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Animalizing the Canon: Toward Multispecies Subjectivities and Ethical Engagement in English Literary Education

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education

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Abstract

This dissertation explores how animals are largely erased from literary education and curricular practice and how they could be actively incorporated into literary pedagogy. Animal stories, including those focused on farmed animals, are prominently represented in children's education. Yet the animals in these stories are typically anthropomorphized in ways that help guide children toward humanist readings and away from questions surrounding the animals, especially any critical issues pertaining to animal exploitation and/or harm (Burke & Copenhaver, 2004; Cole & Stewart, 2014). In this way, Western education's deployment of animals offers another alibi to the "animal capital" foundations of capitalism, one that not only obscures, but naturalizes their economic instrumentalization (Shukin, 2009).

Animal Farm and *Charlotte's Web* are two canonical educational texts that represent not only farmed animals, but also quite explicitly, the manifestations of physical and psychological torment inflicted upon them by humans (McHugh, 2009; Tiffin, 2007; Cole, 2017). Yet the animals are filtered through the anthropomorphic prism to adhere to the hierarchal anthropocentric imperative that sees value in animals only as resources to reproduce humanist value (Fudge, 2009; McKay, 2005; Oerlemans, 2008; Simons, 2002). Animals are endemically erased and replaced through a process of humanist allegorical substitution that I call the anthro-allegorical frame. In leaving the representations of animal violence unexamined, educators help to facilitate a pedagogical naturalization of exploitation.

In the introduction, I outline the theoretical foundations, research methodologies, and the most salient literatures to situate my contributions. The first chapter interrogates conventional approaches to reading and teaching this book to reproduce an anthropocentric interpretive

orientation. I posit that *Charlotte's Web* can be differently conceptualized and enlisted by educators in order to recognize animal subjectivities, engage more authentically with the text and the real issues it confronts, and to invite students to grapple with animals' lives and deaths, as they develop intellectually and ethically.

Next, I expand on that interpretive framing to address the question of how the values of human exceptionalism (Haraway, 2008) undergirding literacy education may be disrupted and reconceptualized as part of a multispecies curriculum. By building from fieldwork at an early childhood education centre involving the reading of *Charlotte's Web* and deliberate forest engagements in a formerly agricultural space with children, I explore ways in which these material and animal encounters can enrich the pedagogical engagement with the text. I examine how the text opens up possibilities for interpreting the more-than-human experiences we encounter beyond the classroom with an emphasis on deepening the children's "entangled empathy" with animals (Gruen, 2015).

In the third chapter, I analyse the source of the human exceptionalism embedded in academic scholarship and literary education and how this pervasive anthropocentric project manifests in the systematic de-animalization of the most iconic of animal themed texts, *Animal Farm*. Then I argue for a new, hybridized reading - and teaching - that moves beyond the anthropocentric and toward a more-than-human interpretive and pedagogical orientation that speaks to the oppressions and challenges confronting multiple species, including, but not confined, to our own. In the conclusion, I synthesize the most salient insights and themes, and identify areas for future work, particularly in the interest of decolonization.

My research is situated at the intersections of environmental educational studies, literacy and literary studies, critical animal studies, and new feminist materialisms. Methodologically,

chapters 1 and 3 extend from literary analysis that draws on deconstruction (Derrida, 1998) to analyze the texts as well as the interpretive traditions informing their reception and pedagogical appropriation. In Chapter 2, I combine these approaches with diffractive analysis (Barad, 2007) and participant observation at an early learning centre.

Accordingly, this dissertation examines the ethical and ontological limits of humanistic and anthropocentric literary education, particularly in the context of anthropogenic environmental emergencies that threaten the existence of innumerable animal species, including our own. Moreover, this project aims to promote a reconceptualization of humanist literary education that challenges the entrenched anthropocentric educational practices by reorienting our relations to animals in ways that respect their subjectivity, agency, and right to life, and by cultivating inter- and intraspecies empathy.

Summary for Lay Audience

This project is dedicated to reevaluating the place of animals in literary education. Children are encouraged to read animal stories that are, in actuality, human stories posing as animal stories. Young children are often engaged with animals and animal stories offer a convenient conduit to embed humancentric lessons and messages. As they mature, children are guided to reading more overtly human focused books while animal stories are seen as vestiges of early childhood. Two key and enduring books that guide children along this trajectory are E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* and George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. *Charlotte's Web* has long been presented as a primary level text that introduces children to ideas of maturation and mortality using animals as vehicles for these deeper human concerns. Similarly, *Animal Farm* has been presented as a text that introduces intermediate and high school age children and young adults to political and historical themes by using the surface animal story purely as an allegory for the Russian Revolution. Accordingly, children and young adults are instructed that animals and their stories are only valuable insofar as they may be exploited to serve human interests. Many literary and educational scholars have observed this interpretive pattern that erases animals from stories that would seem to be representing them. It is also particularly ironic that both authors indicated that it was the oppression and exploitation of actual animals that inspired their classic novels and yet, this dimension is only rarely acknowledged by scholars and educators.

The first chapter of my dissertation analyzes *Charlotte's Web* from the animal perspective. I focus on Wilbur's struggle for survival against the wishes of his human owners. I draw an analogue to the internet sensation, Esther the Wonder Pig and propose educational

possibilities to teach and learn *Charlotte's Web* from Wilbur's perspective as a farmed animal who wants to live a safe and happy life.

The second chapter expands upon this animal focused reading of *Charlotte's Web* and applies it to an on-site study. In this study I engaged a pre-school class with readings of *Charlotte's Web* with forest walks so that the children could re-imagine the animal stories in a space inhabited by animals. This engagement was further enriched by the fact that the forest had grown over old farmland, the remnants of which still littering the forest. I explore how our engagements with the past and present of animal lives and draw connections to Wilbur's experience as a farmed animal in *Charlotte's Web*.

In Chapter 3, I analyse *Animal Farm's* interpretive history and how it has influenced the teaching of the book. I engage with the cultural influences and implications informing the fundamental erasure of animal stories and experiences depicted in the book in favour of an exclusively humanist allegorical interpretation. Like *Charlotte's Web*, *Animal Farm* offers a critique of the agricultural subjugation of animals, but the exclusively humanist interpretive frame focuses the reader's attention away from the question of animal misery to the abstraction of the humancentric allegory. I propose a dual reading of the book that emphasizes the animal surface story in conjunction with the humanist allegory to emphasize the shared, yet distinct, oppression of marginalized humans and animals alike.

Accordingly, my project seeks to restore the animal dimension of these classic texts and to teach them beyond the exclusively humanist frame and to consider the animal perspectives represented. In doing so, I seek to promote literary educational possibilities that encourage children and young adults to become more attuned to animal experience and to promote deeper concern for how animals are affected by our regard, or disregard for their well being.

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the essential input from a range of contributors and supporters. I am grateful to those who offered advice and guidance and to my fellow travelers along the way, both of the human, and more-than-human variety.

Firstly, I am deeply indebted to the generous guidance of my supervisor, Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw. Veronica introduced me to a world that was unfamiliar, and more than a little intimidating, to a former high school teacher – the Early Childhood Education space. She welcomed me into her larger research projects that granted me a wealth of diverse new experiences and research opportunities that enriched this project in ways I could not have anticipated. Veronica encouraged me to bring my animalized reading of *Charlotte's Web* into the pre-school classroom, and most importantly, into the spaces outside of the classroom. Additionally, Veronica introduced me to new ontological frames and inspired me to challenge my own intellectual and pedagogical comfort levels and imagine new possibilities.

I am also most grateful to my committee member Helena Pedersen. Helena's award-winning book *Animals in Schools*, and her subsequent scholarship and dedication to animal justice inspired me to pursue this project in the first place. I was deeply honoured when Helena agreed to serve on my PhD committee and her dedicated feedback and critical insights were essential to my project's development and its ultimate refinement.

I also wish to thank members of Veronica's research team with whom I collaborated on a variety of projects over the last few years. I'm grateful to have shared a range of rich experiences with research colleagues I encountered over this time, so many of whom offered their encouragement, support, and solidarity at critical times, most notably, Kelly-Ann, Sarah H. and B., Tatiana, Rocio, Narda, and Randa. I also wish to thank the educators and administrators that

participated in my study for their enthusiastic commitment to bringing *Charlotte's Web* into the pre-school classroom and beyond. I am grateful to the participating children (as well as their parents) for their imaginative engagement with the project.

A special thanks to my parents. First to my mother, Virginia, for her support and encouragement that guided me from the beginning and the inspiring empathetic example she modeled for me. My late father, Bill, became committed to the protection of animals as he more fully embraced his maternal Mi'kmaq heritage and shared these values with his children. I'm also grateful for the support of my sister Wendy and brother Billy for helping their younger brother along his journey over the years.

Finally, and most importantly I express deep and abiding thanks to my life partner and soulmate, Kendra, without whom this project could never have happened. Her passionate commitment to the improvement of animal lives, as well as her beaming creativity and brilliance have served as the light guiding me both within this project and beyond it. Her love and support have been the greatest gifts of my life. I'm so grateful to co-parent a family of rescue dogs: Sunny, Zeke, the late Ms Macey, and the recently passed Buster (Big Man), all of whom endured some measure of abuse or mistreatment at the hands of humans. Their loving presence serves as constant reminder to us of the responsibility we have to the animals around us and that there are so many more perspectives and experiences to consider.

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1. Introduction

My research is situated at the intersections of environmental educational studies (with an emphasis on Indigenous ways of knowing), literacy and literary studies, critical animal studies, and new feminist materialisms. My theoretical positioning then seeks to find accommodation between theoretical orientations often at odds on significant ontological and ethical concerns. This conflict is particularly evident when contrasting critical animal studies and the wider human animal studies domain that includes new feminist materialisms. It is not the goal of this dissertation to immaculately reconcile the divergent dimensions of these theoretical frames but to read them through each other to balance the strengths and deficits in the other (Nimmo, 2015). Accordingly, I will elaborate on these conflicts in the theoretical frameworks section. I will also outline their crucial points of alignment and consider how elements of these distinct orientations may cross pollinate in generative ways to enhance the pedagogical commitment to critical animal issues in literacy and literary education. I will do this by emphasizing the cumulative benefits that may be derived from drawing both orientations. Similarly, ethical and ontological tensions exist between critical animal studies and Indigenous cosmologies but there are generative points of convergence that offer educators immense pedagogical potential to advance a critical awareness of the entangled colonial and species-based violence (Belcourt, 2015, 2020; Robinson, 2014; 2018).

This dissertation explores how animals are largely erased from literary education and curricular practice and how they could be actively incorporated into literary pedagogy. Animal stories, including those focused on farmed animals, are prominently represented in children's education. Yet the animals in these stories are typically anthropomorphized in ways that help

guide children toward humanist readings and away from questions surrounding the animals, especially any critical issues pertaining to animal exploitation and/or harm (Burke & Copenhaver, 2004; Cole & Stewart, 2014). In this way, Western education's deployment of animals offers another alibi to the animal capital foundations of capitalism, one that not only obscures, but naturalizes their economic instrumentalization.

Animal Farm and *Charlotte's Web* are two canonical educational texts that represent not only farmed animals, but also quite explicitly, the manifestations of physical and psychological torment inflicted upon them by humans (McHugh, 2009; Tiffin, 2007; Cole, 2017). Yet the animals are filtered through the anthropomorphic prism to adhere to the hierarchal anthropocentric imperative that sees value in animals only as resources to reproduce humanist value (Fudge, 2009; McKay, 2005; Oerlemans, 2008; Simons, 2002). Animals are endemically erased and replaced through a process of humanist allegorical substitution that I call the anthropo-allegorical frame. In leaving the representations of animal violence unexamined, educators help to facilitate a pedagogical naturalization of exploitation.

In this introduction, I outline the theoretical foundations, research methodologies, and the most salient literatures to situate my contributions. The second chapter interrogates conventional approaches to reading and teaching *Charlotte's Web* and how they reproduce an anthropocentric interpretive orientation. I posit that *Charlotte's Web* can be differently conceptualized and enlisted by educators in order to recognize animal subjectivities, engage more authentically with the text and the surface level animal issues it confronts. In so doing, I invite students to grapple with animals' lives and deaths, as they develop intellectually and ethically.

Next, in Chapter 3, I expand on that interpretive framing to address the question of how the values of human exceptionalism (Haraway, 2008) undergirding literacy education may be

disrupted and reconceptualized as part of a multispecies curriculum. By building from fieldwork at an early childhood education centre involving the reading of *Charlotte's Web* and deliberate forest engagements in a formerly agricultural space with children, I explore ways in which these material and animal encounters can enrich the pedagogical engagement with the text. I examine how the text opens up possibilities for interpreting the more-than-human experiences we encounter beyond the classroom with an emphasis on deepening the children's "entangled empathy" with animals (Gruen, 2015).

In the fourth chapter, I analyse the source of the human exceptionalism embedded in academic scholarship and literary education and how this pervasive anthropocentric project manifests in the systematic de-animalization of the most iconic of animal themed texts, *Animal Farm*. Then I argue for a new, hybridized reading - and teaching - that moves beyond the anthropocentric and toward a more-than-human interpretive and pedagogical orientation that speaks to the oppressions and challenges confronting multiple species, including, but not confined, to our own. In the conclusion, I synthesize the most salient insights and themes, and identify areas for future work, particularly in the interest of decolonization.

1.1 Defining the issues and context

Accordingly, this dissertation examines the limits of the humanist (i.e., anthropocentric) literary education, particularly in the context of anthropogenic environmental emergencies that threaten the existence of innumerable animal species, including our own. My project aims to promote a reconceptualization of humanist literary education that challenges the entrenched anthropocentric educational practices by reorienting our relations to animals in ways that respect their subjectivity, agency, and right to life. How to create tangible opportunities for an expanded, inclusive multispecies literary educational project is a central concern of the integrated articles

comprising this dissertation. However, such a reorientation can only be considered after thorough examination of the deep-seated, multifarious yet mutually reinforcing legacies that inform the human exceptionalism embedded in literary education specifically and education more broadly.

The consequences of these legacies are far reaching and intersectional in nature. Ecofeminists (Plumwood, 1993, 2007; Gaard 2002; Donovan & Adams, 2007) have argued that the oppression of women and other marginalized people, nature and animals are deeply entangled and a product of patriarchy and Western enlightenment values, most notably, capitalism. The human exceptionalism underpinning humanism is deeply entangled with other forms of exceptionalism that promote logics of exclusion and oppression within the human species (Chen, 2012; Jackson, 2020). Cultures that resist the enlightenment prescribed nature-culture divide (Latour, 2003) have been systematically dehumanized and dispossessed of their lands on the grounds that they are insufficiently human, indeed closer to nature and animals (Wynter, 2003). Indigenous cultures are especially vulnerable to exploitation, oppression, and violence because settler-colonial extractionist attitudes toward nature, land animals are extended toward those most closely associated with the animals and raw materials (Tuck, McKenzie & McCoy, 2014). As many Indigenous scholars, activists, and artists have argued, decolonizing, and indigenizing educational institutions (Currie-Patterson & Watson, 2017; Griffith, 2018) will require a reorientation of our relations to nature, land, and the animals with whom we share the land (Simpson, 2014; Belcourt, 2015; Watts, 2020). This is not to argue that the emerging efforts to Indigenize and decolonize education across Canada should be applied to advance an animal ethic in education or that Indigenous cosmologies and culture represent a model for a multispecies educational program as this would diminish the direct concerns for the ongoing oppression of Indigenous people. What is important here is that Indigenous scholarship of Kim

Tallbear (2015), Vanessa Watts (2013, 2020) and Margaret Robinson (2014), among many others have argued that we must challenge Western, settler-colonial instrumentalist, extractionist attitudes toward animals and nature in order to truly indigenize and these broader concerns align with the goals of developing an educational multispecies subjectivity and ethic. It is essential that in the ongoing literary-educational commitment to diversify and decolonize the curriculum accommodates Indigenous onto-ethico-ontologies and cosmologies rather than modifying those knowledges to fit the hegemonic humanist, settler-colonial educational value system (Simpson, 2014).

The aforementioned tensions between critical animal studies and Indigenous ways of knowing and scholarship are well founded and often rooted in the debate over hunting traditions and rights of Indigenous peoples. While some Indigenous people regard critical animal studies as a colonial assault on their rights to the land, Haudenosaunee scholar Ruth Koleszar-Green, along with Atsushi Matsuoka (2018), argue that this rupture between Western and settler animal advocates and Indigenous peoples is a result of “truncated colonial narratives” that are “narratives rendered incomplete or distorted because of colonialism” (Sorenson & Matsuoka, 2018, p.14). Koleszar-Green and Matsuoka borrow the term “truncated cultural narratives” from animal ecofeminist Marti Kheel who argued that animal advocates who condemned Indigenous hunting practices “wrench an ethical problem out of its embedded context (which) severs the problem from its embedded roots” (1993, p. 255). As Koleszar-Green and Matsuoka point out, Kheel argued that ethical arguments always require historicization and contextualization. That is to say, we can’t address an issue (i.e. the hunting and trapping of animals) without understanding the historical context informing various practices. Koleszar-Green and Matsuoka, along with Margaret Robinson and Billy Ray Belcourt agree that veganism can be compatible with

Indigenous way of being and knowing but that it can't be imposed from above by white Westerners and Settlers who are unaware of the colonial practices that contributed to the rise in Indigenous hunting practices, namely the impoverishment and immiseration of first nations peoples and the eradication of their former livelihoods (Belcourt, 2015, 2020; Koleszar-Green and Matsuoka, 2018; Robinson 2020).

Mi'kmaq scholar Margaret Robinson argues that her culture's commitment to hunting became alienated from the culture of reciprocity that valued the agency, and honoured the sacrifice, of the animal. An increasingly instrumentalized vision of animals took hold due to the colonial influence of European settlers' demand for animal furs and meat (2014). She argues that this settler-colonial intervention disrupted the earlier Mi'kmaq traditions that emphasized multispecies reciprocity. Robinson cites the Glooscap legends and oral tradition as evidence of her culture's pre-colonial commitment to animal well being that condemned the unnecessary killing of animals. As Koleszar-Green and Matsuoka argue, Western and settler animal advocacy and Indigenization can complement each other but only through mutual respect and understanding, not through a colonial top-down prescription imposed from above but a dialogic engagement that promotes awareness of both perspectives. For Koleszar-Green and Matsuoka, Margaret Robinson and Billy Ray Belcourt, colonization is the root cause of violence against animals. Critical animal studies scholars have argued that violence against animals and animal domestication is the root of all subsequent oppressions (Best, 2009). But it is important for animal advocates and activists to exercise what critical animal studies scholar Claire Jean Kim calls "multi-optic vision" when engaging with colonized and oppressed groups and their relationships with animals to consider how colonialism and racial oppression influenced their cultural narratives, practices and traditions (2015). Listening and working respectfully with

Indigenous people and scholars to understand the complex histories and “truncated narratives” of colonized peoples requires humility not the imposition of answers. As Koleszar-Green and Matsuoka argue, such a mutually empathetic endeavor can only strengthen the commitment to animal lives, and I argue to the cultivation of a critically engaged animal pedagogy.

The Common Worlds Collective (from which my work emerges) seeks to accommodate relational ontologies to Indigenous knowledge with a particular commitment to decolonizing education (Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor, 2015) and reconceptualizing the curriculum beyond the anthropocentric to engage with land and animals (Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor, 2018; Nxumalo, 2016). The common worlds broader relational, land-based approach to education then seeks to contextualize animal concerns within a broader, intersectional project that aligns climate, decolonizing, and anti-oppression pedagogies to disrupt the hegemony of human exceptionalism and to promote new possibilities for a more-than-human education. My project specifically seeks to extend this commitment to interspecies intersectionality and toward a more specifically animal-conscious literary pedagogy as an essential pedagogical project that promotes empathetic engagement with animals (Gruen, 2015)

Accordingly, I intend to explore the possibilities that can emerge from disrupting both a) the human exceptionalism guiding Western, settler-colonial education b) what I call the corresponding *anthropo-allegorical* teaching of animal-themed texts. On a wider level this will require an expansion of English reading selections beyond the exclusively human (and Western humanistic) domain, and inclusion of animal representations beyond the merely anthropomorphic and anthropo-allegorical. For the purposes of this project, I focus on two canonical teaching texts (*Charlotte’s Web* and *Animal Farm*) that have been systematically de-animalized through literary criticism and educational praxis and almost universally taught

through the anthropo-allegorical frame (Kinghorn, 1986; Yandell, 2013; Otmani and Belabel, 2020). This project seeks to reclaim and re-animalize these texts to offer students the opportunity to empathize with living experiences beyond their own species and expand their ways of knowing and being beyond the hegemony of anthropocentric modernist rationalism.

