for service. It is a kind of reality that provokes in Kitano's “postscript”

to the novel a kind of self-reflectivity. Kitano admits to modeling the neighborhood in which Kame-kun lives off his very own. When considering this place as a setting for a novel, he recalls asking himself: “Would this be an appropriate place for Kame-kun?” (Kitano 2016: 166). We should be posing the same when reading any piece of animal literature: Is this an appropriate place for the animal in question?

If it feels difficult to navigate the implications of this question, it is because they are framed by and bound to a language ingrained in us since birth. In this sense, animality is something to which we cannot ever claim total alliance, because we cannot ever know what it is. Therefore, to merely claim it as something to which we all belong by default is merely to move the weight from one end of the scale to the other. The binary only shifts but does not separate. I am therefore advocating here at the inset, as it were, what I call “postanimalism.” It is a direct challenge to the necessitarianism of our relationships with animals, by which mechanisms of grief industrialize both individual care for and mass destruction of nonhuman lives. There is nothing beyond these relationships, because we are their progeny, indefinitely redrawing their circles in denial of anything that segments them. Were the maintenance of the status quo not so important, entire regimes would not be designed to re-inscribe them through education, agriculture, and industry.

If posthumanism is understood to be a radical enmeshment of bioforms and inanimates, then it must necessarily rely on species narcissism. By this I mean to suggest that posthumanism is essentially human by its formation, and relies on the primacy of cogito politics—i.e, politics created in the service of sentient humanity. Postanimalism is therefore the next logical, but by no means final, step toward the realization of a truly interspecies world. This would entail not only a mere flip of its counterpart—that is, it

would be more than expanding animality to include humanity—but also a dissolution of zooforms altogether toward a linguistic reality in which neither “humanity” nor “animality” is a valid concept.

It is in the service of postanimalism that I have ordered the stories in the way that I have, for their context and construction are as important as their situations. The breeding and keeping of pets—and, for that matter, the manufacturing and production of cyborg turtles—may be sullied, as Bandō suggests, by capitalist greed, but for many involved it is a noble pursuit, one that reflects the very best of humanity. Breeding of animals allows humans to be more selective than they might be allowed to be with humans, and comes from a desire to express perfection and communion with all species. If we think that by denouncing breeders/manufacturers we are solving the problem, then we are sorely misguided. We cannot simply focus our attentions on the stewards of effect without interrogating those of cause when the latter are responsible for the denouncing in the first place.

The Japanese writings I have chosen all reach for the ideal of unity, which regardless of its consummation is as much a belief system as the arguments leveled against it. At stake in these stories is not the loyalty, love, or intelligence of animals, but rather our wayward perceptions of those traits. To blame authors—especially those, like Gunji, who write from personal experience—for over-romanticizing their relationships with animals is to deny the truth of those relationships for the authors. Our job should not be to do away with personal truths but to attune ourselves to our own reactions toward those truths, especially when we feel compelled to do away with them.

Postanimalism takes a step in precisely that direction by recognizing the productive errors not only of the texts but also our reactions. Any animal story need not necessarily conform to the grander implications of species existence. Despite Gunji's thoughts on the plight of blind people in Japan, her book is more artfully concerned with her relationship to the guide dog, Berna, whose own phenomenological reality is closest to Gunji's own for being born by and of necessity. Whatever the narrative scale involved, however, we can be sure that the nature of the story is paramount. All of this requires a method of imagining. What is important about these stories goes beyond their content and into the fact that they are being told in the first place. Postanimalism attends to this storytelling urge and moves it beyond the threshold of viable circumstance and into the light of universal truth. Or so it feels when basking in an author's light...or darkness.

And so, while the hiss of King's undead cat is an impossible terror to sustain in the foreground of our rational imaginations, in the world of the novel it is the epitome of communicative potential. The story cannot move forward until Louis Creed responds to the desperation of that reaction. Readers can verily weigh their own responses to these horrors in tandem, and in the process, understand how someone like King or Otsuichi is at once mining a tradition and luxuriating in the persistence of individual pets who transcend their own domestication.

In each of these stories, those who ignore those bits and pieces activated in themselves do so for the same reason that Louis buries his wife even after the failures of his cat and son: because to admit defeat means depriving yourself of a safety screen which has been there all your life. These are people who chase after meta-questions even as they fear them. The heroes are ones who take on those questions despite their fears. Their

sentimentality is a recent invention—or, more accurately, adoption from western models—in Japanese pet-boom literature. Without it, that feeling of doing something worthwhile rapidly fades. These narratives appear to do justice to animals by focusing on their traumas, but are in fact working through defensive smokescreens against the intellectual crises engendered by confrontations with animal otherness. Optional responses to that otherness generally boil down to total love or annihilation. Focusing on animal suffering undermines its agency.

This is where postanimalism offers a glimmer of hope from this conundrum, and in proposing it I follow Kari Weil, who frames progressive animal studies as an attunement to individual voices that is also resolutely self-aware (see Weil 2012: 149-150). While it recognizes the social need for animal stories, framing as they do animals as creatures of rights, it also understands that we can only know so much about animals before hitting a wall. And rather than chip away at that wall incessantly, it chooses to pay no heed to the idealism that lies beyond it and instead focus on chipping away at the categorical distinction to begin with. Not to make some grand assessment of all life, but rather to recognize the ability to speak without meaning.

While posthumanism is by no means perfect, it did give me a language with which to express concepts I had been struggling to articulate beforehand. My hang-ups on anthropocentrism had led me to a reverse form of that very thing I abhorred. I wanted to understand the value of moral proof in a literary world that struggled to be self-reflective about its own imperatives. It was for this reason that I became interested in Gunji's work, which through the lens of real-life experience promised to engage with animals far more lucidly than idealistic drift. But what I found was that in the more fantastic fiction, taken

to the extreme by Kitano, there was a truth being articulated, because the mode of fantasy allowed for greater leeway in exploring concepts to their fullest. For Kitano, King, and Otsuichi, I found it far more difficult to imagine a *reciprocal* love between humans and pets, because they were looking beyond the smokescreen of real experience to the advantage-seeking core of those relationships. My initial mistake was in thinking that their pessimism was born out of a fundamental misunderstanding of animal life. This kind of thinking, however, led me to overvalue human conceptions of animality. I therefore propose a postanimalism: to move beyond that allegiance, no matter how goodly intentioned, toward animals for the mere sake of their animality. To do so undermines the inherent value of the animal even as it reinforces the arbitrary value of the human.

I cannot emerge from this project with hardcore truths. And while I have looked to models for inspiration and retroactive advice alike, none provided me with the map I so naively hoped for when setting out on this intellectual journey. I had wanted this dissertation to espouse a moral philosophy, but have come out of the other end of it knowing that this approach would be antithetical to its leanings. If anything about it is philosophical, however, it is the spirit of debate that animates its fundament. This is one reason why this dissertation is guilty of the very thing it criticizes: that is, using animals as sounding boards for the construction of a personal critical theory. Rather than delude anyone into thinking they can escape from it, I wanted to show that that very inescapability is what makes humans errorful creatures by default, and why owning up to the generative value of error is a launch into understanding the cosmos shared by species and technologies.

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