1.2 Rationale & problem

The reasons for the exclusion and/or instrumentalization of animals in education are attributable to broader ontological and ethical influences. Informing these influences is what Bruno Latour (2003) refers to as the “modern constitution.” For Latour, the “modern constitution” emerged from the humanist-enlightenment onto-epistemological re-orientation that prescribed and inscribed a separation between culture and nature. Although the human exploitation of animals of course preceded modernity, Latour argues that humanist-enlightenment onto-epistemology reified our instrumentalist relations to animals on a systemic, and eventually industrial scale. Similarly, David Nibert builds on ecofeminist theories that Western civilization is built upon the entangled subjugation of animals, nature as well as altered human groups and societies that are naturalised or animalised by the Western subjugator or colonizer (2002; 2013). This nature-culture divide was ultimately embedded and reproduced in Western educational curricula and practices as animals (and issues of animal welfare) are subordinated, silenced, or excluded in ways that uphold the nature-culture divide and the broader oppression and exploitation of animals (Cole and Stewart, 2009; Pedersen, 2010; Snaza, 2013, Taylor, 2014)). This means that though animals are sometimes present -- physically in the biology lab or representationally as characters in the numerous stories, films and books decorating students’ classroom -- they are reduced to the status of manipulate-able objects and drained of agency or subjectivity. The “modern constitution” or what Barad refers to as

“Cartesian cuts” (2003) legitimizes human mastery over the natural world, thereby constituting an entrenched anthropocentrism that filters through our culture and pervades our educational and curricular values.

A review of the Ontario English and Language Arts (ELA) curriculum documents reveals the hegemonic anthropocentrism embedded within and perpetuated by literary education. These documents also reflect how the nature-culture divide is instilled and upheld through literary and literacy education. The current ELA documents of Ontario’s Ministry of Education do not include a single reference to animals, nature, or even ecological concerns. When considering that the tradition of English language poetry has been decorated with a vast history of animal, natural and ecological representations, and ruminations, of which the Romantic tradition exerts the most prominent and enduring legacy, such absences seem conspicuous. Literary education is, it seems, deeply invested in divorcing culture and nature and elevating humans above animals even when some of its most iconic voices and movements would implore readers to embrace a very different vision of the culturally inscribed division between culture and nature as well as the hierarchies elevating humans above animals.

The most progressive curriculum documents in this respect are from the 2017 Grades 9-12 Environmental Education curriculum, and the 2019 Grades 9-12 Inuit and First Nations Curriculum documents. Tellingly, Environmental Education is not a stand-alone subject but rather a supplemental program designed to be sprinkled piecemeal into core subjects. The goals, as stated in the environmental education document, are beholden to stewardship-based models that emphasize responsible management of resources. Specific reference to animal issues are virtually non-existent. The few direct animal references in the curriculum suggest a similar resource management logic reinforcing cultural inscribed hierarchies that promote human

exceptionalism. The Environmental Education document reveals that expectations in the Grades 1-8 Language Arts and 9-12 English curriculum “do not explicitly address environmental education” (81), nor do they in any way address animal or any non-human concerns, further underscoring the influence of humanist anthropocentrism at the core of literary education. By contrast, Computer Studies has a distinct environmental education policy document.

The dearth of a formal environmental curriculum in English indicates the limited reach of environmental education in Ontario as English is the only secondary subject that all students are required to take throughout their high school education. It is therefore the course best positioned to reach the widest number of students and scholars have argued that English courses are excellent educational vehicles for exploring environmental and animal issues (Huggan and Tiffin, 2015; Cole and Stewart, 2016). The lack of environmental education in Language Arts and English within the urgent context of the climate emergency represents a conspicuous absence. Yet it is also a vital opportunity to confront and disrupt the human exceptionalism that continues to guide our humanities-based literary and literacy education. The opportunity for a formal integration of environmental education into English that includes animal stories and perspectives to encourage children and young adults to empathize beyond the experiences of their own species would constitute a valuable step towards species and climate justice that will simultaneously encourage attitudes of sustainability required for both human and animal survival.

Unlike the supplementary Environmental Education program, the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit curriculum documents offer complete, stand-alone courses. However, the current provincial Conservative government has recently incited controversy with its announcement that the curriculum will not be universal but be merely an elective program for students, and its

implementation will be decided at the discretion of the school boards (Alphonso, 2019).

Additionally, Indigenous groups have criticized the government for inadequately consulting their communities throughout the process (Jones, 2019). Even though the curriculum is designed for full courses, it also encourages cognate subjects to integrate elements of First Nations, Metis and Inuit curriculum.

Two particularly pertinent strands of the broader First Nations, Metis and Inuit curriculum referred to as “essential understanding and key concepts” are:

1. **Land: Relationships with the natural world:** The Creator gives us laws that govern our relationships with the natural world so that we can live in harmony with all creation.
2. **Interconnectedness of all things: Relationships with all of creation through life balance All of creation is connected.** To live a prosperous life, one lives in balance with all life, including people, land, sky, animals, plants, and waters (2019 *Ontario First Nations, Metis and Inuit Ministry Documents*, 2019, 9-10).

While these formulations remain vague and do not speak directly to the individual sentience or agency of animals, they are among the only references given to the importance of establishing a symbiotic relationship with animals, nature and the rest of the non-human world. In this way, the First Nations, Metis, Inuit curriculum offers a rare challenge to the “modern constitution” and human exceptionalism embedded in Western educational curricula. Such curricular interventions offer a rare opportunity to bring to the fore the entangled human-animal consequences of what David Nibert calls “domestication”, a neologism combining domestication and desecration (2013). Nibert argues that domestication of animal bodies is entwined with the colonization of human bodies and that animal domestication must be abolished before we can decolonize.

Indigenous scholar and poet Billy Ray Belcourt inverted this formulation by arguing that we cannot end animal domestication until we decolonize (2015). Tuck, McKenzie and McCoy (2014) offer a similar analysis of the links between capitalist extractionist logics destroying nature and animals and colonial violence. These formulations see the connectedness of animal domestication and colonization and present pedagogical avenues for exploring these curricula expectations in ways, that although imperfect, offer alternatives to Western onto-epistemologies and its downstream educational human exceptionalist (and ethnocentric) values that naturalize and perpetuate the instrumentalization of animals. Given that the current Ontario government refused to commit to mandatory First Nations, Metis and Inuit curriculum, it is important for ELA classes to integrate as many of their essential understandings and key concepts as possible. These two strands in particular offer English teachers opportunities to extend their classes into Indigenous and more-than-human discussions. Recently, a number of Ontario boards (including Lambton-Kent and Greater Essex County school boards) have committed to indigenizing the Grade 11 English curriculum so that all texts will reflect Indigenous issues and world views (Dodge, 2019; Alphonso, 2019). This is a welcome change that points the way to a decolonized future that moves beyond the parochial boundaries of the current anthropocentric hegemony imposed by Eurocentric humanism.

Given this context, my analysis confronts the pervading cultural ethos that Robert McKay (2005) has called “compulsory humanity” – and how we may disrupt it within educational settings. Literary educational curricula in Ontario presupposes and reproduces this notion of “compulsory humanity,” as do most Western literary/literacy curricula, as it remains a distinguishing feature of literary humanism. However, I see potential for re-envisioning education in order to expand and reshape our webs of empathy, ideas of subjectivity, and the

praxis of teaching, particularly in English and language arts classrooms. Indeed, in order to emphasize and reproduce anthropocentrism in canonical texts like *Charlotte's Web* and *Animal Farm* students must have their attention redirected from the animals and animal dimensions at the story's surface, to the 'more important' humancentric allegory beneath the surface, one that my own experience has taught me is by no means an intuitive process for most students. To better understand this process, I see value in enlisting and adapting literary scholar Kenneth Burke's (1966) concept of "terministic screens." For Burke, terministic screens are invoked to channel reader receptions/interpretation and pedagogical implementation along and into culturally coherent lines. In this way, terministic screens could be seen as an aesthetic complement to Thompson's (1978) notion of "ideological blinders;" the alternatives are not erased, our interpretive engagement is simply directed toward the cultural consensus. The cultural and ideological factors informing what I call the *anthropo-allegorical* terministic screen instructs us to read animals exclusively as symbolic objects used to support anthropocentric narratives. The animal form is exploited in stories while perversely denying animals independent agency and subjectivity. The animal form utilized in narratives becomes a mere a ghostly avatar, one that stands in for an ontologically intelligible human subjectivity. This process supports the wider project of human exceptionalism and has endured largely unexamined for generations. It can and should be disrupted if we are to confront the ecological crises that threaten human, animal, and natural life, albeit disproportionately. If we are to confront the existential crisis of the current climate emergency, we must begin to step outside of the anthropocentric curricular-pedagogical bubble that ignores lives and concerns beyond the human.

1.3 A more-than-human shift in curriculum studies

Educational research has been relatively slow and sporadic in responding to the broader animal and more-than-human shift in the academy. There have been notable exceptions emerging from the domains of environmental education (Orr, 1992; Hutchison, 1998; Barret, 2004; Li, 2007; Kahn 2010; Bartlet, 2011; Goleman, Bennet and Barlow, 2012; Lloro-Bidart, 2015, Barret, 2017), posthumanism (Weaver and Snaza, 2015; Rautio, 2017; Kuby, 2018; Tarr, 2018), actor network theory (Law, 2009; Perillo and Mulchahy, 2016) and critical animal studies (Pedersen, 2010a; Kahn, 2011; Dinker and Pedersen, 2016; Rowe and Rocha 2015; Cole and Stewart 2016, Robles, 2016). More recently, the Common Worlds Project (Taylor 2013; Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor, 2015, 2018; Pacini-Ketchabaw 2016; Nxumalo and Pacini-Ketchabaw 2017) has combined animal studies with new material feminist onto-epistemologies (Barad, 2012; Haraway, 2015; Tsing 2015) to emphasize mutual vulnerabilities of children and their animal and more-than-human surroundings, with the goal of reconceptualizing pedagogies, and ultimately subjectivities. Beyond these more-than-human scholarly interventions, the field of education is still largely beholden to pedagogical and curricular practices that position nature and animals as exploitable resource to be managed “responsibly” (Greenwood, 2014).

Educational scholars offer a diverse range of interpretive and critical frames to explain these enduring trends. Reconceptualists have long suggested that educational studies as an academic discipline is too beholden to the practice of education to offer the necessary critical perspective required for analysis (Pinar 1978; Young, 1980; Pinar and Grumet, 1982, Priestly, 2011). In order for educational studies to achieve the required critical perspective they argue, it would have to be divested from the instrumentalist goals and prescriptive models which had defined the field since Tyler and impose a clear divide between theory and practice. More recently, posthumanist and critical animal studies scholars have likewise argued that curriculum

studies remains too invested in practical and prescriptive goals to provide clear critiques and regenerative theories that point to new possibilities (Weaver, 2010; Lewis and Kahn, 2010; Meek, 2015; Rocha, 2016). Accordingly, education is reduced to exploitable (social) resource to be manipulated. Consequently, curriculum and pedagogy that ventures into the more-than-human domains (i.e. environmental education) tend to reproduce instrumental logic. To remedy this issue, a number of posthumanist educational scholars, like the reconceptualists before them, call for a separation of theory from practice (Weaver 2010; Meek, 2015; Weaver and Snaza, 2015).

Critical animal educational perspectives argue specifically that education and curriculum studies are inherently anthropocentric due to their unquestioned commitment to fostering decidedly human subjects and shaping humanistic subjectivity (Lupinacci, and Happel-Parkins, 2016, Spanning, R., 2017). This is because the field of education, both in practice and as a scholarly discipline, is deeply interwoven with the traditions of humanism and the hegemonic power relations that promote the economic exploitation of animals (Pedersen, 2004; Kahn, 2008; Snaza, 2013). Correspondingly, institutional structures of education presuppose and reproduce the supremacy of the human subject. This “compulsory humanity” (McKay, 2005) serves to invalidate animals and issues pertaining to their welfare that conflict with logics of animal instrumentalization for the purpose economic benefit (Pedersen, 2010b). Consequently, political-economic environmental educational scholars like Teresa Lloro-Bidart have argued that the field of education “must confront its commitment to humanism” if it is ever to stake a credible ontological position on more-than-human concerns in the age of the Anthropocene (2017).

More specifically, Critical Animal Pedagogy combines critical animal studies with critical education to interrogate the hidden curriculum of human exceptionalism (Pedersen, 2004;

Affifi, 2015; Corman and Vandrovcova, 2014; Linne, 2015; Rowe, 2016; Peggs and Smart, 2017; Horsthemke, 2020). A particular emphasis on interrogating concepts of food perpetuated by schools (formally and informally) that reinscribe hegemonic power and market relations (Stewart and Cole, 2009; Rowe, 2015; Rowe and Rocha, 2016; Rud, 2018; Dolby, 2021). Such critical animal pedagogical research seeks to challenge the naturalization of animal food products and seeks to promote critical awareness of the ethical and ecological consequences of meat and dairy consumption. Another branch of Critical Animal Pedagogy builds upon the intersection of animal and environmental crises by emphasizing the need for critical animal theory in the age of the Anthropocene (Spannring, 2019, 2021; Russell and Spannring, 2019; Oakley, 2019). In doing so, this research reveals the extent to which animal consumption drives ecological (as well as animal) destruction.

1.4 Contemporary Environmental and Posthuman Education

A more broadly interspecies environmental education has emerged in educational scholarship and curriculum theory, one directly influenced by the broader more-than-human turn in the academy. There have been three theoretical influences guiding the emergence of interspecies concerns in environmental education: humane education, posthumanism/ feminist materialism, and (critical) animal studies/pedagogy. Humane education emphasizes connections among human rights, animal protection, and environmental education (Selby, 1995; Ascione, 1997; Weil, 2002; Daly and Suggs, 2010; Kalof, Zammit-Lucia, Bell, & Granter, 2016). It is characterized by “an innovative teaching and learning process that supports students in their development of empathy, critical thinking and active citizenship” (Pedersen, 2004, p. 5). In this way, humane education constitutes a progressive development in environmental education, one that stresses interdependence of humans and other species as opposed to the anthropocentric and

instrumentalist stewardship model (Faver, 2010; Castellano, de Luca, & Sorrentino, 2012; Iorio, Hamm, Parnell, & Quintero, E. 2017). Humane education can be integrated by teachers into curriculum and pedagogy, either through direct instruction or from visiting instructors representing organizations such as SPCAs, WWF, etc. (Thomas, & Beirne, 2002). Accordingly, humane education remains an informal pedagogical project, with the limited exceptions of formalized curricula in Scandinavia, the UK and a handful of American states. (Nicoll, Trifone, & Samuels, 2008). On a social and political level, humane education's promotion of active citizenship recalls William Stapp's goal to present environmental degradation as a social ill that requires educational intervention (1969). Humane education therefore presents an alternative to affirmative market ideology of anthropocentric stewardship by emphasizing the entanglement of humans, animals and nature but still privileges humans as stewards but to promote the welfare of animals rather than to promote the interests of human socio-economic interests.

The feminist new-materialist approach to environmental education promotes a more-than-human reconceptualization of the humanist values governing educational practice and research. This school has been criticized for flattening distinctions between animals, nature and materiality that de-prioritizes the suffering of animals and the power relations informing animal exploitation and immiseration (Nimmo, 2015; Rekret, 2016). At its core however, it presupposes a multi-species community of knowers (Fawcett, 2005; Barrett, 2012, 2014, Blenkinsop, Piersol, Sitka-Sage, & Ho, 2017). Feminist new materialism assigns theoretical legitimacy to nonhumans and focuses on "relational ways of knowing, the importance of non-human action and lived experience" (Lloro-Bidert, 112, 2017). Its emphasis on relational, feminist posthumanism extends Whitehead's "process philosophy" by way of Gilles Deleuze, Donna Haraway, Isabelle Stengers and Karen Barad. Kay Milton (2002) intervened in this respect in

her challenge to humanist conceptions of identity and subjectivity. Arguing that subjectivity is informed by a combination of ecological and interpersonal influences (Milton, 2005), she argues that the concept of personhood can only be understood relationally with all dimensions of the environment (Snaza, 2013; Sonu, & Snaza., 2015; Lloro-Bidert, 2017). Similarly, Barrett (2012, 2014, 2017) argues for an increased commitment to more-than-human experiences by promoting “threshold concepts” in pedagogy and curriculum. “Threshold concepts” are ideas characterized by their “troubling and transformative nature” (2017, p. 1131) that affirm and promote repressed inherent knowledge already possessed by students regarding their connectedness to the animal world. The goal in advancing threshold concepts is to have students to challenge modernist anthropocentric concepts of identity.

Richard Kahn (2010) has pursued a critical theoretical ontological framework to advance his notion of eco-pedagogy. Kahn’s theoretical mission is to redeem and reconceptualize Paolo Freire’s critical pedagogy beyond the ontological limits of its ingrained anthropocentrism. Similarly, David Greenwood promotes a critical pedagogical perspective that confronts schools’ “universal call” for economic growth and development (Hirsh, 2007). Greenwood asserts that this hegemonic “call” is so strong and so deeply embedded in curriculum that it is difficult for teachers to circumvent. Greenwood (2014) argues that it is essential that curriculum studies be reconceptualized beyond anthropocentric frames before education is able to address the crises of the Anthropocene.

John Weaver in *Educating the Posthuman* (2010) and Nathan Snaza and Weaver in *Education and Posthuman Research* (2014) identify the intensifying market pressures on educational research and curriculum characterized by increased emphasis on quantitative studies and measures to assess educational efficacy. They argue that education is instrumentally

motivated to measure “what works” rather than “works for what?” (2014). They contend that posthumanism presents the ontological reconceptualization required to pursue the latter question, particularly in the context of the Anthropocene. Snaza and Weaver’s critique of humanist-enlightenment construction of the subject-object relationship. They assert that educational qualitative and quantitative research presupposes a knowing human researcher reproduces the subject-object relationship that has characterized empiricism since Francis Bacon. His research orientation empowers the researcher over those being researched, one with a troubling legacy for animals and marginalized peoples. Accordingly, they argue that the subject-object relationship intrinsically promotes a “language of dominance” (Snaza and Weaver, 2014, p. 9). Snaza (2013) further argues for a “bewildering of education” that disrupts education’s primary mission – the “production of the human” (39). Snaza argues that the broader construction of humanity is established in contrast to animal and non-human others and that education must end this humanist-enlightenment project that puts humans at the top of the subjectivity hierarchy.

Another important educational project that has challenged this subject-object onto-epistemology of anthropocentric mastery is advanced by the Common Worlds Childhoods Research Collective (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kocher, and Kind, 2016) Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw (and subsequently Fikile Nxumalo) build on Donna Haraway’s hybridic concept of naturecultures to reorient subjectivity toward “humans in the world” rather than “separate from the world” and consider how early childhood pedagogies may be re-oriented to challenge anthropocentric orthodoxies (Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor 2015; Pacini-Ketchabaw and Nxumalo, 2015). Like Haraway (as well as Snaza and Weaver) Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor largely reject quantitative research methodologies (and conventional qualitative educational research methods as well) in favour of ethnographic and post-qualitative research approaches. In

this way, they ensure that their research methodology is ethically and ontologically consistent with their pedagogies of more-than-human entanglement.

My project draws upon a constellation of research and scholarly approaches to the question of animals in education. I combine a critical animal studies and pedagogies approach to identify the embedded market and power dynamics informing educational anthropocentrism that normalize the instrumentalization of animals for human purposes as reflected in the work of Helena Pedersen, Matthew Cole, and Kate Stewart. At the same time, my research is heavily influenced by feminist materialist relational ontologies with particular emphasis on educational applications that combine literary analysis with material and animal engagement (Kuby, Thiel and Spector, 2018, 2019; Andrienova, 2021). Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2018) offer a highly influential distillation of relational ethics that applies a critical lens to the symbolic deployment of animals for educational projects that repress problematic colonial-capitalist-ecological implications for humans and animals alike.

1.5 Research Questions and Theoretical Foundations

- 1) How can the values of human exceptionalism embedded in the humanist literary tradition and undergirding English literary/literacy education be disrupted and reconceptualized as part of a multispecies curriculum that promotes empathy for non-human animals?
- 2) How can a multispecies animal commitment in English Language Arts curriculum support and be co-supported through wider commitments to decolonize and diversify the curriculum and promote a more widely inclusive anti-oppression educational culture and curriculum?

My project's theoretical foundation is located at the intersection of critical animal pedagogy, literary theory, and new feminist materialism. Critical animal pedagogy (Pedersen 2010, 2011; Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen, 2016; Gunnarsson Dinker, 2021; Cole and

Stewart, 2009, 2014) combines critical animal studies (Adams, 2015; Noske, 1997) with critical pedagogy (Friere, 2010; Giroux, 1984; McLaren, 1998; Apple, 1982/2012). Critical animal studies, as Helena Pedersen describes it, focuses on: “social structures, institutions, practices, and ideologies that define what relations are possible between humans and animals and that reduce human-animal interaction to modes and processes of production and consumption” (2010, p. 2-3). She argues that schools are deeply invested in reproducing and normalizing the use of animals for economic production and consumption. Thus, critical pedagogy’s analysis and critique of power relations embedded and normalized in educational settings brings the marginalization of animals into focus and challenges the legitimacy of this hegemonically inscribed dismissal of animals beyond their use value. Critical animal pedagogy then combines the broader analysis of animal exploitation and destruction for human ends with an anti-oppression critique of educational structures to analyse education’s institutional role in perpetuating animal immiseration and slaughter. Critical animal pedagogy guides my work throughout this project by allowing these classic animal narratives to reveal the violence of animal subjugation and slaughter rather than masking the animal tragedy as a vehicle for supposedly loftier and more significant human analogues.

To this end, critical animal pedagogy addresses the unexamined anthropocentrism at the heart of critical pedagogy (Bowers, 2004; Corman, 2012; Horsthemke, 2020). Paolo Friere’s seminal critical consciousness project had been deeply invested in the Western humanist tradition (Bowers, 2010). Questions of animal oppression were subordinated to concerns for the human, with a particular Eurocentric emphasis. Not surprisingly then, questions of colonialism were also subordinated to class, erasing the very specific forms of oppression experienced by Indigenous peoples (Tuck, McKenzie, and McCoy, 2014). Richard Kahn (2010) extends Friere’s

project beyond the anthropocentric into a broader multispecies “ecopedgagical” commitment by reconnecting critical pedagogy to the ontological roots of its critical theory forbears: the Frankfurt School. A persistent, but often overlooked preoccupation in the work of critical theorists, most notably Theodor Adorno (2005), Max Horkheimer (2013), and Herbert Marcuse (2003) was a deep and abiding concern for animals and nature.

Beginning with their joint authored *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and continuing into their later independent works, Horkheimer and Adorno advanced a proto-intersectional analysis of the prominent motif of domination pervading Western capitalist culture. Instrumentalism, they argue, is forged, and continuously reproduced in the West’s cultural penchant to dominate nature and its sentient domain of non-human animals:

Humans possess reason, which pitilessly follows its path; the animals from which they draw their bloody conclusions have only unreasoning terror, the impulse to take flight on a path which is cut off....In war and peace, arena and slaughterhouse, from the slow death of the elephant overpowered by primitive human hordes with the aid of the first planning to the perfected exploitation of the animal world today, the unreasoning creature has always suffered at the hands of reason. (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002, p. 204)

They argue that it is from this foundation of animal subjugation and sacrifice, that all forms of human subjection are manifested. For Horkheimer and Adorno, a continuum of subjugation, at the hands of other humans, follows from this originating model of oppression. Those whose culturally assigned identities are most culturally associated with nature (of which the closest are non-human animals) occupy the most precarious social status. Horkheimer and Adorno specifically identify women, Indigenous and racialized minorities as being most vulnerable to this cultural codification, while the cultural identities of white, middle, and upper-class, able bodied heterosexual males are the most secure, occupying the unassailable position of transcendental, universal subject. Their analysis abounds with examples of historical and

contemporary examples of oppressive and genocidal projects legitimized by the familiar formula of dehumanizing and animalizing marginalized humans. In this respect, human and animal oppression is so deeply entangled that we cannot isolate one from the other. Both must be seen in their integrated totality in order to understand the shared cultural forces promoting (animal and human) oppression. Kahn's ecopedagogical project has influenced critical pedagogical theorists to confront human exceptionalism as another oppressive narrative upholding status quo power relations (McLaren, 2013). It has also inspired derivative explorations such as Russell's "queer ecopedagogy (2013), anarcho-ecopedagogy (Payne, 2017) and new feminist materialist ecopedagogical engagement (Dunkley, 2018).

Like ecopedagogy, critical animal pedagogy restores the animal and more-than-human ethico-ontological foundation established by the Frankfurt School's critique of the limits of enlightenment humanism to address the anthropocentrism guiding critical pedagogy, and education more broadly. However, critical animal pedagogy is not invested in redeeming, and ultimately upholding Friere's specific project nor his devotion to Western humanist principles that perpetuate colonial-imperialist chauvinism, albeit in a softer package (Bowers, 2012; Corman and Vandocova, 2014; Kopnina 2020). Critical animal pedagogists regard anthropocentrism as a feature, rather than a bug, of the Western humanist project and seek ethico-ontological alternatives to the status quo narratives of human exceptionalism. Accordingly, critical animal pedagogy is divested of much of the humanist, settler-colonial legacies that problematize ecopedagogy

Elements of critical animal studies/pedagogies have intersected with ecofeminism. Carol Adams's (2010) cultural critical animal analysis has been embraced by ecofeminist scholars Val Plumwood, Lori Gruen (2015) and Greta Gaard (2017) establishing a more animal-oriented

ecofeminist school. Val Plumwood (1993) formulated a proto-intersectionalist analysis of instrumentalism that embraced the more-than-human in a way that resonated closely with the Frankfurt School's theories. Ecofeminism's primary distinction from critical animal studies rests in its dual emphasis on capitalism *and patriarchy* as the sources of all domination (human and non-human). For ecofeminists, like the Frankfurt School before them, the subjugation of humans and nature are deeply entangled. An early critique levelled at ecofeminism is that it essentializes women as being closer to nature and that it is grounded in quasi-mystical pseudo-science. This may have been true of some of the perspectives that emerged in the early 1970s iteration of ecofeminism but its 1990s second wave, as developed by Val Plumwood (1993), Greta Gaard (2011) and Lori Gruen (2009; 2015) presented a nuanced and rigorous version of ecofeminism, that Plumwood called "critical ecofeminism" (2017), which emphasized the shared oppression of the majority of men, along with women in the patriarchal/industrial-capitalist nexus and the disproportionate oppression felt by racialized, impoverished and disabled "others" and children. Plumwood rejected the ontological veganism as a rejection of humanity's biological positioning in the food chain. Carol J. Adams (2010) advanced an ecofeminism that positioned veganism as an essential rejection of Western patriarchal ideology that links the consumption of meat with the sexual consumption of female bodies. Along with Carol J. Adams, Josephine Donovan (1990; 2006) and Lori Gruen (1996; 2015) advanced an animal ecofeminism that aligned ethically and, to a lesser extent, ontologically with critical animal studies in their commitment to animal liberation and veganism.

My dissertation is guided by the critical animal studies analysis and ethical critique of the embedded anthropocentric power relations that reduce animals to exploitable and consumable economic units. My work is also animated by its intersectional theorization of entangled human-

animal oppression (Best, 2009; Nibert, 2013) a commitment influenced by its ethical and philosophical forbear, the Frankfurt School and one it shares with animal ecofeminism. Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of instrumental rationalization and its consequences for animals and nature was a formative and foundational influence on my analysis. Similarly, animal ecofeminism holds a significant ontological and ethical influence on my interspecies/intersectional outlook. Chapter 1 of this dissertation focuses on how *Charlotte's Web* can and should be read as a critique of the agricultural practices to rear animals for human instrumental purposes, most specifically for human consumption. The book's porcine protagonist, Wilbur, yearns to live and the visceral fear of the farmer's blade is one that haunts his daily existence. Given the age range of the children reading the book (typically ages 7-10) the chapter focuses on cultivating an "entangled empathy" with Wilbur and the other animals as an essential step towards facilitating critical engagement with animal exploitation (Gruen, 2015). Chapter 2 continues the commitment to engaging with *Charlotte's Web* to cultivate and build upon children's "entangled empathy" through a novel study with pre-school children. The children were encouraged to make connections between the animal representations as well as the novel's setting with actual animals and setting (both present and past) in the forest space surrounding the school. Chapter 2 examines the possibilities for pursuing empathetic and critical possibilities that might emerge for children when they are able to make connections between sympathetic animal characters like Wilbur with the animals in the forest and more particularly, the animals that once populated the farm that the forest replaced. Artifacts of animal containment still persist (notably the remnants of barbed wire fencing) and children soon made connections between Wilbur's involuntary containment and those of the farmed animals that once inhabited this space. This chapter also engages with decolonial possibilities by drawing upon Indigenous

scholarship that emphasizes human-animal entanglement (Tallbear, 2016; Watts, 2020) and Indigenous cosmologies that offer points of ethical alignment with critical animal studies (Robinson, 2014; 2018). Chapter 3 applies critical animal pedagogical analysis of anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism institutionally embedded in Western curriculum, and educational practice and how this informs the exclusively anthro-allegorical reading and teaching of *Animal Farm*.

Similarly, though less critically, feminist new materialism (Barad, 2007; van der Tuin, and Dolphijn, 2012; Braidotti, 2013; Stengers, 2018) extends ecofeminism's concern with the fragile more-than-human domain through their committed "turn to matter." Feminist new materialism is informed by its commitment to understanding the relationality between all things and beings in the material sphere. It challenges dualistic and hierarchical theoretical and methodological frames. Accordingly, new materialism embraces difference in a context of "affirmative relationality" (Mulcahy, 2021). This theoretical frame is highly constructive when engaging in more-than-human inquiry due to its fluid flexibility and emphasis on actively engaging with difference and the more-than-human "other" through diffractive analysis. Feminist new materialism is crucial to the posthumanist educational projects of Lenz Taguchi (2010), van der Tuin and Dolphijn (2012); Rautio, Hohti, Leinonen & Tammi (2017) and the work of the Common Worlds Collective headed by Affrica Taylor and Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw.

Donna Haraway's emphasis on "worlding" promotes new "situated" frames to see new perspectives to challenge the Western, anthropocentric, and patriarchal frames that have dominated enlightenment logic that centers the human as god-like observer and evaluator of all phenomena. This "god trick" informing Western scientific inquiry and education instills and

affirms human exceptionalism and reduces the more-than-human domain to manipulable matter to be exploited by human masters (1988). Crucially, Karen Barad's notion of "agential realism" challenges the positivist commitment to a cosmos comprised of "independent objects with inherent boundaries and properties" that interact with each other (2003, 815). In this way, Barad, reconceptualizes the anthropocentric Cartesian "cuts" that situate humans as subject-master over material objects, nature and animals in favour of "agential cuts" that resituates human agency as an inseparable part of a larger phenomenon that acts upon and responds to other material and sentient influences in a process of "mutual entanglement" she calls "intra-activity." For Barad, this reconceptualization requires a shift in our ontological, ethical and epistemological frames as all three of these categories are inseparable. Such an "onto-ethico-epistemological" shift requires a radical reconstitution of subjectivity and therefore a complete reconceptualization of our current educational values and the human exceptionalism at its onto-ethico-epistemological core.

Similarly, Anna Tsing argues that we need to attend to the more-than-human "polyphonic assemblages" surrounding us, arguing that we must look beyond the culturally imposed constraints of our anthropocentric vision to accommodate ourselves to the diversity of life around us and the precarities imposed upon them due to human domination (2015). Similarly, Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2012; 2017) offers a means to resituate our educational values away from the productivist, techno-scientific onto-epistemologies of Western neo-liberalism by "staging" attentive, care-full, immanent worldly encounters beyond the merely human (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 53). One of the primary goals of literary education has been to advance empathy and consideration for diverse peoples and perspectives and promote an ethic of cosmopolitanism among students (Stomaiuolo and Nichols, 2019). My field research and pedagogical interventions build on the relational ontologies advanced by Haraway, Barad, and

Tsing to re-situate literary and literacy education in ways that bridge the nature-culture divide by materializing and (re)animalizing *Charlotte's Web*. The children are encouraged to extend their reading of the into the outside world as well as bringing those worldly encounters back into the text in order to re-imagine and re-story it.

New feminist materialist relational ontologies, and posthumanism more broadly, have been criticized for being inadequately critical of human exploitation of animals, specifically for the purpose of slaughter (Weisberg, 2009; Latimer, 2013) Indeed, Haraway's ethical position on animal protection has been notoriously lax and inconsistent (outside of the relatively privileged realm of agility dog competition) (Giraud, 2019). She has been known to defend the use of animals for lethal laboratory experiments and to ridicule animal liberation activists and factory farming protests (Giraud, 2013). Companion species seemed to be the only species worthy of ethical care and intervention from humans which indeed seemed at odds with her broader outlook (Adams, 2006; Latimer and Miele, 2013). Barad's ethical position on animal life was less contradictory but somewhat more ambiguous. Her early (and most cited work) seemed to present a flattening of living and non-living materiality (2003; 2007) that troubled critical animal studies scholars (Pedersen, 2011; 2021). Her emphasis on "diffractive analysis" and "affirmative relation" had been widely interpreted by both her supporters and critics as an invalidation of critical theory specifically and the notion of critical engagement more broadly (Braunmühl, 2018, Giraud, 2019).

Accordingly, Barad's ideas became increasingly associated with apolitical, or sometimes even conservative, positions that would uphold the political-economic status quo, a position increasingly desired by academics operating under the funding pressures in the context of globalized neoliberal campus politics (Rekret, 2016). Some educational engagements with Barad

and Haraway have over-simplified relational ontologies to the point that they merely cynically reproduce status quo conventions of human exceptionalism, a notable example of which is the article “Slaughtering a Cow in Early Childhood Education” (Aslanian and Moxnes, 2021) where the authors use Barad’s theories to uncritically support slaughter practices as a tool for pedagogical engagement that more closely resembles indoctrination into the carnistic economy (Joy, 2020). In many quarters there has been a growing sense that structural oppression and violence against animals, as well as humans, could be side-stepped by simply adhering to the symphonic relational entanglement of all matter as critiqued by Nimmo (2015) and Lloro-Bidart (2018) who point out that relational ontologies are susceptible to appropriation that flattens power relations in ways that upholds the neoliberal status quo and anthropocentric hierarchies. In Donna Haraway’s vastly over-cited (not to mention misunderstood) phrase, all we had to do was “stay with the trouble” as if our only ethical obligation to the ongoing extinctionist project against animals and nature is that we bear witness (2016).

Critical animal studies (Francione, 2009; Twine, 2012) and critical animal pedagogy (Pedersen, 2010, 2019; Cole and Stewart, 2016) promotes an ethic of activism and advocacy dedicated to the emancipation of domesticated and farmed animals. Critical animal studies analyzes and critiques the speciesist (Nibert, 2002) power relations (brokered through capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy) through which humans dominate and slaughter animals. To confront these speciesist injustices, critical animal studies theorists advocate for a unified, global resistance to the systematized subjugation of animals for human purposes. In contrast, new feminist materialisms (Barad, 2003; 2007; Haraway, 2008, 2016; Tsing, 2014; 2015) challenge the notion of the autonomous human subject as a construction of liberal humanism, one they argue is embedded in critical, emancipatory projects (including critical animal studies).

Therefore, their work typically rejects most facets of critical theory due to its reliance on humanist methodologies and ontologies and propose materialized, embodied, and relational ontologies that decenter the human from its transcendent role as arbiter of universal objectivity and morality (Rekert, 2016). New feminist materialism unquestionably lacks the necessary critique of the systemic immiseration and destruction of animals. Nimmo (2015) argues that this critical abdication stems in part from the posthumanist (including new feminist materialist) commitment to embracing local and “situated” perspectives and knowledges while resisting totalizing transformational projects that they believe re-inscribe humanist understandings of the world. Instead, posthumanism promotes “a vision fuelled by humility as much as ethical conviction, and by a sense of modesty about humanity, rather than righteousness” (Nimmo, 2015, p. 194). However, Nimmo argues combined carefully, the two ontological positions may be “rendered complementary” to the extent that “they may be taken to refer to different objects” (p. 193). That is to say that critical animal studies seeks to transform our relations with animals while posthumanism seeks foremost to transform humanity’s relationship to itself. Both seek to challenge values of human exceptionalism but with the goal of achieving different ends. However, their complementarity lay in the fact that they both disrupt human exceptionalism and from an educational perspective the combination can be potent, especially if relational ontologies can be used to scaffold students toward more critical engagements. Once the narrative of the natural supremacy of the subject is disrupted, our domination of animals and nature becomes considerably more vulnerable to critique.

One such attempt to reconcile the ontological tensions between critical animal studies/pedagogies and posthumanist based relational ontologies is the critical posthumanist frame offered by Helena Pedersen in her article, “Release the Moths: Critical Animal Studies and

the Posthumanist Impulse” (2011). Here, Pedersen points to the affinities between critical animal studies and posthumanism while also addressing the points of departure. Both frames largely agree on the symptomology (i.e. anthropocentrism) but have very different approaches to how we confront the problem. Critical animal studies advances a more activist based approach drawing on its antecedents of animal liberation and critical pedagogy with an emphasis on addressing the source of the animal production/consumption model – the “animal industrial complex.” (Noske, 1989). Posthumanism, in contrast is skeptical of human intervention of any kind as it would threaten to re-inscribe the humanist paradigm with an emphasis on rights discourses, albeit of an animal variety. Pedersen suggests that these two frames require a kind of cross-contamination to re-invigorate the other. It is important to note here that Dr. Pedersen has since amended the position argued in “Release the Moths” and no longer believes that critical animal studies and posthumanism (including new feminist materialism) can be ethically reconciled (2019). However, I argue that critical animal studies requires a deeper interrogation of the humanist ontologies that inform its outlook while posthumanism requires more critical scrutiny and ethical clarity on the instrumentalization and destruction of animals for human purposes. One can stand against the human immiseration of animals without subscribing to the sanctity of the autonomous human subject and all of its vanity. The ethics of relational ontologies rests on a commitment to humility as an antidote to the excesses of human exceptionalism. The true humility would be to release animals from the misery to which they are assigned either through our active, or in the case of relational ontologies, a passive oppression. Another way must be possible.

There have been recent and ongoing signs of such cross-contamination between these divergent ontological frames namely in the form of a more critical shift within relational

ontologies. Eva Giraud's *What Comes After Entanglement* (2019) begins the process of problematizing the ethical limits of relational ontologies with primary emphasis on the now two decade long ossified commitment to witnessing without acting. She points to a future of growing alignment between critical approaches and relational ontologies in ways that would be mutually animating. That future alignment had already been underway in the works of relational ontologies' two leading voices, though much of it went unnoticed. In *Staying With the Trouble*, Donna Haraway invokes the work of philosopher and critical theorist Hannah Arendt when condemning the "all too ordinary urgencies onrushing multispecies extinctions, genocides, immiserations, and exterminations" of past, present and future obscured in plain sight/site (2016, p. 37). Along these lines, Haraway posits that our persistent neglect of precarious life (and death) in what Tsing calls the "capitalist ruins" reflects the thoughtless abdication of care that informs Arendt's synthesis of the "banality of evil" (Tsing, 2015; Arendt, 2006). For Haraway, the necessarily urgent ethic of thought and care can only be reclaimed through a care-full commitment to storying to reflect and reveal these wider assemblages and their more-than-human consequences.

In the 2010s, Barad's more recent work has become even more explicitly critical but, perhaps tellingly, significantly less cited. It is in these works, that Barad offers a more explicit articulation of her ethical ontologies, one increasingly devoted to concerns of social and interspecies justice against the ravages of anthropocentric ecological destruction. She has applied her diffractive methodologies to political economic critiques of neoliberal extinctionist practices and embraced Frankfurt School critical theorist Walter Benjamin and his commitment to "now time" to "explode the continuum of history" that forestalls a "revolutionary time" when confronting the emergencies of social and ecological injustice (2017, p. 22). Barad has been

engaging with the work of critical theorist Jacques Derrida with particular emphasis on his theorization of hauntology and how it complements her theories of entanglement and intra-activity on a temporal level (2010; 2014; 2018; 2019). Central to Derrida's hauntological theory (a broadening of ontology to engage with past and future as well as the present) is commitment to an inter-temporal conception of justice as he argues:

No justice... seems possible or thinkable without the principle of some responsibility, beyond all living present, within that which disjoins the living present, before the ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead, be they victims of wars, political or other kinds of violence, nationalist, racist, colonialist, sexist, or other kinds of exterminations, victims of the oppressions of capitalist imperialism or any of the forms of totalitarianism (xviii, 2010).

Derrida would broaden this commitment to inter-temporal justice to concerns with animals as well in *The Animal that Therefore I Am* (2008) that would, in turn, influence Barad's interspecies analysis (2012). Derrida's notion of hauntology, as well as Barad's materialist re-theorization of hauntology, offered a crucial frame to connect the textual and material domains and the ghostly impressions that are rendered through their intersections as I unpack in Chapter 3.

This intersection between Derridean critical/literary theory and relational ontologies animates my project, particularly for the article "Textual – Material – Animal Encounters." Just as Haraway and Barad challenged us to look beyond humancentric conceptions of material phenomena, Derrida's deconstructionist literary project challenged readers to re-evaluate the author-centric conception of literary studies. For Derrida, a work of literature (or any textual document) is comprised of constituent units, of which authorial intention is but one contributing piece (Spivak and Said, 1988). This is not to suggest that the author's intention is irrelevant but

that there are many more factors shaping a text's meaning and that often perceptions of authorial intention are inseparable from the interpretive ideologies of any given era being imposed onto the text (Derrida, 2016). Derrida argues that deconstructing these texts is essential work as they must be disentangled from the ossifying ideological projects that exploit them. For Derrida, these interpretive ideological projects have been deeply invested in maintaining Eurocentric, Western supremacist narratives that are perpetuated through education, particularly the humanist literary and philosophical educational project. Well before Derrida's official animal turn (2008), he had commented on how the humanist literary-philosophical project not only encoded cultural hierarchies that elevated Western culture above all others but also a species hierarchy that further cemented western notions of human exceptionalism (1978, p. 91-92). This theorization informed his cultural analysis of what he later termed "carnophallogocentrism" that linked the economic exploitation and consumption of animals with patriarchal and humanist frames of reason and literacy connected through the logic of instrumentalism (1995). In this way, Derrida's deconstructionist project supports critical animal studies by further articulating how deeply embedded human exceptionalism is in our cultural and education structures and his deconstructive frame offers the essential foundation for my "re-animalizing" analysis and interpretive reconceptualization of *Charlotte's Web* and *Animal Farm*.

Derrida's deconstructionist theories have long contributed to literary and ontological projects aimed at challenging or diversifying the canon away from what he termed "white man's mythology" (1982, 211). But the ultimate extension of this project requires an interspecies–intersectional approach that reconceptualizes literary education specifically, and onto-ethico-epistemology more broadly, away from the values of Western and human exceptionalism and toward a range of stories, cosmologies and ontologies that advance marginalized human

identities along with lives of animals. In Chapter 4, I unpack these legacies and their entangled consequences for animal as well as human exclusion, exploitation and oppression.

In Chapter 4, I discuss how Zakiyyah Jackson (2020) presents a powerful and persuasive argument that the fates of black bodies and animals are entangled under the ongoing legacies of Western colonial imperialism and a commitment to interspecies justice is required to fully confront anti-black racism. This argument resonates with Aph Ko's commitment to veganism as a means of challenging white supremacy (2019). Similarly, but not commensurately, Margaret Robinson (2014; 2015), Leanne Simpson (2014) Vanessa Watts (2020) and Kim Tallbear (2015; 2017) have argued that commitments to decolonization and indigenization can only be implemented through respectful engagement with land-based, interspecies cosmologies that pre-existed colonial intervention. Although this project commits to the reconceptualization of two of the most iconic educational literary texts of the 20th century, I acknowledge the ethical and conceptual debt relational ontologies has to Indigenous cosmologies and ways of knowing and that my ongoing project to reorient our pedagogical approaches to literacy and literature is in many ways, directly or indirectly, influenced by Indigenous knowledges and values.

1.6 Methodology

My methodological assemblage primarily includes literary analysis in Chapter 1, diffractive reading and participant observation in Chapter 2, and Derridean deconstruction and literary analysis in Chapter 3. In Chapter 2, diffractive reading and participant observation are combined with kinesthetic walking as method approaches in the field (Drew and MacAlpine 2020; Nelson and Hodgins 2020, Nelson and Drew, forthcoming; MacAlpine, 2021) adhering to Tsing's "arts of noticing" (2015). The purpose of combining Tsing's "arts of noticing" with walking as method in the field is to promote a deeper awareness of the entanglement between

humans, animals, and materiality and to acknowledge and understand the precarity inflicted on animal and natural life by human encroachment. I combined these methodologies with intensive re-reading of *Charlotte's Web* to re-imagine and re-story the text through the children's animal and material interactions in the forest. In this chapter I also draw on Derrida's notion of hauntology (2012) to shape these methodological approaches as we regularly encounter remnants of agricultural implements from the forest's earlier temporal incarnation as a farm. Here, the ghostly remnants of the former farm haunt our walks and offer spaces of engagement for the children to link the experiences of the farm animals in *Charlotte's Web* to the physical detritus that serve as the legacy of the farm (and the captive animals) that once existed in this space. The most arresting of these physical legacies being the collapsed barbed wire fence that serves as a reminder of the zones of animal containment (and by extension inevitable slaughter).

I combine Derridean deconstruction (1998) and diffractive reading/analysis (Barad, 2003; 2007) in my engagement with the literary texts and the theoretical perspectives shaping their interpretation and pedagogical application. Diffractive analysis/reading is distinguished from other reading methodologies in its resistance to dualisms and oppositions. That is rather than reading dialectically (whereby the Hegelian and Marxian shadow looms large) with thesis and antithesis colliding and yielding an ultimate synthesis, diffraction offers a "methodological practice of reading insights through one another" with the goal of generating new insights both beyond the theories as well as generating new ways of seeing the theories themselves (Barad, 2007; Mazzei, 2014). Critical pedagogy is often premised on the notion that its Marxian/Gramscian materialist ontological positioning offers objective insight and clarity on the question of power relations, oppression and exploitation while overlooking nuances, as well as

possibilities, that do not cohere to the theoretical rubric (Bennett, 2010; Van der Tuin, 2011). As established earlier, such devotional adherence to theoretical frames leads to blind spots (e.g., anthropocentrism) and the unintentional reproduction of colonial, white supremacist hierarchies that negate the possibilities of theoretical contamination. As Van der Tuin argues, “the diffractive method allows us to affirm links between seemingly opposite schools of thought, thus breaking through a politics of negation....(D)iffraction, then, is the strategy with which new concepts or traditions, new philosophies can be engendered” (2011, p. 27). My project draws on a wide range of interdisciplinary perspectives and epistemologies to address the deficit of more-than-human representation and encounters in curricular and classroom spaces. The process of multispecies (re)storying requires a multiplicity of theoretical and disciplinary frames in order to imagine new possibilities. According to Barad, traditional textual analysis is grounded in the method of reflection. Accordingly, the emphasis on reflection “reflects themes of mirroring and sameness” and is less likely to produce original and generative insights. Diffractive analysis, on the other hand, emphasizes “patterns of difference” using the metaphor of waves passing through each other rather than bouncing off the other and “spread differently than they would otherwise” (Barad, 2007, p. 71-72, 2007; Mazzei, 2014, p. 742). Barad’s notion of “intra-activity” is essential to this process as it emphasizes onto-epistemological continuity and relationality as opposed to dialectical or hierarchical separation and divergence.

In such fashion, Barad expands on Haraway’s notion of “situated knowledges” which challenges the Cartesian/Baconian enlightenment notion of an objective perspective that Haraway argues has characterized scientific research (Haraway, 1988). Similarly, Barad rejects the anthropocentric, human exceptionalist assumptions guiding the nature-culture boundaries embedded in Western onto-ethico-epistemologies and in doing so, “highlights the relationality

between discursive practices and materiality” (Geerts and van der Tuin, 2016, p. 7).

Accordingly, diffractive analysis helps us foster new readings and interpretations that move beyond fixed and hegemonically prescribed representational and reflective domains to propel us into new worlds, experiences and perspectives that would otherwise be lost, contained, or silenced from us. Barad describes this process of diffractive knowing as “a matter of one part of the world making itself known to another part of the world” (Barad, 2007, p. 185).

Consequently, the diffractive process “produces an emergent and unpredictable series of readings as data and theory make themselves intelligible to each other” (Mazzie 2014, p. 743).

Diffractive analysis allows me the essential method to interrogate entrenched anthropocentric and human supremacist onto-ethic-epistemologies embedded within ELA curriculum and to challenge the nature-culture boundaries that uphold these values. The diffractive process is ideally situated to advance my project of (re)connecting the realms of nature and culture in the educational context so that these worlds can mutually shape our knowledge of the more-than-human, and in so doing reveal deeper insights about ourselves. In this way, diffractive analysis challenges me to engage the multitudinous and generative possibilities that may otherwise be contained by more traditional analytic frames. This project requires new ways of seeing, being and knowing our curricular-pedagogical relations to the more-than-human world and diffractive analysis offers the most generative method of concocting new spaces for “speculative (multispecies) fabulations” (Haraway, 2008). The diffractive method’s emphasis on the co-constituting intra-activity between the discursive and material spheres promotes greater possibilities that a more inclusive, relational discourse (i.e. curriculum and pedagogy) could hold on the material, embodied lives of animals, the state of the current

ecological (im)balance and our own long term wellbeing as members of an interconnected ecosystem.

Derridean deconstruction complements diffractive analysis in the way it promotes “pluridimensional” approaches to reading and writing. Accordingly, deconstruction promotes new ways of reading that challenge recalcitrant ideological and ontological values embedded in the texts. I employ deconstructive readings to unlock new animalized readings of *Charlotte’s Web* and *Animal Farm* (with extensions to other teachable texts) to promote new possibilities for pedagogical applications beyond the anthropocentric. Derridean deconstruction dovetails with diffractive readings when combining various frames of theoretical analysis to texts as well as (re)framing them for pedagogical purposes. For instance, Derrida’s deconstructive interrogation of the Western humanist legacies informing the canons of literature and philosophy brings to the surface the various agendas informing authoritative textual interpretation that were previously invisible or naturalized. Like diffractive analysis, Derridean deconstruction resists the authoritative impulse to impose interpretive frames but to allow the constituent parts (including the reader’s perspective) of the text to reveal the meaning(s) all the while understanding that interpretations (i.e., meaning) are subject to shifts depending on the context. This is not an argument for relativism but rather one that is attuned to the complexity and vitality of the text and its interplay between subjectivities, cultures, and temporal contexts.

1.7 Methods and Data Collection

For Chapter 2, I undertook fieldwork beginning in September 2017 at the west London ECE, one of three centres selected for the international Climate Change and Animals Pedagogies network research of the Common Worlds collective. Over the 30 months during which we conducted research, we -- along with the educators and children at the centre -- witnessed a

dramatic topographical transformation of the space surrounding the centre and the primary school housing it.

The week of March 9-13, 2020, was a week-long intensive engagement at the centre. We began by considering the theoretical implications of Coronavirus as harbinger of the peril of human encroachment into animal domains and spaces. By mid-week, one of the researchers assigned to work with me in the pre-school literacy-material-animal research project for *Charlotte's Web* had become noticeably ill and was absent Wednesday, March 11. This was the day the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. The ominous Friday, March 13th, 2020, was the final on-site engagement with the centre (at least for this iteration of our project) because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tensions had begun to emerge with the participating pre-school educators. The tensions were not directly related to the emerging COVID crisis but undoubtedly the heightened anxiety was not beneficial. The educators were becoming uncomfortable with my pedagogical and curricular commitment to intentional, repetitive, and consistent focus on *Charlotte's Web* and related extensions. They felt they were imposing this curriculum on the children and not giving them space to engage in activities of their choice. The ECE director was very supportive of our program and attempted to persuade the educators that their ECE program was committed to our intentional pedagogical methods as well as the more-than-human commitments of the larger research project, and that the children seemed engaged with the pedagogical and curricular approaches. Ultimately, we agreed to a less intensive focus for the last couple of days as the project was almost at an end. By the time we reached Friday the 13th, the atmosphere of the school had begun to assume a subtle sense of apocalyptic concern. Stories, and accompanying pictures, of massive supermarket lines and empty shelves were being shared among researchers

and educators. There was word that schools could be closed for the following week. When we concluded for the day, we had no sense of how profoundly our lives were about to change for the next several months, if not years. What I and my colleagues did leave knowing was that the trends and phenomena of human encroachment and species and natural depletion we witnessed and experienced over the course of our research engagements at the centre encapsulated much of the symptomology informing the crisis we now find ourselves facing in a zoonotic pandemic.

The data generated from my fieldwork engaging with text, animals, nature, and materiality were recorded through diverse methods including photography, video, field notes, pedagogical documentation, and student sketches (both in classroom and in the forest). Consistent with common worlding methodologies, developed by Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw and Affrica Taylor, this project engaged researchers, educators, and children into forms of collaborative reflection and expression using performative, textual, and arts-based methods (Kind 2016; Pink 2013). These methods were utilized with the goal of activating and attuning our minds, senses, and imaginations to the “polyphonic assemblages” of the animal and material world around us and investing in a cross-contamination between the discursive and the material spheres by connecting animal stories inside the classroom to the nature and animals in the material world outside of the classroom (Tsing 2015, p. 23). The children are encouraged to draw reflect and draw connections between the text (namely *Charlotte’s Web*) and the exterior phenomena and material artifacts that they encounter.

The entire pre-school class was dedicated to the curricular goals developed for the *Charlotte’s Web* novel study. There were 14 children in the preschool class and six of these children had been directly involved as participants in the project. We followed Western University protocols to obtain consent from the families and assent from the children (see

Appendix A-E). The children's parents signed consent forms detailing the goals of our project, ethical commitments, research documentation, curricular objectives, and pedagogical strategies. Children were regularly consulted and made aware that they could opt out of our project: "(e)ven if you consent for your child to participate, he/she has the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. If your child chooses not to participate or you choose to withdraw your child from the study at any time it will have no effect on your child's care and education" (Appendix A). I adhered to this commitment throughout by ensuring the children wished to continue in the project. They were asked before each pedagogical engagement if they wished to participate or decline. Occasionally, a child opted out of the lesson because they chose another activity, but this was rare.

Their primary ethical dilemma encountered was issue of leading the children through the forest and disrupting the lives of the animals around us. The ECE had already been committed to forest walks before the arrival of our research group. We decided that we could help cultivate a culture of careful and respectful engagement with these spaces and the animals we encountered within. We addressed this dilemma directly with the educators and informed the children that our presence was generally unwelcomed by animals and that we must do our best to avoid direct contact with them. Many of the children came to understand that the forest was a vanishing space and that the animals were correspondingly threatened by the rapid housing expansion and this generated a sympathetic response and a desire among many to be as gentle as possible in our forest walks.

As participants, the children's responses would be documented through our ongoing research (my project was part of the larger Climate Action Network – Exploring Climate

Change and Pedagogies with Children). The parents were informed that these forms of research documentation would include the following:

- incorporate ideas generated through the project into his/her daily practices for further observation and interpretation.
- display some of the information collected and the ongoing analyses in your classroom.
- communicate the ongoing analyses through regular updates via your classroom's newsletter so you are aware of the activities in which your child is participating as well as the learning that takes place in everyday practices at the centre.
- disseminate the findings in articles in professional magazines, and at conference presentations.
- contribute entries to the project website blog and professional social media accounts.
- Through an art exhibit.
- In publications and presentations, for example in books, chapters, articles in refereed and professional journals, academic and professional conferences, white papers.
- In masters or doctoral theses.

Participating children's identities are kept confidential – to the best of our abilities. The consent form emphasized the following conditions:

Any photographs and/or video recordings to be shared on the project website and through professional social media accounts (e.g., Twitter) might have partial images of children e.g., hands visible, feet visible) but will NOT have images of children that are recognizable (i.e., no faces will be visible). We acknowledge the importance of your child's privacy, but are not able to assure absolute confidentiality. As with any person working with children, we are bounded by the

professional and legal obligations of duty to report. The researcher will keep any personal information about your child in a secure and confidential location for a minimum of 5 years. A list linking your child's study number with his/her name will be kept by the researcher in a secure place, separate from his/her study file (CAN Letter of Information and Consent, p. 4-5).

Additional confidentiality conditions include making sure any identifying information is stored securely. In the event of research publication, the participating child's name will not be used but researchers may use the child's personal quotes in their dissemination of the project. Finally, both pre-school educators had consented to serve as participants in the study and committed to undertaking the novel study curriculum and pedagogical extensions.

The field work was conducted over a period of six months between October 2019 and March 2020. The most intensive period of the project (the *Charlotte's Web* novel study) was conducted from January to mid-March 2020 with the full intensive week where the class focused exclusively on the novel study and forest walks being conducted in the final week of this period. In January, the educators introduced *Charlotte's Web* to the class. We began integrating discussion of the book's events, characters, imagery and setting into our forest encounters. The children became interested in particular events and characters from the book and would notice analogues of these representations in the forest. During the one week intensive we extended these connections by developing curriculum linking the reading project with the place-based forest encounters. The children were encouraged to engage directly in representation by sketching, drawing, painting, and engaging with writing practices of their own. The focus of these creative practices was to have the children become participants in world creation and to link the word/world construction of the book to their encounters with the world beyond.

Accordingly, I engage the educators to re-imagine or “speculatively fabulate” (Haraway, 2008) a new “animalized” approach to curriculum and pedagogy. To this end, my project enlists Donna Haraway’s concept of “worldings” or the co-construction of worlds (2008) (along with speculative fabulations) to engage observationally and imaginatively in ways that encourage the children to materialize and perform the text (i.e., *Charlotte’s Web*) while also textualizing our material encounters through print, etching and design guided by the textual-material pedagogies developed by Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor (2019). The goal of this animal-textual-material work is to re-imagine possibilities for multispecies inclusive educational narratives and texts, with the hope of promoting animal and land-based curricular and pedagogical possibilities that circumvent normative human exceptionalist frames long embedded in the curriculum as well as pedagogical research and practice.

For this purpose, my project draws on Ursula K. LeGuin’s essay “Some Thoughts on Narrative” within which she argues that as members of modern Western society we are beholden to capitalist/positivist ontologies and consequently we have been “terrorized...into being rational.” (40, 1989). This tyranny of rationality limits us imaginatively as it presupposes a world of singularity and linearity and prescribes a vertically detached (top-down) imposition of rational interpretation, or what Haraway calls the “god trick” (1991, 185). Such positioning encourages us to rationalize and accept the interspecies hierarchies that contribute to the carelessness and thoughtlessness that normalizes erasures and extinctions. In this way, Le Guin’s critique of the “tyranny of the rational” corresponds closely with Haraway’s invocation of Arendt’s “banality of evil” as both concepts reflect converging deficits of imagination and empathy. To counter the vise-like hold of the rational-indicative mode one needs to embrace subjunctive narrative voice. The subjunctive voice challenges the prescribed rational boundaries

that structure our reality and relation to the world and engages with the edges of things that are otherwise invisible. It is the openness, thoughtfulness and carefulness of the subjunctive mode that informs our observational and narrative engagements with the ruins of the forest and the legacies of containment shrouded within. This is not to invalidate rationality but to critically analyse what constitutes rationality and to promote more nuanced and less hierarchically (and anthropocentrically) prescribed concepts of our world that have (and continue to be) harmful to animals, nature and marginalized people.

Le Guin's approach to re-vitalizing the world and relations around us by re-imagining and re-framing it beyond hegemonically prescribed boundaries bears some affinity to Derrida's deconstructionism in the way they are committed to re-evaluating the status quo. Le Guin's approach is of course aesthetic and speculative while Derrida's is philosophical and interrogative, but both are united in their agreement that these are all manifestations of discursive-narrative constructions that require us to "read and write differently" (Derrida, 1998). Accordingly, my deconstructionist textual method for *Charlotte's Web* and *Animal Farm* is structured as follows:

- I read the texts *descriptively*, documenting and mapping animal dimensions in character, plot, and story.
- Next, I deconstruct the allegorical and symbolical interpretations of the texts in conjunction with the pertinent secondary sources that have influenced the anthropocentric interpretations in order to illuminate the ontological, cultural, and ideological frames that privilege these anthropo-allegorical interpretations that effectively erase animal representations in their very presence.

- I then revisit the texts and interpret them *beyond the anthropo-allegorical* interpretive frames and identify specific plot elements, themes, and characterizations and promote these previously obscured or discarded animal dimensions of the book.
- Finally, I identify complementary opportunities for the texts to circumvent embedded values of human exceptionalism to deepen students' empathy toward animal others and understanding of the consequences of animal oppression and exploitation.

This process allows me to identify and critique the imposed anthropocentric frames that implicitly invalidate animal presence in stories that are explicitly animal focused. With this embedded anthropocentrism animal exposed and confronted and problematized, I am able to propose animalized readings of the texts that bring ethical animal issues to the surface of the text so that they may be better deployed pedagogically.

My data is drawn from a combination of textual analysis and the examination of the records gathered from the on-site field research, including photography, video, field notes, pedagogical documentation, and student drawings. Additionally, interviews and discussions with educators, parents and administrators have been documented and integrated into the analysis for Chapters 1 and 2. The data for Chapter 3 is drawn from educational documents and resources and deconstructive textual analysis of *Animal Farm* and dominant literary theoretical and pedagogical models as well as diffractive analysis of theoretical and philosophical frames informing the cultural and educational reception and pedagogical deployment of *Animal Farm*. The data from Chapters 1 and 2 are also partially analysed through these methods.

1.8 Significance

I offer both theoretical and practical contributions to advance animalized and materialized approaches to reading beyond the human. The ongoing posthumanist-materiality and more-than-human-turn in academic (and increasingly mainstream) discourse has received largely muted response from the mainstream of educational and research theory. Although vital scholarly contributions have been made (Kahn, 2009; Pedersen, 2010; Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor, 2015; Snazu and Weaver, 2015; Cole and Stewart, 2016; Kuby, Spector and Thiel, 2019), in practice, literary education functions to reproduce anthropocentrism and ways to challenge the ongoing practice of animal exclusion or erasure in ELA education. This turn has challenged the human-centric ontology at the core of Western scholarship and education and in its place has emphasized a broader, intersectional framework recognizing the connectedness and interdependency of humans and animals, and our shared natural environments (Shukin, 2009; Van Dooren, 2014; Tsing, 2015). This project contributes to addressing this lag while also confronting the long standing and ingrained legacies of human exceptionalism pervading literary education through the conduit of the humanist tradition and its manifest values. Humanism cultivates a specifically Western settler-colonial form of subjectivity, while literature and literary/literacy education has been the primary vehicle perpetuating this privileged form of subjectivity (Derrida, 1998; Lyotard, 2002; Snazu, 2013). In addition to establishing a cultural hierarchy with Western culture placed at the top, humanism is upheld by enforcing a clear species hierarchy and the twin, mutually reinforcing enterprises literacy and literature have been enlisted to uphold this hierarchy in a cultural project Robert McKay refers to as “compulsory humanity” (2005). To propose new animal and material directions, we must first confront the legacies that inform the anthropocentrism that pervades the humanist-infused traditions that animate our educational curricula.

The articles will be guided ethically and ontologically by the understanding that we “are in an interdependent relationship with the world that we come to know through intra-activity within the material-discursive embodied realities we live in and with, and that we are in a process of ‘becoming-with’” our multitudinous human and more-than-human surroundings (Lenz Taguchi, 2010, 40; Haraway, 2008: 4). Accordingly, the relational intra-activity between story and materiality will be emphasized with an emphasis on (re)storying conventional relationships to animals and the natural world around us by engaging in the process of “speculative fabulation” to generate and re-imagine new possibilities through this commitment to “situated knowledges” and perspectives (Haraway, 2008; 1991).

At the same time, a critical engagement with animal lives is required. We need a structural understanding of the assemblage of factors informing the actual animal subjugation, immiseration and slaughter and the way such atrocities are normalized and validated through the cultural, and indeed educational debasement and/or erasure of animals. We can see that with Barad’s recent engagement with Benjamin (2017), her ongoing ruminations on Derridean notions of hauntology and hospitality (2011; 2014; 2019), and the influence that Judith Butler has had on her theories (2003) that critical and discursive frames have been and continue to be integrated into Barad’s ethico-onto-epistemologies. Giraud has explicitly argued for a critical infusion into relational ontologies (2019) and this project promotes a similar alignment between the two frames that mutually accommodates their complementary as well as distinctive ontological approaches.

Crucially, my dissertation is also designed to generate practical contributions. As a result of my close engagement with the texts, I will be able to offer teachers specific applicable insights and examples to allow them to engage differently with existing canonical texts in order to

cultivate deeper animal empathy and provide ideas for incorporating new animalized readings to foster student engagement beyond the anthropocentric and anthro-po-allegorical. This project considers ways that educators can engage multi-modally, materially, experientially and intersectionally, within current curricular frames, to foster students' imaginative and empathetic capacities beyond the anthropocentric.

Finally, the lives of animals require empathy, consideration, and concern of and for themselves. The goal of this project is to reframe literary education so that it becomes more inclusive of animal subjectivity, experience, and discussions of related animal ethical issues. As with earlier projects to diversify the canon and to generate ethical and moral concerns with exclusions of marginalized people, this project aims to promote greater awareness and empathetic engagement with the suffering of animals (Gruen, 2015). Greater inclusivity of animals and their exploitation in literary education brings it in line with the cultural shifts that have been underway for some time that is increasingly resonant for younger people who are engaging more critically with products that require the consumption of animals (Marsh, 2016; Monahan, 2020). Many more parents are interested in educational initiatives that promote greater animal welfare. When my *Charlotte's Web* pedagogical plan was shared by the education centre with the parents of the participating children there was no resistance. Some vegan/vegetarian parents expressed particular support for emphasizing Wilbur's resistance to being codified as a killable food resource by the agricultural economy. Others expressed interest in promoting animal agency and subjectivity in literature to help us understand our entangled relations with animals with regard to issues of ecological sustainability in the face of our climate emergency. There is ever growing concern with the effects of climate change on wild-life and an increasing understanding of how the dystopian project of the animal industrial complex (Noske, 1997) is a

leading cause of the climate disaster (Bristow, 2011; McMahon, 2019). Bringing concerns of animal agency, subjectivity, and welfare into the literary education further validates these issues and generates deeper understanding of the entangled relations between humans, animals and the fragile balance of the ecosystem we share.

Given my focus on different educational levels, my dissertation is comprised of an integrated set of three research articles. The second article “Re-animalizing *Animal Farm*: Challenging the “Anthropo-allegorical” in Literary and Pedagogical Discourse and Practice” has been accepted for publication *Humanimalia* .

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Webs of Empathy: Animal Subjectivities and the Teaching of *Charlotte's Web*

This paper has two overarching purposes. The first is to examine some of the cultural impediments that limit direct engagement with animals in literary education. The second is to propose possibilities to circumvent these constraints and foster interspecies empathy through literary teaching and learning. To these ends, I concentrate on E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*. Conventional approaches to teaching this book reproduce an anthropocentric framework and specifically what I call an anthro-allegorical lens. Such readings and teaching strategies position animals simply as allegories for more serious and sophisticated human issues. However, I posit that *Charlotte's Web* can be differently conceptualized and enlisted by educators in order to recognize animal subjectivities, engage more authentically with the text and the real issues it confronts, and to invite students to grapple with animals' lives and deaths, as they develop intellectually and ethically.

This paper has two purposes. The first is to introduce some of the cultural impediments that prevent or suppress direct engagement with animals in literary educational spaces. The second is to propose possibilities to circumvent these constraints in pursuit of more ethically engaged education.

There are numerous animal-themed books used for literary education and many of them are enduring classics. In the teaching of animal-themed texts such as *Charlotte's Web*, *Animal Farm*, and *Watership Down*, the animal concerns at the surface of the text are subdued in favour of a supposedly more important human subtext that lies beneath the narrative surface. Here I will concentrate on E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* and unpack the barriers to and possibilities for fostering interspecies empathy. Indeed, conventional readings and teachings of *Charlotte's Web* paradoxically omit the experiences of animals despite it being an ostensibly animal-centered book, thereby contributing to the de-valuing of animals in educational and by extension broader social discourse; specifically, their erasure in plain sight. Yet, I posit that *Charlotte's Web* can be differently conceptualized and enlisted by educators. The book can be understood as not only illuminating animal subjectivities and relations, but also as challenging the carnophallagocentric (Derrida, 1991) culture within the story's world – a disruptive, denaturalizing dynamic that could

extend into the broader world of the reader. Accordingly, I propose possibilities for re-animalizing *Charlotte's Web* to guide readers and educators beyond the anthropocentric and to invite them to grapple with animals' lives and deaths as they develop intellectually and ethically.

Pigs in Context

Before delving into the specifics, it is important to contextualize this analysis – and pigs – conceptually, culturally, and socioeconomically. Pigs have long been incorrectly associated with filth and squalor. In the contemporary agri-industrial economy, pigs occupy an unenviable space. In much of the global north, they are largely kept out of sight inside factory farms in gestation crates and other forms of intensive confinement within which they can stand up and lie down, but not turn around or move for much of their short lives. When they are temporarily ‘visible,’ they are packed densely into poorly ventilated truck trailers as they are moved to slaughterhouses. Yet there is some growing interest in pigs and their advanced cognitive capacities. Recognition of their intelligence may be why they are often represented in children’s stories and entertainment. Regardless, their symbolic presence is refracted perversely in their real-world existence, where the cruelty of their living (and slaughter) conditions are intensified by their cognitive abilities.

Of course, such contradictory dynamics are not reserved for pigs. A variety of other agricultural animals often figure in the cultural imaginary provided for children and youth, notably horses. But pigs are undoubtedly prevalent. From the Three Little Pigs to *Babe*, from Porky Pig to Miss Piggy and, as we shall examine, from Wilbur to Esther, our ambivalence toward pigs is revealed in many popular texts and cultural artifacts.

So why does a carnistic culture (Joy, 2020) choose to symbolically re-animate, as it were, the vanquished victims of the “animal industrial complex” (Noske, 1989). Nicole Shukin uses a

symbolic economic analysis to contrast the physical rendering of animals with their symbolic rendering, namely the cute anthropomorphized, simulated animals decorating popular culture. She argues that these two phenomena are mutually reinforcing as our culture's "disneyfied avatars" offer a spectral alibi that works to obfuscate the system's physical rendering of animals (Shukin, 2009). In other words, we decorate our surface culture with endless spectral animal "carcasses" devoid of animal souls, infused instead with synthetic human voices, precisely as real animal bodies are used to serve our economic goals.

I suggest that hegemonic literary education prepares us to instrumentalize (most) animals by teaching young people that the animals have value only in so far as they can reflect anthropocentric concerns back to us. This exploitative and exclusionary logic is embedded in Western educational practices, contributing to an educational silencing of animals (Pedersen, 2010). This means that animals may be present --physically in the biology lab or representationally as characters in the numerous stories, films and books decorating students' classroom – but that they are invariably reduced to the status of manipulable objects and drained of any authentic subjectivity.

Helena Pedersen argues that ideological messaging combined in official and hidden curricula works actively to codify boundaries between human and animal interests while also serving to "sustain and reinforce the incorporation of animals into capitalist-specific modes of production and consumption" (Pedersen, 2010, p. 242)

Given these dynamics, it remains peculiar that so many of our educational texts would depict – and often anthropomorphize - animals destined for slaughter and human consumption. Some scholars (Desmond, 1995; Crist 2000) argue that an anthropomorphized treatment of animals has contributed to the erasure of authentic animal experiences. However, it could also

be argued that these anthropomorphic treatments offer animals something they are desperately missing: a voice through which to communicate their experience, albeit an artificial and imperfect one.

From my experience teaching such texts to both elementary and secondary students, the process of reading animals as symbolic abstractions is not what students do first. Such abstract interpretations require the imposition of hermeneutic frames that must be pedagogically instilled in students and modelled by teachers. Such hermeneutic frames could be seen as an aesthetic/pedagogical complement to Thompson's "ideological blinders" (1963). The cultural and ideological factors informing how we 'read' animals in literary education involve what I call the anthroo-allegorical frame. That is to say, that young people are guided to read animals as symbolic avatars and animal stories as allegory for human experience – the allegorical and symbolic frames are presented as the *sophisticated* way to address animals in literature. Animals are thereby subordinated, even deleted, from their own stories allowing scholars and educators to conveniently sidestep troubling animal experiences. Susan McHugh refers to this effective silencing of animals in plain representational sight "as the disappearing animal trick...now you see the animal in the text, now you don't" (McHugh, 2011, p. 42).

Such anthropocentric attitudes are reflected in pedagogical approaches to *Charlotte's Web*. For many teachers, grappling with the complex subject of death when transposed onto animal stand-ins may be less risky than confronting farmed animals and food systems. A recent episode of the acclaimed HBO series *Big Little Lies* satirizes such a conflict, but one highlighting the environmental entanglements of industrial agriculture more than animal subjectivities. In the episode, a second-grade teacher at an affluent California school is using *Charlotte's Web* as a pedagogical tool for teaching about climate change. One student's anxiety prompts her to pass

out, ultimately summoning the wrath of the child's mother who proceeds to attack the school's climate change program. It is later revealed that the fainting child's anxiety attack was brought on as much by her parents' extensive personal and financial problems as it was by apocalyptic fears. But, interestingly, the teacher's question to the children, "why does Charlotte not want Wilbur to be eaten?" elicits the canned response: "sus-stain-a-bil-i-ty." The children then recite the amount of water consumption used to produce a single pound of sausage. Yet even here, the value of Wilbur's life and his perspectives are not addressed.

Notably, the scene has become fodder in the American culture wars and has sparked a range of reactionary op-ed and blog pieces castigating the "hippie-dippie" perversion of the novel's values of friendship and personal sacrifice in favour of "leftist educational propaganda." However, I suggest that such reactionary perspectives offer a deeper truth, just not in the way those espousing such reactionary criticisms assume. *Charlotte's Web's* greatest power rests in its capacity to inspire "empathetic engagement" with Wilbur's unjust positioning within the agricultural economy and the power of friendship and personal sacrifice to confront the logic and morality of this system.

Where's Wilbur?

E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* has, in equal measure, delighted and perturbed generations of children since its publication in 1952. Indeed, scholars (Griffith, 1980; Kinghorn, 1986; Devereaux, 1997) have argued that the book offers children a means of confronting the realities of temporality, change, and most compellingly, death. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of literary scholarship devoted to *Charlotte's Web* emphasizes its pedagogical role in preparing children for a decidedly anthropocentric perspective on death. To contemporary animal studies scholars, it will seem troubling to distil a book directly confronting the brutality of animal

slaughter into an allegory for the inevitability of human aging. But until recent incursions of animal studies and posthumanism into literary scholarship, an ethico-ontological hermeneutic, that Robert McKay calls “compulsory humanity,” has dominated our interpretive frameworks (2005). Borrowing from Judith Butler’s notion of compulsory heterosexuality, McKay convincingly argues that animals have been radically excluded from literary theory and pedagogy, even when addressing works in which they occupy considerable presence.

Indeed, as noted, by building on McKay’s analysis, I propose the term *anthropo-allegorical* to capture the specific ways that animals are normally constructed in literary education. Symbolism, metaphor, and allegory become devices enlisted to erase animal presence. For texts like *Charlotte’s Web*, the normalized use of an anthropo-allegorical lens allows scholars and teachers to sidestep the sticky animal issues in favour of a cleaner, anthropocentric lens. The animals are not animals; they are allegories. Consequently, to enlist Susan McHugh, Wilbur’s experience in *Charlotte’s Web* thus reflects the disappearing pig trick: now you see him, now you don’t. Crucially, his primal plea (“I don’t *want* to die”) to avoid the farmer’s blade and dinner table are also evaded.

In 1948, E.B. White wrote an essay based on his personal experiences called “Death of a Pig” that would ultimately inspire *Charlotte’s Web*. The essay recounts White’s mid-life goal to retreat from the city to become a “gentleman farmer” and the personal conflict he faces in his role as butcher. When his pig becomes ill with erysipelas, White vainly endeavors to nurse the pig back to health but is struck by the emotional bond he develops with an animal he was supposed to have killed anyway (White, 1948). In a subsequent essay entitled “Pigs and Spiders”, White interrogates the farmer/animal relationship more incisively arguing that the farm poses a “peculiar problem” for animal lovers as the “fate of most livestock is that they are

murdered by their benefactors. The creatures may live serenely but they end violently and the odor of doom hangs about them always” (White, 1953). It is noteworthy that animal slaughter is similarly referred to as murder in *Charlotte’s Web* when the old sheep first reveals to Wilbur the fate that awaits him, stating “almost all young pigs get murdered by the farmer as soon as the real cold weather sets in. There’s a regular conspiracy to kill you at Christmastime” (49). One would be hard pressed to find a stronger declaration that “meat is murder” than this proclamation in one of the most widely read children’s books in history. According to Amy Ratelle, White’s essays reflect his personal struggle to “redress the wrong he feels he is doing to a trusting fellow creature provides a direct impetus for creating Wilbur.” In doing so, White offers himself “...a pig that he gets to save by granting him a unique subjectivity, thus removing Wilbur from what Derrida calls the “carnophallogocentric” paradigm of Western meat consumption” (Ratelle, 2014). Derrida (among other scholars, particularly material ecofeminists) argues that meat consumption, patriarchy and capitalism are entwined together and mutually reinforcing.

Fern, the story’s ostensible protagonist, stands in for White, and like-minded animal sympathizers, challenging the carnophallogocentric logic somewhat. In this respect, it is significant that Fern is a girl. Her older brother, Avery, is less intelligent than Fern and deeply invested in reproducing the carnophallogocentrism by persistently engaging in the hunting and capturing of animals. He is also notably less empathetic. When Fern intervenes in her father’s intended slaughter of the runt pig that will become “Wilbur”, she empathizes viscerally by putting herself in the pig’s position, declaring the act to be “Unfair...the pig couldn’t help being born small could it? If I had been born very small at birth would you have killed me?” (White, 1980, p. 3). In doing so, she is disrupting the accepted hierarchical order of things that ranks humans above animals, men above women and adults over children. She could just as easily be

pointing out that Wilbur had no choice in being born a pig, or herself being born a human, for that matter. Fern's intervention contests the legitimacy of normalized inequities in the system by positing the potential interchangeability of the objects subordinated within its hierarchy (i.e. children, girls, and animals). Her father promptly rejects this conflation stating "Certainly not....This is different. A little girl is one thing, a little runty pig is another." Fern responds with: "I see no difference....This is the most terrible case of injustice I've ever hear of" (White, 1980, p. 3). By invoking the concept of justice, Fern seems to be elevating the stakes beyond the immediate and interpersonal realm to the larger ethico-social domain. Ultimately, it is this appeal that prompts her father to yield the pig's fate to her hands. Under Fern's care, the pig is subjectivized as Wilbur. He is offered respite from the objectified status of meat animal and cared for as a fellow sentient creature. This is powerful pedagogical material to engage students' animal empathy and to consider the ethics of Fern's position versus that of her father.

Still, once Wilbur grows too big for Fern to care for, her father re-asserts the dominant, carno-phallogocentric paradigm by suggesting she sell Wilbur to her uncle's farm. Fern, innocent of Wilbur's ultimate fate, reluctantly agrees and sells him for six dollars but promises to visit him regularly. Thus, Wilbur is thrust back into the meat economy. Gradually, Fern's attachment to Wilbur wains. Wilbur soon learns that he can not always count on Fern for emotional support and though she saved him once, she is powerless to protect him from Farmer Zuckerman's blade when the time comes. He is reduced to what Agamben calls the "bare life" (Murray, 2010, p. 11) status of killable resource and the horror of this realization registers viscerally.

Many literary scholars (Coates, 2004; Yu, 2016) have argued that Wilbur's presence serves merely as a metaphor for Fern's developmental progress. Yu has gone so far to argue that

Charlotte's Web conforms to the wider tradition of “talking animals and their relations with human child characters to express the idea of children-as-animals” (2016, p. 145) He argues that Fern is “forced to save her animal by speaking in Charlotte’s voice” (p. 142). However, this argument doesn’t account for Fern’s growing ambivalence toward Wilbur which culminates in apparent disinterest in Wilbur’s triumph by the novel’s conclusion. When all of the other human characters are at last engaged with Wilbur and his blue-ribbon success Fern is off riding the Ferris wheel with Henry.

Re-animalizing Wilbur

Given what we know of White’s experiences with animals from “Death of a Pig” and “Pigs and Spiders” we might consider Fern’s ultimate withdrawal from Wilbur to be in fact a broader indictment of the social pressures inflicted on children to wean themselves off their animal attachments in order to become fully integrated into the adult order. Indeed, a telling exchange occurs in the middle of the book when Fern’s mother visits the family doctor to relay her concerns about her daughter’s animal attachment. Mrs. Arable informs the doctor that Fern is talking to animals and asks him if he believes animals can talk. The doctor responds “I never heard one say anything...But that proves nothing. It is quite possible that an animal has spoken civilly to me and that I didn’t catch the remark because I wasn’t paying attention. Children pay better attention than grownups. Perhaps if people talked less, animals would talk more” (White, 1980, p. 110). The doctor’s perspective reflects a non-conformist attitude towards the place of animals and their broader treatment by humans, one preceding the growing interest in other species’ voices and agency in the field of animal studies.¹ Although subtle, the doctor’s statement offers a fairly incisive critique of humanity failing in its duty to recognize the

¹ In *Winnie the Pooh*, E. E. Milne also said “Some people talk to animals. Not many listen though. That’s the problem.”

sentience of our fellow creatures. There is the sense of the Lacanian *real* pervading the Doctor's assessment of the animal realm, one that is ironically silenced by the human imposition of the symbolic order of language. Fittingly, the language barrier separating the human and animal discourse is closed only on the human end and is only temporarily breached by Fern.

As noted, Fern's intervention to save Wilbur is only partially successful. Once he grows, he is sold to Zuckerman's farm where Wilbur's life will not be valued. It is finally left to a member of the arachnid species, Charlotte, to save Wilbur from the blade. Upon Wilbur's arrival at Zuckerman's farm, he is immediately confronted with the desolation of the space and the loneliness he feels without Fern's companionship. He is initially shunned by the other animals, specifically by the sheep, and Wilbur is oblivious to the fact he has returned to the status of consumable resource. Charlotte sees the wonder, sadness, and capacity for joy in Wilbur's heart and becomes the friend he desperately needs. Initially, Wilbur is repulsed by Charlotte's predatory feeding habits, being that she must trap, kill and eat flies and other insects for her own sustenance. Charlotte explains that trapping and killing insects is the way spider's have fed themselves since the first spider got the idea. It is a strangely social interpretation of her species' biologically essential feeding habits. When Charlotte later reveals that she offers the flies "an anesthetic so they won't feel pain" as a "little service (she) throws in" it suggests an imperfect, but well intentioned "empathetic engagement" with her prey, one that can be learned (White, 1980, p. 48).

This attempt to mitigate the pain of others then informs Charlotte's attempt to intervene on Wilbur's behalf to spare him from becoming a consumable food animal himself. To this end, Charlotte employs a savvy, public relations "web-based" campaign to save Wilbur's life. Writing with a literal web, Charlotte's message must be pithy. The resulting "web-based"

declarations, beginning with “some pig” resemble the condensed, if somewhat impoverished, linguistic economy pervading current social media platforms. Charlotte weaves her web to proclaim the distinctiveness of Wilbur.

Griffiths has argued that the simplicity of Charlotte’s messaging reveals the superficiality of Wilbur’s value, and by extension, the value of other farm animals within White’s narrative. Why not declare “friend not food” or “meat is murder” to better communicate Charlotte’s plight? (Griffith, 1993, p. 48). I suggest that the superficial messaging reflects more incisively humans’ demonstrated deficiency toward self-reflection and interrogation, a motif that abounds throughout the novel. Charlotte seems to implicitly understand that people respond more positively to shameless self-promotion than they do to demands of personal and social examination (as current political and social media trends attest). In doing so, Charlotte employs a proto-social media PR savvy to reconfigure Wilbur into a someone rather than a something. This is a powerful assertion of animal subjectivity, one that requires careful pedagogical emphasis.

Reading *Charlotte’s Web* anthropocentrically and anthro-allegorically not only drains the story of its essential richness, but I would argue also offers a misrepresentative, and even disingenuous, interpretation of the book to young readers. The anthro-allegorical reading that positions Wilbur as an animal avatar for children themselves requires the imposition of Wilbur’s fear of slaughter onto human children who may or may not fear death themselves. The explicit reference to “murder” problematizes this mapping immensely. Few children could relate to such a primal fear but many children register concern for the deaths of animals. The fact that the story’s protagonist is a farmed animal who wants to live presents a visceral dimension that defies anthro-allegorical interpretation and represents a reality beyond the pages.

Yet the hegemonic imperatives of “compulsory humanity” have compelled generations of critics to interpret *Charlotte’s Web* through this very lens. Yu and other critics have developed elaborate hermeneutical frames to map both Wilbur and Charlotte onto *Fern*, in efforts to explain away the dominant animal voices in the text. Such readings provide a twisted irony given that this is a novel devoted largely to the assertion of animals’ voice and subjectivity in the context of farming and food production. Indeed, the Doctor’s suggestion that “if people talked less, animals might talk more” could be equally applied to the humanist imposition of the anthropo-allegorical lens onto this narrative. Reading and teaching the text beyond the anthropo-allegorical allows the animals to speak for themselves and children to engage directly with the animals’ experiences and material conditions. This animalized approach offers more volatile, and less ideologically containable, possibilities but is one that promotes a deeper interspecies connectivity and more authentic engagement with the representations and ideas presented in the text.

Wilbur and Friends (Not Food)

A more recent real pig and her story complement these dynamics in compelling ways. Steve Jenkins and Derek Walter practiced much the same strategy when they adopted a pig who was named Esther, and now *Esther: The Wonder Pig*. Steve and Derek, like Charlotte, have provided Esther with the platform to become a someone rather than a something, materially and virtually. In this way, Esther’s social media presence offers a strong contemporary connection to *Charlotte’s Web*. Teachers can use Esther’s highly entertaining web videos to engage student interest further and extend the discussion of the issues raised in *Charlotte’s Web* into the present context. In doing so, teachers can help generate discussion of more current and relevant issues related to farming and specifically factory farming. There are videos where Derek and Steve

discuss their reasons for adopting Esther and creating a farm sanctuary for other farm animal rescues where they speak in sensitive, accessible and “non-preachy” language about how their devotion to animals has changed their lives for the better. Such videos demonstrate the power and potential of empathetic engagement and demonstrate that there are real world possibilities for human-animal relations that extend beyond consumption.

Derek and Steve’s championing of Esther has not come without criticism, however. Some have accused them of reproducing sexual politics of meat themes and ideas because of various videos feminizing Esther, in, admittedly, at times, rather garish fashion. Steve and Derek have attributed some of these early mishaps on their own emerging animal rights perspectives and an until quite recent lack of education on these issues. They have also been criticized for diving too deeply into the celebrity obsessed waters of social media, perpetuating neoliberal myths of individual exceptionalism that lead to charismatic animals being seen by the public as more deserving of life than others. Although these may be valid critiques of the Esther phenomenon, it must be noted that intentions and goals matter, as do outcomes. There are hundreds of anecdotal testimonials from people who re-evaluated their pork (and often general meat) consumption because of their exposure to Esther. Like Charlotte, Derek and Steve found themselves in an unexpected position – to become saviour to a pig that would otherwise be doomed to destruction. Like Charlotte, Steve and Derek worked tirelessly, and desperately, to raise consciousness of the plight of pigs and other farmed animals; and like her, a little shameless at times to raise the necessary consciousness.

Likewise, Charlotte’s public relations triumph is not without problematic implications either. The fact that Wilbur is positioned competitively against another pig for first prize (and hence the opportunity for survival) places the reader in a position to determine which life has

more value. Ratelle argues that despite White's best efforts to confront the logic and morality of carnism, he reproduces entrenched binaries of worthy and unworthy lives by positioning Wilbur as the model show animal worthy of the blue ribbon, thereby "reinforcing the carnophallogocentrism of which he was so critical both in this novel and his other writings" (Ratelle, 2014, p. 338). Ratelle argues that Wilbur is presented as "radiant" while Uncle (the opposing pig) is described as being coarse, brutish and ultimately less sympathetic, thereby emphasising Wilbur's case for individual exceptionalism rather than a broader interrogation of the ethics of animal slaughter.

This argument, however, would seem to underestimate the cynicism and broader human skepticism belying White's narrative. It is not that Wilbur is actually more "radiant" than Uncle – he is described as being quite ordinary throughout the novel. The perception of Wilbur's superior appearance is a mere construction successfully perpetuated by Charlotte's "spin." She is positioned as a master campaigner, figuratively spinning Wilbur's narrative through her literal web spinning, and in so doing successfully manipulates public opinion into perceiving a special, even "supernatural" aura around Wilbur's presence.

White also undermines the zero-sum logic that the competition places on the selection process – there can only be one winner, the rest will perish. Indeed, Uncle wins the prize but Charlotte's final campaign succeeds in forcing the judges to subvert the rules of their own competition by creating a special prize (the blue ribbon) that will finally spare Wilbur's life, as well. Wilbur's victory is indeed an exception, but one that also subverts the supposedly objective standards guiding the competition. As the runt of the litter, Wilbur offers no future value for competitions while Uncle (with his larger size) embodies the ideal pig. Wilbur can only be safely removed from his precarious place in the carnophallogocentric economy by an

intervention that would seem to approach the divine, when in fact it is an act of “interspecies solidarity” (Coulter, 2016) that subverts the intended goals of the competition. Even at the point that Wilbur is awarded the blue ribbon, he unceremoniously collapses into a heap that resembles the lifeless corpse he almost became. The judge declares, “we can’t give a prize to a *dead* pig...It’s never been done” (White, 1980, p. 159). The judge’s statement enacts an unintended tautology (a dead pig cannot win a prize because his exclusion assures his death, and his being dead would negate his eligibility) bringing to the surface the repressed carnophallagocentric ethic guiding the fair celebrations. When Templeton revives Wilbur by biting his tail, the threat of Wilbur’s disqualification is farcically resolved, further undermining the legitimacy of the proceedings. Charlotte therefore succeeds in altering the carnophallagocentric logic, if only for this agricultural pageant. I suggest that by interrogating these dynamics more closely, it becomes possible to expand students’ own webs of empathy, even without the magical interventions of an arachnid spin doctor, because people’s carnistic attachments are similarly constructed.

It is noteworthy that Charlotte succeeds in presenting Wilbur as a “special pig” even though there is nothing discernably special about him to the human characters who cannot, or will not, hear him speak. White thus gives his young readers access to Wilbur’s thoughts and fears, first through the proxy of Fern. When Fern’s interest and attention shifts beyond the interests of animals to boys, the reader can forge a direct connection to the animals, one no longer mediated by a human protagonist. As the Doctor suggests, our world and experience become considerably narrowed and less rich when we do not listen to or empathize with animals. The novel’s ending invites children to find communion with animals and points to another possibility, one that now sadly seems lost to Fern as it is to so many other children who are socialized away from animal interests.

Similarly, through Esther, Steve and Derek reveal that empathetic engagement with animals can be restored, even after it has been lost. They have demonstrated that all of us can listen to and care for animals, even those that otherwise be destined for the abattoir, on their way to the dinner plate. Linking these narratives in a classroom environment allows children to see possibilities that extend beyond the imaginary and into the actual world where they and grown-ups, can take a stand, too.

This discussion has only begun to identify ways that educational practice can be reshaped in order to challenge the ethico-ontological spectre of “compulsory humanity” that is deeply embedded in our educational system. We can commit to a more-than-human membership of linked and intersecting subjectivities, and simultaneously recognize animals’ significance and ethical significance irrespective of any human interconnections. There are compelling opportunities for educators and students alike to consider the perceptions and experiences of our fellow beings to whom we owe so much more.

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Ghostly Entanglements and Ruptures: Textual-Material-Animal Encounters with and Beyond *Charlotte's Web*

Abstract

This analysis builds from field research undertaken with pre-school educators and children at an early childhood education centre (ECE) in London, Ontario, Canada. This project is animated by concern with forces of socioenvironmental change and their effects/affects on the surrounding ecology, particularly on the non-human animals struggling to survive despite anthropogenic devastation of their habitat, and whether educational strategies can help illuminate these processes. Therefore, guided walks through the altered landscape were interwoven with a literacy project using E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* as the central text. I sought to encourage the children to re-imagine their own literary and material experiences and frame them as a participatory common practice, as part of repositioning our subjective responses to the world around us, particularly the animal world. To analyse these research processes, I enlist and combine Indigenous ways of knowing with Derrida's notion of hauntology to help us imagine new possibilities for literacy education within the settler-colonial context of the Anthropocene.

"The past isn't dead. It isn't even past."

William Faulkner

Introduction

"Where did Wilbur go?" I ask the children.

One of them points emphatically toward the barbed wire fence and says: "He went that way!"

We make our way toward the barbed wire fence, and I ask the children to sit in a reading circle adjacent to the ancient and derelict partition. Pointing to the jagged remains of the fence, I ask them why it is here. Most of the children are confused by the question, with the exception of one child who made regular visits to a family farm.

"It keeps the animals in!" he declared.

"Which animals? The rabbits? The deer?" I ask.

"No!" he shouts. "Farm animals! Cows and horses."

"How about pigs?" I ask.

“Yeah, pigs too,” he responds.

“Pigs like Wilbur?”

This discussion is drawn from field research undertaken with pre-school educators and children at a recently built early childhood education centre (ECE) in a rapidly developing area of London, Ontario, Canada. As part of a larger, international study devoted to the development of climate pedagogies with young children, this site’s research and pedagogical focus had been guided by the theme “Witnessing the Ruins of Progress.” Accordingly, our research was animated by the goal of attuning ourselves educators, and children to the transformative influences and consequences of land development for human and non-human life (including flora) with particular emphasis on the lives of the animals living in the surrounding spaces (Tsing, 2015). Our research and approach to curriculum development has been informed by new feminist materialist ontologies that emphasize entangled material relations between living and non-living matter and their potential to mutually affect each other (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2008; 2016; Tsing, 2014). This notion of intra-activity (Barad, 2003) greatly expands our understanding of “we” by challenging humanist-positivist presuppositions of the exceptional, transcendent positioning of humans as separate and above the fray of non-human life and materiality (Kuby et al, 2019, p. 6; Braidotti, 2016). This ethical commitment to relationality guided our research and pedagogy as we (specifically co-researchers, educators and children) encountered numerous species of animals, many of whom would disappear over the three-year span of our research tenure at the centre.

The early education centre is housed in a newly constructed elementary school and intended to accommodate the recent wave of young families arriving in this growing neighborhood. Our study began in 2017 with the school and early childhood education centre

entering their second year of operation. From late 2017 until early 2020, we witnessed a metamorphosis of the surrounding land from the confluence of discarded farm fields and emergent forest punctuated with a mix of recently finished homes and nascent foundations to a fully developed suburban space complete with parks, condominium towers and shops.

Throughout this time, the visual and auditory interventions of construction crews and equipment had become an increasingly ubiquitous presence. The landscape surrounding the school was drastically reshaped and domesticated for human purposes. Our research goal was to focus our awareness and attention onto these forces of change and their effects/affects - both direct and indirect - on the surrounding ecology. In doing so, we place particular emphasis on the besieged non-human animals struggling to survive the human generated devastation of their habitat. A centrepiece of our pedagogical engagement was to engage the children in walks through this altered landscape, culminating with intentional wanderings through the vanishing forest behind the school. Here we would regularly encounter ghostly remnants of the farm that once occupied the space.

In the fall of 2019, I initiated a literacy project with a pre-school class using E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* as the central text. The children (ages 4-5) had not yet developed the literacy skills to read *Charlotte's Web* but would listen and participate in teacher-led class readings. The project was enthusiastically supported by the centre's director, the classroom educators, and the children's parents. The opportunity to build literacy skills while introducing the children to a renowned classic was a motivating factor for the educators and many of the parents. My literacy approach focused on engaging the children with the novel's story and characters and investing that interest and energy outward to the surrounding landscape outside the school and to builds on the foundational work conducted with my research colleagues at the centre as well as from the

collective research drawn from our broader collective over the years. I sought to encourage the children to re-imagine their own interpretations of these experiences to extend our literary and material encounters and frame them as a participatory common practice. In doing so, I draw upon Karen Barad's notion of diffractive analysis – "a methodological practice of reading insights through one another" (2011, p. 145). Accordingly, I encourage the children and educators to read the text through the experiential lens of our animal-material encounters and likewise to read those very same animal-material "intra-actions" (Barad, 2003) through *Charlotte's Web*. In doing so, I raise the question: are we able to disrupt and reposition our subjective responses to the world around us, particularly the animal world, in ways that disrupt hegemonic anthropocentric hierarchies and value systems embedded in educational curriculum and practice?

Before the project was initiated, educators would encourage a passive engagement with classroom reading, one in which the authoritative teacher verbally transmits the messages inscribed in the text. Although we would need to retain elements of this conventional pre-school reading model, we sought to invigorate it by taking the reading into the surrounding forest that has been littered with the refuse and relics of a bygone agrarian past. This is a space then that casts a phantom-like resonance with the pastoral farm space depicted in *Charlotte's Web*. We hoped to engage the children as active, imaginative participants by encouraging them to co-construct the story through the spatial, material, and kinesthetic entanglements inspired and observed over the course of this textual-material-multispecies journey. Through our forest walks, we are continuously presented with the specters of the past, prompting the children to question what came before us. To help analytically conceptualize these processes, I enlist Derrida, including what he calls "the staging of the event." Acknowledging the antecedents to our present

moment is the first ethical step in disrupting anthropocentric, neoliberal, and colonial narratives. Derrida argues in *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning and the New International*:

“(w)ithout this non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present, without that which secretly unhinges it, without this responsibility and this respect for justice concerning those who are not there, of those who are no longer there or who are not yet present and living what sense would there be to ask the question ‘where?’ ‘Where tomorrow?’ ‘whither?’”(2012, p. xviii).

When we neglect what Derrida calls the “staging of the event,” then we are forever adrift in a perpetual present, alienated from the past and unable to construct a viable and ethical vision of the future. In that spirit, I argue that we attune ourselves to the worlds that are vanquished, present, and emerging around us, to disrupt the Western, anthropocentric, and neoliberal ontological consensus that privileges the present without consideration for the past, as well as hegemonic, instrumental, short-term and equally anthropocentric approaches to the future. Simultaneously looking backwards and forwards is necessary for confronting the climate emergencies and its multispecies effects. Crucially, Derrida offers a welcome intervention in this regard and particularly his idea of hauntology. Yet similar inter-temporal and interspecies ideas were already central to many Indigenous cosmologies, notably the oral tradition of the Gloosecap stories of the Wabanaki and Mi’kmaq cultures (Robinson, 2018; Monkman, 2019) that have simultaneously been erased, marginalized, and fetishized by settler-colonialism for centuries.

To this point, Mississauga Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson has long argued that a land-based Indigenous onto-ethico-epistemological re-orientation is required in environmental education, one grounded in an intergenerational commitment to past, present, and future generations as she frames it, “(l)ooking to the ancestors to prepare for the future” (2002, 23). Vanessa Watts argues that Indigenous “cosmologies speak to an intimacy with animals and

mutual, recognizable agency,” pointing toward a sustainable, non-instrumental future (2020, 119). Similarly, Mi’kmaq scholar Margaret Robinson points to oral traditions wherein “animals are portrayed as our siblings,” positioning “humanity and animal life as being on a continuum, spiritually and physically” (2013, p. 190). Billy Ray Belcourt (2015) points to the tensions between critical animal studies (Francione, 2008; Best, 2009) and Indigenous ways of knowing and cosmologies. Koleszar-Green and Matsuoka (2018) argue that ethical engagements must be historicized and contextualized so as to understand the influence of “ruptured colonial narratives,” a term they borrow from Marti Kheel (1993). They argue that hunting and trapping traditions had been intensified in order to adapt to imposed settler colonialism economic imperatives. Similarly, Margaret Robinson argues that the Mi’kmaq hunting cultures became more instrumentalized as a response to settler-colonial economic and patriarchal influences (2014). Claire Jean Kim argues that critical animal scholars should commit to an ethical framework she calls “multi-optic vision” when engaging with colonized and oppressed groups and their relationships with animals to consider how entangled colonial and racial oppression shape cultural narratives and traditions (2015).

Although, Indigenous ways of knowing are not directly incorporated into the curricular interventions discussed and analysed in this article, their importance for more thoroughly understanding the hauntological and relational ontologies is clear. Accordingly, I enlist a diffractive method to read these frames through each other as a means from “which new concepts or traditions, new philosophies can be engendered” (van der Tuin ,2011, p. 27). To this end, I illustrate a critically engaged and historically robust material, interspecies and intersectional pedagogical analytical lens that looks beyond the culturally inscribed temporal and species divides and that, ideally, could help us imagine new possibilities for literacy education.

Ghostly Intrusions Informing the Present

Western educational practices, much like economic enterprise, are ontologically oriented toward the future. Both are focused on development, productivity, and growth and have cultivated advanced quantitative and qualitative metrics to measure progress, evaluate potential, and prescribe strategies to enhance output (Apple, 2011; McLaren, 2015). This is not to say that the goals of formal educational systems and capitalist enterprise are seamlessly aligned but that their values and aims are convergently constituted by the ontic principles and doctrines of capitalism itself (Lather, 1998; Lenz Taguchi, 2009). Accordingly, much of our educational infrastructure and values mirrors capitalism's short-term futurist orientation, privileging the immediate extension of the present moment (and its immediate consequences) rather than a long-term commitment to the world (and lives) to come. The last half decade of neoliberalism has intensified these processes by further diminishing the temporal horizons of the past – as well as the future – to prioritize the immediacy of the forward moving present (Derrida, 2012). No longer beholden to the past and free of the burdens and responsibilities to a (not so) distant future, neoliberalism becomes ever more rapacious and narcissistic.

This ontological commitment to the regenerative present necessitates an ongoing erasure of the past. But as the Faulkner epigraph above suggests, traces of the past persist beyond their erasure even if those traces are initially unrecognizable or unintelligible to the temporal parochialism that pervades capitalist-neoliberal subjectivity. Education is often committed to approaching all students equally which disregards the diverse cultural, ethno-racial and class histories that inform the experiences of the children we are tasked with educating. These historical cuts function as a form of cognitive dissonance that obfuscates - or denies - the layers of presences and experiences that precede the present context. A similarly decontextualized

privileging of the present informs our relations with the seemingly inert presence of non-living materiality. Western capitalist culture has often positioned itself in relation to matter existing long before us, or our earliest evolutionary ancestors, as having value only insofar as it may be extractable and exploitable for immediate consumption. The collective amalgamation of matter that we refer to as land becomes a commodity that humans can somehow possess without regard for the multispecies lives that exist within, on, and above it while simultaneously erasing the histories of the people who inhabited it for centuries before. The animal food products consumed are typically disassociated from the animal slaughter that produced them as it is rarely acknowledged that meat is the product of the deaths of sentient, feeling beings. Western capitalist societies obfuscate animal presence as an “absent referent” through the euphemistic camouflage of terms like “steak” and “hamburger” (Adams, 2010).

And yet, despite the instrumentalist efforts of capitalist/neoliberal ideologies to disassociate the present from past, the legacies of the past, much like the repressed, return to haunt the weightless reverie of a seemingly perpetual present. Jacques Derrida introduced the concept of hauntology as a temporal intervention to further complexify ontology and its conceptual foundation of being and becoming. For Derrida, ontology privileges the present and erases the “staging of the event” that constructs our current state of becoming, being and the reality of the moment (2012, p. 10). What of the legacies of prior events and happenings, and the traces of those legacies, that precede our perpetual but ever evaporating present? To address this question, Derrida argues, “it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of every concept, beginning with the concepts of being and time. That is what we would be calling here a hauntology. Ontology opposes it only in a movement of exorcism” (2012, p. 202). In other words, hauntology accounts for the events preceding current reality and

what exists therein. Ontology addresses what *is* while hauntology addresses what *was* and how the traces of the *was* influences what *is* and *will be*. Accordingly, the past impinges on the present in a ghostly fashion because - the past no longer *is* and yet it is all around us. Yet, as Derrida observes ontology's emphasis on being (i.e., the now) is devoted to obliterating the past. This privileging of the present through the erasure of what precedes it is a symptomatic blind spot of enlightenment ethico-onto-epistemology. This is an insight Karen Barad referred to as the "metaphysics of the present" in her successive engagements with Derrida's hauntology (2011; 2017) This pedagogical project seeks to disrupt this pattern by "conjuring" the vanquished presences that preceded the ephemeral event of our moment – one that will also evaporate and quite possibly haunt a future to come.

Research Ethics

The participating educators committed the entire pre-school class to the curricular goals developed for the *Charlotte's Web* novel study. There were 14 children in the preschool class and six of these children had been directly involved as participants in the project. The children's parents signed consent forms detailing the goals of our project, ethical commitments, research documentation, curricular objectives, and pedagogical objectives and strategies. Only the participating children's responses would be documented in my research. Participating children's identities are kept confidential, as are the identities of participating educators and administrators. Additional confidentiality conditions include making sure any identifying information is stored securely. In the event of research publication, the participating child's name will not be used but researchers may use the child's personal quotes in their dissemination of the project. My novel study project was included in the Climate Action Network – Exploring Climate Change and Pedagogies with Children and the participant consent forms made the parents aware of the nature

and animal focused pedagogies. Parents were consulted regularly and updated with progress reports in a weekly newsletter. The parents expressed a great deal of enthusiasm for the *Charlotte's Web* novel study for its educational value and some of the parents, who were ethical vegans, expressed support for engaging with the issue of animal slaughter directly. None of the parents expressed reservations about this topic being raised and discussed in the classroom. Children were regularly consulted and made aware that they could opt out of our project: I adhered to this commitment throughout by ensuring the children wished to continue in the project. They were asked before each pedagogical engagement if they wished to participate or decline. Occasionally, a child opted out of the lesson because they chose another activity, but this was rare.

Hauntological Methodology

My project is devoted to the goal of connecting our textual/literacy classroom engagement with the materiality of the surrounding worlds around us, both present and past. Here we are guided by Karen Barad's notion of agential realism which is committed to understanding phenomena beyond imposed subject-object hierarchies. Agential realism constitutes a challenge to positivism and its commitment to a cosmos comprised of "independent objects with inherent boundaries and properties" that interact with each other (2003, 815). Barad argues that *phenomena* are informed by relations characterized by an "ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting components" that are "mutually entangled" in their becoming (p. 815-16). Accordingly, agency emerges through relational encounters (i.e. intra-actions) forming a "mutual constitution of entangled agencies" (Barad 2007, p. 33). To elucidate these relational processes, Barad offers the concept "agential cuts" in contrast to Cartesian cuts that presuppose a clear delineation between subject and object, mind and body, and human mastery over the non-

human world. As Barad offers, “differentiating is not merely about cutting apart but also cutting together (in one movement). Differentiating is a matter of entanglement” (p. 148). Our research and pedagogy are deeply informed by this awareness that our experiences are deeply entangled with the materiality and the more-than-human lives we encounter through our educational journeys.

Because human exceptionalism is so deeply embedded in educational onto-epistemologies (Taylor & Giugni, 2012; Pedersen, 2010; 2021) we must invest in methods that cultivate awareness of the diverse range of perspectives and agencies subordinated or erased by Cartesian positivism. Here, we are indebted to Anna Tsing’s arts of noticing and listening as a guide to attuning our senses and perceptions to the “multiple temporal rhythms and trajectories of the assemblage” (2015, p. 24). Much of this new focus requires that we observe the precarity that surrounds us and consider how we are positioned in relation to it, understanding that our presence produces damage to our natural surroundings and contributes to the precariousness of the manifold forms of life contained within it. In doing so we hope to simultaneously avert the vanity that guides our culture’s conquest and conversion of nature and animals into manipulable matter. For both Barad and Tsing, the ruinous effects and legacies of extraction, exploitation and expropriation characterizing Western capitalist cultures (and the destruction inflicted on non-human as well as human lives) are visible when we choose to notice. However, the myths of human exceptionalism (specifically patriarchal-Eurocentric notions of the human) have conditioned a wilful blindness that manifests as a refusal or incapacity to acknowledge the damage wrought in name of progress. Barad argues that positivism’s penchant for privileging and centering human accomplishment as the primary driver of change conditions us to seeing a very limited piece of the transformation, one that obscures the consequences of our actions while

myopically elevating the human benefits. For both Barad and Tsing, this culturally conditioned humancentric myopia constrains our relations to both space and time. Prioritizing a “metaphysics of presence” Barad argues (2011, p. 144) borrowing from Derrida, orients us toward a decontextualized subjectivity that privileges human interventions in the world that when we zoom out wider and further are revealed to be one entangled part (outsized though it often is) of phenomena extending over space and time. The metaphysics of presence as it were, offers a mere snapshot of the phenomenon, the experiential equivalent of using a freeze frame to interpret an entire film. This myopia has far reaching social, political, and economic implications and consequences as it drives the rapacious capitalist interdependency between limitless expansionism and consumption that feasts on the natural, material and animal world closing the radius of species extinction, one that is rapidly narrowing to include our own.

Common Worlding

The common worlds’ relational, land-based approach to education challenges masculinist, anthropocentric ideologies embedded in unexamined positivist pedagogies (Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor, 2015). We contextualize animal concerns within a broader, intersectional research focus that aligns climate, decolonizing, and anti-oppressive pedagogies to disrupt the hegemony of human exceptionalism embedded in educational curriculum and practice (Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor, 2018; Nxumalo, 2016). Building on the new feminist materialism of Karen Barad, and Anna Tsing, the common world methodologies are committed to disrupting education’s anthropocentric myopia that presents the animal and material world as objects to be known and ultimately controlled by the transcendent human subject. In doing so, we seek to generate new possibilities for pedagogical engagement beyond the human.

In the context of this project, we engage in walking as method (Drew and MacAlpine 2020; Nelson and Hodgins 2020, Nelson and Drew, forthcoming) adhering to Tsing’s “arts of noticing” (2015) to align our movements and documentation with our common worlds commitment to respecting multispecies ‘inter-intra’ relationality while understanding childhood(s) as being politically situated within shared, but asymmetrical and continuously emerging worlds. (Barad 2003; Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw 2018, Taylor, Diaz-Diaz, and Semenc 2020). The data generated from our encounters with text, animals, nature, and materiality were recorded through a variety of means including photography, video, field notes, pedagogical documentation, and children’s drawings (both in classroom and in the forest). Consistent with common worlding methodologies, this project engaged researchers, educators, and children toward collaborative reflection using performative, textual, and arts-based methods as social practice (Pacini-Kethabaw, Kind and Kocher 2016; Pink 2013). We employ these methods with the goal of activating and attuning our senses, perspectives, and imaginations to the “polyphonic assemblages” of the more-than-human world surrounding us (Tsing 2015, p. 23). To this end, our project engages with Donna Haraway’s notions of “worldings” or the co-construction of worlds (2008) and speculative fabulations to combine observation with imaginative engagement in a way that allows the children to materialize and perform the text (i.e., *Charlotte’s Web*). In doing so we are also committed to textualizing our material encounters through print, etching and design guided by the semio-material and textual-material pedagogical scholarship of Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor (2019) and posthumanist literacy engagements of Kuby, Spector and Thiel (2019). The children in the participating pre-school class condition their listening, observational, and performative engagements to generate their own visions inspired by the material-textual intra-actions they encounter.

Materializing and Animalizing *Charlotte's Web* Through Forest Encounters

This project is primarily concerned with the transversal of boundaries, borders, and binaries, notably the nature/culture, textual/material, past/present, and rational/imaginative divides, and the stories inspired by these crossings. A primary motif in *Charlotte's Web* is the crossing of thresholds and confines. The narrative begins with a little farm girl (Fern) refusing to accept that a baby “runt” pig must be slaughtered. She names him Wilbur and promises to take care of him. Wilbur is allowed to live and passes the precarious threshold separating slaughter and companion animals. Later in the story, Wilbur is returned to the agricultural economy where is again consigned to the status of slaughter animal. Here, he is kept in a barn from which he yearns to escape and one day discovers he has the opportunity to exit the boundaries of the barn through a loose board in a wall. Wilbur is apprehensive at first, but decides to cross the threshold, and runs free through the field and trees.

After reading a chapter in the book, we would invite the children to engage in a forest walk to notice the animals and the legacies of animal life that once populated the former agricultural space behind the school. After reading chapter III, which depicts Wilbur's escape from the barn to which he finds himself confined, we decided to walk with the children through the forest to see what material (and ghostly) connections could be to Wilbur's experience. When we enter the forest after having read the opening chapters of the book, the children are captivated by the barbed wire that eerily re-enacts the restrictive boundary of the past. Despite the former fence being mostly collapsed, it retains the potential to ensnare the feet of a careless walker, and perhaps cause them to trip. For the most part however, the wire is mostly harmless and can be easily transgressed with a careful step. The hold it retains over the children is therefore mostly symbolic – it establishes a division between zones that the pre-schoolers seem inclined to

respect. In an after-reading activity the children were asked to sketch the scene. An interesting development emerged from this engagement – a few of the children began sketching lines. One of the sets of lines had discernable jagged edges of the barbed wire. The children confirmed that they were drawing the fence from the forest – it was this material threshold that they envisioned Wilbur transgressing through. Some of the other children took notice and were energized by the artistic conjuring of the barbed wire fence line in the classroom space. Later, we encouraged the children to kinaesthetically enact Wilbur’s escape as we read the specific passages describing this event. The children designated lines in the floor that they would cross emulating Wilbur’s escape but again reconceived as crossing a lined boundary rather than through a hole in the wall. The children’s responses and interpretations inspired us to re-read chapter III in the forest.

The following vignette illuminates a primary material-textual encounter in the forest:

We go out to the school yard and line up behind the fence door separating the pre-school space from the rest of the school yard. When the fence door is open, we run to the field leading to the forest – just as Wilbur did when he escaped the barn. When we get to the field, we all run, and jump inspired by Wilbur’s example.

“We are free – like Wilbur!” one of the educators proclaims and the children triumphantly cheer in celebration.

After running through the field, we slow down...just as Wilbur did. We walk slowly and attentively toward the forest and like Wilbur did upon his escape, we smell the freshness of the afternoon air as we moved carefully through the wooded area. One of the children points at a set of droppings and excitedly declares: “It’s Wilbur’s poo!” Other children responded affirmatively to this whimsical observation.

“Was Wilbur here?” asks one of the educators.

A chorus responds: "Yes!"

"Where did Wilbur go?" I ask.

One of the children points emphatically toward the barbed wire fence and exclaims "He went that way!"

We make our way toward the barbed wire fence, and we ask the children to sit in a reading circle adjacent to the ancient and derelict partition. Pointing to the jagged remains of the fence I ask them why it is here. Most of the children are confused by the question, with the exception of one child who makes regular visits to a family farm.

"It keeps the animals in!" he declared.

"Which animals? The rabbits? The deer?" I ask.

"No!" he shouts emphatically. "Farm animals! Cows and horses."

"How about pigs?" I ask.

"Yeah, pigs too," he responds.

"Pigs like Wilbur?"

This generates an excited response from many of the children. We talk about how the fence would have kept animals from leaving just as the barn in Charlotte's Web holds Wilbur and his friends captive on the farm.

The forest behind our school is littered with ghostly presences of its agricultural past but nothing more haunting than the barbed wire fencing protruding from the ground, rusted and dilapidated metal enclosures now entangled with the flora around it suggesting the existence of a faded dystopian landscape. We understand that what existed here perhaps constituted a pastoral utopia to some (namely the settler colonial humans who occupied the space). To the entrapped animals in these spaces, many of whom, like Wilbur, were designated slaughter animals, these

spaces would have been considerably less pleasant. Wilbur offers us a voice from the animal perspective, one that comes to speak for the animals confined in this space all those years ago. I encourage the children to engage empathetically with Wilbur and farm animals like him. I guide them by posing the question:

“How do Wilbur and his friends feel about being stuck inside the barn. Are they happy?”

I ask.

“No,” a chorus of responses declare.

“It makes him feel sad,” one child offers. Others nod in agreement.

“Did the animals that used to live behind this wire feel the way Wilbur and his friends feel?” I ask. Many express their agreement with plaintive nods. I begin reading from chapter III of Charlotte’s Web. The children are rapt and some become especially animated by the following passage:

‘Wilbur’s out,’ they said. Every animal stirred and lifted its head and became excited to know that one of his friends had got free and was no longer penned up or tied fast” (White, 19).

“Where did Wilbur go?” I ask.

“He went over there!” reports one of the children pointing across the barbed wire fence line.

“Shall we go follow him, and see?” I ask.

“Yes!” a number of the children respond in near unison.

We make our way to a flattened part of the fence line. Some of the children are still hesitant to cross but two jump over the barely propped-up wire and then others join along with

one of the educators. A minority of the children cautiously respect the fence line and remain in place.

“How does it feel to be on the other side?” one of my research colleagues asks.

I then recall the part of the chapter when immediately after Wilbur crosses the threshold to freedom the goose asks him how he feels. I immediately read this short passage aloud. “‘I like it,’ said Wilbur. ‘That is I guess I like it.’ Actually, Wilbur felt queer to be outside his fence, with nothing between him and the big world” (White, 17).

“Does it feel strange or different to be on the other side?” I ask.

“Like Wilbur!” one of the children yelled as he started running around as the others joined in with him. By this point the remaining holdouts had crossed the now vanquished boundary and joined with the others to embrace the wonder of the moment. At this point, I ask the children to gather in a circle again and I continue reading aloud the passage depicting Wilbur’s escape. We reach the part where the farmers chase after Wilbur until he relents.

“How does Wilbur feel as he runs around the field?” I ask.

“Happy!” say some of the children.

“Scared!” say a few others.

“Where is Wilbur going?” asks one of the children.

One of the researchers returns the question. “Where do you think he’s going to go?”

“To the forest!” the child responds.

Some of the children jump up and run around the trees.

Other children begin to point out that Wilbur wanted to go back because he got scared.

“Why do you think Wilbur is scared?” I ask. They respond that Wilbur doesn’t know where to go and that maybe he is cold. Undoubtedly the children are becoming cold during this

slightly below seasonal mid-March afternoon and many of the children join us in re-crossing the vanquished but still lingering fence line. The educators gather the rest of the children, and we wander back seeking the warm refuge of the school.

This proved to be a powerful provocation for the children as our material and interspecies forest encounters spilled into the classroom. The classroom increasingly came to embody Haraway's notion of the "natureculture," not so much materially, as we mostly refrained from the extractionism of souveniring, but spectrally as the room was increasingly adorned with imagery inspired by the hidden layers revealed over the course of our forest walks, readings, and performative interpretations and this has deeply informed the children's creative extensions. We arranged the classroom space to simulate the boundary/threshold within the room so that the children could continue to explore the idea of passing from one domain to another. We then taped paper rolls down to the floor on opposite sides of the classroom. We engaged the children into the practice of print and design by bringing easels and paper into the classroom. We divided the class into two groups and guided the children to engage collaboratively in a common practice of letter printing and drawing (with graphite) and invite them to extend imaginatively from this provocation by engaging with the paper rolled out onto the floor. Our intention was to extend the literacy foundation that has been established over the previous months and re-apply print literacy as a social practice through which the children could engage as participants. As sources of inspiration, we projected images of our forest encounters (including images of the barbed wire fence and the rabbit droppings scattered throughout the forest) on the wall along with posters of printed text from *Charlotte's Web*. We emphasized an intensive, repetitive, and reflective engagement with our textual, animal, and material encounters to promote full participation and engagement among the children.

The children generate a diverse range of creative responses to these arrangements and represent these encounters in kinesthetic and performative expressions, such as by restaging Wilbur's escape by jumping across our classroom boundary, as well as by etching and printing engagements on the paper and easels. Many of the children drawing collaboratively on the paper rolls are committed to sketching the barbed wire fence but become additionally focused on adding little circles around the fence. When I ask a group of the children what these circles are, they respond resoundingly, "It's Wilbur's poo!" The interest in "Wilbur's poo" (which had been inspired by our earlier encounter observing rabbit feces) spread throughout the classroom and soon most of the other groups were incorporating "Wilbur's poo" into their sketches. The children engaging kinaesthetically also began to incorporate the "poo" motif into their exercises. "Watch out you don't step on Wilbur's poo," cautioned one child. Accordingly, the children are inspired by material encounters in the forest (in this case, animal feces) which they connect to their textual engagement with *Charlotte's Web*. The practice of literacy becomes a worldly/material encounter through our forest walks and forest readings which vitalizes the children's engagement with animals (real and imagined) in the world outside the classroom. Through their (re)imaginative and (re)interpretive storying of their experiences, the children reconstruct their textual and material experiences into a participatory common practice that emphasizes the relationality between text, animals, materiality, and our surrounding environment. At the same time, the children's textual-material engagement with the barbed wire fence prompted the children to consider how farmed animals (like Wilbur) feel when they are confined for human purposes.

Re-storying the Rational

After reading about Wilbur's escape the children become captivated by the idea of crossings in the forest. Previously on the forest walks we would stop before we reached the barbed wire both as a practical marker and for safety concerns. Soon, this ominous remnant of an earlier world would come to occupy an increasingly mythic space in the children's shared imaginary as they would come to accept the prohibitive boundary it inscribed onto the land. The children understood that this barbed wire relic was the collapsing legacy of an agrarian life reflecting the experience endured by Wilbur in *Charlotte's Web*. Recognizing this affinity, they gradually became inspired to cross this boundary that they now regarded as restrictive (and indeed somewhat sinister) rather than protective. Perhaps the dystopian dimensions of this former space of animal containment and slaughter were emanating through these textual-material intra-actions.

Along these dystopian lines, Ursula K. Le Guin has argued that Western positivism has "terrorized (us)...into being rational." (1989, p. 40). She argues that the indicative mode is the voice of rationality, and it has dominated written discourse (particularly academic, professional and policy modes of writing) since the enlightenment and it frames and filters our perceptions and interpretations of the world(s) around us. To counter the vise-like hold of the rational-indicative mode one needs to embrace subjunctive narrative voice. The subjunctive voice rejects the prescribed rational boundaries that structure our reality and relation to the world and engages with the edges of things that are otherwise invisible. The subjunctive voice promotes the "feminist objectivity" that Donna Haraway calls "situated knowledges" (1991, p. 185). Haraway presented situated knowledges as a challenge to the transcendent, Cartesian/Baconian positivist ideal that positioned the (typically male) scientific observer (subject) above the object of study. For Haraway, this "God-trick" constructs a fiction of totalizing human knowledge over the

phenomena we encounter. This perspective decomplexifies the various processes and relations informing the phenomena. If we shift our perspective beyond the transcendent view, we see something different. Situated knowledges promote a multiplicity of perspectives that see and experience the world from a particular vantage point as opposed to the “conquering gaze from nowhere” (1991, p. 188). Similarly, the subjunctive voice allows us to consider different perspectives and imagine new subjectivities rather than discursively reproducing the “God-trick” through the hegemonic rational-indicative voice.

Accordingly, it is the openness, thoughtfulness and care-fulness of the subjunctive mode that informs our observational and narrative engagements with the ruins of the forest and the legacies of containment shrouded within. This is not to suggest that there is no space for rationality and the indicative voice but that if we wish to zoom out from that small snapshot to see beyond the human-centred event experienced in a continuous present, we must consider new ways of noticing as well as narrating. Seeing, interpreting, and writing exclusively in the same rational-indicative humanist mode predictably reproduces what Derrida calls a “neoliberal rhetoric...made up of the *successive* linking of presents identical to themselves and contemporary with themselves” (2006, p. 87). If we as educators and educational researchers are to challenge the neoliberal rhetoric that is evermore pervasive in educational discourse and curriculum, we must examine the spectral “staging of the event” that informs the presence of the present but also what Derrida calls the absence of the future...or the present yet to come. In this way, the children’s engagement with literacy as a common, reconstructive practice allows them to subjunctively engage with the material and animal world(s) around them. The goal is to give space for a subjunctive disruption and re-interpretation of the human exceptionalist frames that have historically guided educational engagement with animals and to generate new possibilities,

or at least the seeds for new possibilities. This is not to suggest that the pedagogical approaches documented in this study will, on their own, transform children's consciousness, or that the children's affective responses reflect enduring "empathetic engagement" (Gruen, 2009) with the textual and actual animals they encountered. Rather, it is to posit that educators attuned to animal and other more-than-human concerns may generate a pedagogical engagement that extends beyond the anthropocentric and that lays a foundation for challenging embedded human exceptionalist values in the curriculum, one that could be deepened with cumulative pedagogies. The theoretical frames explored here can thus offer compelling food for further thought and educational action.

Conjuring Past Legacies to Confront the Silence of an Imagined "Innocence"

In Canada, the pernicious pedagogical legacy the Canadian residential school system, a century long educational project designed to eradicate the cultures and languages of Indigenous peoples through the forced re-education of children, have been increasingly brought to light (Miller, 2017). Untold numbers of children were tortured, sexually assaulted, and murdered (either directly or indirectly) by their tormentors (Macdonald and Hudson, 2012). The recent discovery of unmarked graves containing the remains of 251 Indigenous children in British Columbia in the summer of 2021 revealed for many Canadians the full horror of our colonial systems that continue to perpetuate and inflict harm on Indigenous people, albeit in different ways (Engler, 2021) Soon after another 751 unmarked children's graves were located on the site of a former residential school in Saskatchewan (McKenzie, 2021). These widespread colonial/educational atrocities were rendered culturally and historically absent in Derridean terms, along with the genocidal legacy of the larger settler-colonial project until the specters of these horrors were conjured again – summoned by the inexhaustible work and commitment of

succeeding generations of Indigenous scholars and activists (Regan, 2010; MacDonald, 2019; McKenzie, 2021). Such colonial erasures, often presented benignly as ignorance of the past and/or a commitment to the present and future, embody what Tuck and Yang call the “settler move to innocence” (2012). Accordingly, we must confront “moves to innocence” within education itself and acknowledge its capacity to be weaponized for oppressive and genocidal purposes.

“Settler moves to innocence” inform many of the spaces around our school. The rapidly built housing developments, reflecting neoliberalism’s escalating and ever heated real estate market, replace the forest that itself grew over the farmer’s fields that supplied an earlier settler-colonial marketplace. The spectral remains of the land’s agrarian past conjure a pastoral ideal in the cultural imaginary – one that for many is embodied by the farm in *Charlotte’s Web*. Such idealized images of the agrarian past not only sanitize the farming practices of that time but present a conveniently sanitized, even ennobled, alibi for the industrial farming practices of the present, but they also erase the settler-colonial legacies of land expropriation that displaced and erased Indigenous presences. *Charlotte’s Web* occupies a space in the cultural imaginary quite at odds with the text’s actual content. On the surface it seems to offer that pastoral ideal of the settler colonial farm, an ideal E.B. White understood very well. In midlife he retreated from urban life to pursue life as a “gentleman farmer” only to become disillusioned with the internal contradictions of the farmer’s life, namely that the animal steward must also serve as animal slaughterer. White’s “entangled empathy” (Gruen, 2015) with his animals inspired him first to reject the pastoral ideal of farming and then to write *Charlotte’s Web* which, as I have written elsewhere, offers as powerful and pointed critique of human exceptionalism, as one may find in a children’s book (Author, forthcoming). White subverts the image of pastoral purity by re-

imagining the idealized simulacrum of the settler-colonial farm from the perspective of Wilbur the pig and his desperate struggle to avoid the blade – an unambiguously dystopian vision of the farm life emerges from this subordinated, precarious perspective. This is an obscured but nonetheless intended frame through which *Charlotte's Web* must be read, one that suggests rather unequivocally that human settlers preside tyrannically over their farmed animals while exercising an unremitting, and unreflective, dominion over the natural world.

Indeed, the author of this children's classic is the very same E.B. White quoted by Rachel Carson in the epigraph to her seminal warning of the looming ecological catastrophe, *Silent Spring*:

I am pessimistic about the human race because it is too ingenious for its own good. Our approach to nature is to beat it into submission. We would stand a better chance of survival if we accommodated ourselves to this planet and viewed it appreciatively instead of sceptically and dictatorially (Quoted in *Silent Spring* 2002, 7).

Charlotte's Web offers a vision of entwined animal worlds (domesticated and non-domesticated) at the periphery of human experience. The domesticated animals have limited agency and their existence is subject to the dictates, or in the case of Fern, the whims of their human masters. In a key passage, Fern's mother complains to the family doctor that Fern is talking to the animals and inquires whether he has heard an animal speak. The doctor's response is instructive: "I never heard one say anything...But that proves nothing. It is quite possible that an animal has spoken civilly to me and that I didn't catch the remark because I wasn't paying attention. Children pay better attention than grownups. Perhaps if people talked less, animals would talk more," (White, p. 110). This gentle but pointed critique of humanity's willful inattention toward animals and the broader more-than-human world resonates deeply with White's earlier lament from the *Silent Spring* epigraph.

When we combine the two statements, the message may be that when humans do attend to animals and nature, they do so in harmful and exploitative ways. White suggests that education is one means of averting destructive human tendencies toward nature and animals as children are as yet uninitiated into full compliance with tenets of human exceptionalism and this informs my project's commitment to the text. This is not a return to the romantic associations of children with animals and nature – a gesture rooted in colonial paternalism that obfuscated the horrors of colonial oppression and expropriation by emphasizing a return to purity and innocence. The most enduring manifestation of this original “move to innocence” (Tuck and Yang, 2012) being the Rousseauian ideal of the “noble savage” which used Indigenous peoples of colonized lands as metaphors for an imagined human childhood (Taylor 2013; 2017). My project is instead committed to presenting an alternative to the settler-colonial neoliberal-indicative framing of the world, a world within which adults no longer listen to animals, if they ever did.

The Mutual Entanglement of Past/Present, Life/Death and the Utopian/Dystopian

Mindful of such reductionist fantasies and settler “moves to innocence” our project is committed to a vision of “entangled common worlds that children inherit and co-inherit as messy and mixed-up rather than pure, as damaged rather than utopian, and as prosaic rather than sanctified” (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Taylor 2018). This common world vision would equally describe the world of *Charlotte's Web* where joy and fear, wonder and cynicism, life and death intersect, indeed intra-act, in ways that confound expectations for stable emotional catharsis. Indeed, by the end of his story, Wilbur's yearning for survival seems assured but his survival depends entirely upon Charlotte the spider's subversive intervention to manipulate the human “dictators” into believing that Wilbur has a unique, almost magical, status. Charlotte's success here offers a

wry satirical comment on the vanity of human supremacy and its guiding illusion that it is somehow for us to determine species hierarchies and the value of non-human lives. Charlotte's death at the end underscores the fragile and ephemeral reality of life. For many, it is this emotional trauma that resonates thereby shaping the book's legacy in the cultural imaginary as one confronting the hard truths of universal mortality (Griffith, 1980; Kinghorn, 1986; Devereaux, 1997, Yu, 2016).

What is often neglected, however, is what happens to Charlotte's offspring – the many hundreds of baby spiders emerging from her egg sack after her death. Wilbur has vowed to look after them, but he is saddened when they all seem to venture out on their own ignoring his pleas to stay. Three spiders decide to stay, and Wilbur's spirits are considerably lifted. However, the narrator informs us that even this brief respite of grief will not last as, "Charlotte's children and grandchildren, year after year, lived in the doorway. Each spring there were new little spiders hatching out to take the place of the old" (White 2012, p. 183). This conclusion emphasizes the continuity of life but one that faces its precarity and finitude head on, emphasizing how life and death are entangled in the same natural processes. In this way, the book avoids sentimentalizing natural death while upholding an ethical commitment to respecting the value and agency of non-human life. Life in the book is always haunted by the possibility, indeed the inevitability, of death, and it is in this ephemerality, the book suggests, that life's true preciousness resides. This recognition then brings the widespread human indifference to non-human life into full view – it is after all humans who intend to slaughter young Wilbur.

Accordingly, the utopian pastoral ideals and the pat affirmativeness that typically characterizes bedtime tales are continuously subverted, one could say haunted, by their dystopian shadow. Similarly, the dystopian past, present, and future of the wooded area behind the school

converge during our forest walks. The legacies of animal captivity and slaughter persist in the form of jagged barbed wire and other implements while the forest (and the animals within) are rapidly encircled by dense housing developments. In the present, we see fewer and fewer large animals. Two years before we would regularly encounter deer (or deer tracks) as well as turkey vultures, but none have been seen this year. Rabbits remain but the inexorable path of development around the school suggests they too will be threatened before long. The most recent developmental intervention has been to carve and uproot sections of forest to curate space for a human friendly nature park and walking trails that are in equal measures inhospitable to many of the remaining animals. The children have witnessed these relentless human incursions that have radically transfigured the surrounding landscape

Spectral Contamination: Forest Encounters Haunting the Classroom Space

The forest images projected onto the wall offer a spectral intervention into this classroom space haunting our imaginations and proliferating new material-semiotic-textual assemblages. The previously sterile, domesticated classroom environment is now awash in a range of imagery drawn from our forest and textual encounters. Indeed, it has become clear how the textual/representational has contaminated the material and simultaneously how the material has similarly contaminated the children's imaginative engagements with the textual. In this fashion, the collaborative engagements between the children combined with the textual-material-animal interplay comes to reflect Anna Tsing's notion that "contamination makes diversity" (2015, p. 29).

But as Tsing also observes, such collaborative and contaminative engagements with diversity are never innocent or pure as the "evolution of our 'selves' is already polluted by histories of encounter; we are mixed up with others before we even begin any new collaboration.

Worse yet, we are mixed up in the projects that do us the most harm. The diversity that allows us to enter collaborations emerges from histories of extermination, imperialism and all the rest” (2015, p. 29). This notion of the “histories of encounter” is one that informs our own experience in the forest (mirroring Tsing’s rumination on Oregon’s national forests).

Similarly, we encounter the layers of history (both visible and invisible) that mark this land and the legacies of “extermination, imperialism and all the rest” that linger but only if we bother to take notice. The wider project of animal extermination, intended or otherwise, persists and is accelerated by every new home and complex erected in these spaces, thereby further diminishing the habitable land for the wildlife that once thrived here. In the city of London, Ontario, the “London plan” was introduced to counter urban sprawl by concentrating “inward and upward” development in the city’s core to promote density. Urban sprawl’s negative impact on wildlife was a key reason cited for the plan’s implementation (City of London, 2016). There is a growing consensus that outward development and associated enterprises produce the most harm for the flora and fauna residing within the forest but also an understanding that these projects exert a great price on our own species as well, though the full effects of these consequences may not yet be apparent. Contamination then is a process that produces generative as well as destructive possibilities. Indeed, our presence, educators, researchers, and children alike, in the school and the ensuing encounters with the forest would never have occurred if not for these expansionist housing projects.

Helena Pedersen argues that posthumanism (including relational ontologies) and critical animal studies could both be invigorated through “mutual contamination” (2011). We require a critical perspective when engaging with the human and animal injustice (past and present) to which we bear witness. Anything short of critical analysis with settler colonial injustice would

constitute yet another “turn to innocence” (Tuck and Yang 2012). Billy Ray Belcourt extends this critique to those who ignore the issue of animal suffering arguing that speciesism is a product of colonialism (2015) We can observe these linkages when we consider how the forest here has grown over farmland that was earlier carved into the vast forest spaces that once reigned over this land before settler-colonists arrived and eradicated the flora and fauna within and replaced wildlife with domesticated animals most of whom would be destined for slaughter. Our forest walks have exposed us to these forgotten and/or discarded legacies. The lingering relics of this past infiltrate our present and shape the children’s engagement with *Charlotte’s Web* and their creative re-imaginings of the text all the while observing an ongoing erasure of the forest and the gradual depletion of the animal life within.

For Derrida, the past enacts a spectral agency over the living, spilling into the ephemeral present and transforming the perspectives and perceptions of those alive today. Like any contaminant, the spectral incursions from legacies past are highly volatile and can be generative or traumatic, often a combination of the two. Barad materializes Derrida’s notion of hauntology in her analysis of the legacies of the Marshall Islands, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki pointing to the half-life contamination effects of radioactive materials exploded more than three-quarters of a century ago. Catastrophic decisions made by men - deceased for decades – continue to poison land, animals, vegetation, and humans and will do so tens of thousands of years into the future as well. Accordingly, “(h)auntings are not immaterial, and they are not mere recollections or reverberations of what was. Hauntings are an integral part of existing material conditions,” (Barad, 2017, p.74). This confluence of temporal and material hauntings require attention, acknowledgment, and appreciation to allow us to recognize the injustices of the past and to imagine “otherwise possibilities” for the future (Barad, 2003). For Barad there can be no looking

forward without looking back. And Derrida argues that justice can only remain an abstraction until the entangled legacies, indeed the ghosts, of the past -- as well as those of the future -- are conjured and acknowledged. He argues:

No justice... seems possible or thinkable without the principle of some responsibility, beyond all living present, within that which disjoins the living present, before the ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead, be they victims of wars, political or other kinds of violence, nationalist, racist, colonialist, sexist, or other kinds of exterminations, victims of the oppressions of capitalist imperialism or any of the forms of totalitarianism (2012, p.xviii).

Later in *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, Derrida would (like Barad) expand the victims of injustice to include animals, particularly those rendered for human consumption by the “animal industrial complex” (Noske, 1989). It is also important for education to expand its concerns beyond the species divide. Currently, Ontario early childhood education is invested in decolonizing the curriculum (Currie-Patterson & Watson, 2017; Griffith, 2018). This includes the integration of Indigenous texts and Indigenous ways of knowing, and emerging commitments to educate children about the legacies of the native peoples and cultures that preceded settler-colonial eradication and expropriation. So, what does it mean to decolonize when the latest iterations of the settler-colonial expansionist project continue to erase and replace the human and more-than-human legacies that marked this land? From my perspective, these ongoing erasures make education’s decolonizing imperative ever more urgent as it becomes the vehicle through which the ghosts of the past may be conjured but it must be complemented with an Indigenous commitment to the natural and animal world as articulated by Indigenous scholars and artists like Leanne Simpson (2002, 2014), Billy Ray Belcourt (2015), Eve Tuck (2012) and Margaret Robinson (2013; 2014; 2018). A broadly inclusive, indigenized commitment to inter-temporal, inter-species intersectionality will be required to challenge these deeply ingrained settler-colonial, capitalist orthodoxies by honouring the victims of the past and re-imagining new

possibilities for the future. Such indigenized commitments to land and nature combined with urban planning that promotes density over sprawl would contribute to more sustainable animal habitats and more livable futures human and non-human animals alike.

Conclusion: The Ghostly Imprint of the Written Word

Finally, in addition to the spectral confluence of the temporal and the material are the representational phantasmagoric presences emanating from our literary and textual encounters. The words written by E.B. White in 1952 emerge into our collective consciousness from the mid-20th century and inflect (indeed contaminate) our material as well as temporal encounters with the forest. Wilbur's story resonates with the ghostly remnants of this agrarian past and serves to symbolically re-animate these ghostly (former) presences. Wilbur and the other farm animals come to embody the animals that once lived and died here, and Wilbur speaks for the animals who could not communicate their will to live in the face of inevitable slaughter. He also speaks for the slaughter animals currently alive and those yet to come. As the Doctor informs Fern's mother, the animals are speaking but it is up to us to listen. Similarly, White's words endure, but it is up to us to truly listen and understand his challenge to human exceptionalism that seemed to confound mid-20th century readers, but which has begun to resonate many years after his death.

Indeed, Derrida argued in *Of Grammatology* that to write is to acknowledge death, meaning that the author accepts their absence, including the final absence that constitutes their physical death. The text is therefore a ghost of sorts that haunts future readers with the stories and insights of a vanished being that no longer exists. In the classroom and in the forest, we invoked the spectral emanations of E.B. White's story and words to enliven the ghostly remains

of a farm within a vanishing forest to imagine the animal and human lives that were but no longer are.

In doing so we begin the process of (re)constituting our ethical obligations to understanding the legacies of the past that “staged the events” of today with an awareness that our choices stage the events and inform the lives that are yet to come. In doing so, we may begin to enact the inter-temporal and inter-species intersectionality required to meet Derrida’s standard of justice “beyond the living present,” that is one that moves beyond the parochial emphasis on the now, toward a standard of justice that is also accountable to the atrocities of the past, the suffering of the present, and the consequences for the future, for the younger, and for the older among us. This re-orientation requires a commitment to reconciling the entangled colonial-imperial – capitalist – Eurocentric - human supremacist legacies of past and present in order to create more just, empathetic, and sustainable futures for our children and all future beings yet to come. This requires a commitment to the lives of all animals, free and confined with a pedagogy that emphasizes the injustice inflicted upon them through human encroachment into natural habitat as well as the continuous slaughter of animals through agricultural and industrial agricultural practices. Indigenous cosmologies and scholarship are not monolithic on the question of animal consumption and there are at times tensions between various First Nations cultures and animal rights advocates (Chang, 2020). Overall, the majority of Indigenous scholarship and activism points to alternative visions for our society that are radically opposed to the settler-colonial commitments to resource extraction, land development, and factory farming (Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy. 2014). Billy Ray Belcourt (2015, p. 9) argues that settler-colonialism promoted speciesism in Indigenous communities to “obfuscate the radicality of Indigenous-animal relations” and that Indigenous cultures must confront speciesism as it is a

manifestation of colonialism and white supremacy. Similarly, Margaret Robinson (2013, 2018) argues that Indigenous hunting practices had been elevated and venerated after settler-colonial domination and that a commitment to ethical veganism can be justified by the oral traditions of many Indigenous cultures (notably the Mi'kmaq and Wabanaki peoples) that exalt the agency and sentience of animals while condemning the unnecessary violence against animals.

These intergenerational/interspecies commitments have characterized Indigenous cosmologies and knowledges long before Derrida, Barad, and Tsing formulated their own theories – and, in this way, they haunt hauntology. But these knowledges are not mere relics of the past as Simpson, Tuck, Watts and Robinson persuasively argue. After centuries of physical and cultural genocidal projects, Indigenous peoples have endured and regenerated, providing leadership and insights about directions forward; the Eurocentric scholars it seems, are merely catching up. Regardless, the respectful collaboration of these two world onto-epistemologies embodies Tsing's notion that “contamination makes diversity” (p. 29). Leanne Betasamosake Simpson has argued that “If bell hooks or Franz Fanon speaks to my heart as an Nishnaabekwe, as both do, then Nishnaabeg intelligence compels me to learn, share and embody everything I can from every teacher that presents themselves to me. Nishnaabeg intelligence is diversity - Nishnaabeg intelligence as diversity” (2014, 16). But this diversification, she argues, cannot thrive in an exclusively settler-colonial academic and educational terrain. Rather, it must be re-imagined with a full commitment to the intelligence and values of Indigenous onto-epistemologies that illuminate pathways to re-orient ourselves beyond the parochialism of the present and the violence of the anthropocentric. The theoretical interventions of Derrida, Barad, and Tsing complement the contributions of Indigenous ways of knowing and scholarship; when combined, they allow us to see “multi-optically” (Kim, 2015) and to appreciate the entangled

legacies of colonial and “carnistic” violence (Joy, 2020). Understanding the “staging of the event” (Derrida, 1995) that informs the past manifestations of species-based and colonial violence shapes our ability to respond to present and future iterations of this violence and guides us to a future where we no longer have to deny the presence of the past.

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Re-animalizing *Animal Farm*: Challenging the “Anthropo-allegorical” in Literary and Pedagogical Discourse and Practice

Interpretations of George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* have been almost exclusively focused on anthropocentric allegory in the text and what I call the anthropo-allegorical interpretive frame. Given *Animal Farm*’s iconic and enduring status in English classrooms, I unpack this process, particularly how it is informed and perpetuated by the persistence of human exceptionalism (Haraway, 2013) rooted in the humanist literary tradition, and connected to hegemonic approaches to education. I employ Derridean deconstruction to critique the humanist and educational legacies that inform the largely homogenized and de-animalized interpretation and pedagogical applications of *Animal Farm*. Then I argue for a new, hybridized reading - and teaching – that moves beyond the anthropocentric and toward a more-than-human interpretive and pedagogical orientation that speaks to the oppressions and challenges confronting multiple species, including, but not confined, to our own.

Animal Farm is among the most widely taught texts in the English Language Arts (ELA) canon (Otmani and Balael, 2020). An allegorical representation of the Russian Revolution, *Animal Farm* famously tells the story of a courageous group of farm animals who come together to overthrow their brutal human masters only to find themselves subjugated and exploited by a self-appointed elite class of animal: the vanguardist pigs. The book depicts the tragi-ironic consequences arising from the animal characters’ blind devotion to leadership, as well as their credulous susceptibility to propagandistic manipulation. Accordingly, as a teaching text, *Animal Farm* presents valuable critical teaching opportunities, especially in the perilous political and cultural aftermath of the “post-truth” Trump era. At the same time, *Animal Farm*’s skeptical (often quite cynical) representation of revolutionary change offered an ideologically useful elixir during the geopolitical tensions of the Cold War, as well as the political and cultural tumult emerging from the anti-oppression and counter-cultural movements of the 1960s and early 1970s. As Frances Stoner Saunders’s research reveals, the CIA saw great propagandistic potential in bringing Orwell’s vision of revolutionary futility to the masses and secretly purchased the film rights to produce the 1955 Disneyesque film adaptation (Shaw, 2003). It

would be in the ensuing years that *Animal Farm* would be canonized as an educational text and like many great teachable texts it can be taught to affirm or challenge the status quo (Bibby, 2014).

Crucially, the affirmative cultural (Marcuse, 1937/2010) and pedagogical appropriation of Orwell's classic causes the animals themselves to be sacrificed, particularly any recognition of the oppression and suffering they endure specifically as animals. Referencing Angus Fletcher's analysis of allegory, Onno Oerlemans reminds us that allegory is shrouded in a competitive duality between vehicle (the surface story) and the tenor (the allegorized abstraction). She argues that "(a)n allegorical representation asserts a hierarchy, since the vehicle of the allegory is inferior to its tenor, and at the same time belies this hierarchy because our attention is drawn to what is immediately presented" (2018, p.31). The standard allegorical interpretation of *Animal Farm* not only subordinates the allegorical vehicle (the animal story), but it also largely negates them thereby adhering to John Simons' argument that animal fables use animal representations "merely as vehicles for the human" (119). Through this reductive allegorical hermeneutic, animals are discursively diminished in ways that reflect, as well as reproduce, their wider material debasement. Accordingly, there exists a semio-material entanglement of animal subordination and exploitation that supports the projects of human exceptionalism and animal capitalization (Haraway, 2008; Shukin, 2009). Unsurprisingly then, most of the textual analysis is devoted to Orwell's use of historical and political allegory (Meyers, 1991; Letemendia, 1992; Kirschner, 2004; White, 2008; Rodden, 2008; Hamilton, 2011; Fajrina, 2016). A smaller body of literary analysis focuses on the theme of language and how it is used to perpetuate power (Elbarbary, 1992; Li 2013; Basuki & Authar, 2019, Dinakhel, et al, 2020). In these literatures,

the direct representation of animals and the very real depictions of animal oppression in the text are left mostly unexamined.

In the English-speaking world, *Animal Farm* is often positioned pedagogically as a transitional text for early adolescents preparing them for the serious themes of the adult literature of high school and beyond (Fockler, 2011; Yandell, 2013; Cole and Stewart, 2014). *Animal Farm* summons the tradition of childhood animal stories like Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* and Margaret Marshall Saunders's *Beautiful Joe*, which typically combined human and animal interests. (Fernandes, 1996; Poirier, 2019) Indeed, its subtitle, "A Fairy Story," signals its affiliation with a broader children's talking animal story tradition, even if only ironically. Consequently, the implied subversion of "the fairy story" tradition is one that would seem to undermine and devalue the status of animal stories as well. Certainly, the enduring educational application of *Animal Farm* is one that overtly disregards, in fact largely erases, the book's animal figures by teaching it almost exclusively through a symbolic/allegorical interpretive orientation (Fudge 2009; McHugh, 2009) effectively rendering it an anthropocentric text. Under this interpretive and pedagogical rubric, the reading of *Animal Farm* requires children discipline their attention to the realm of exclusively human concerns, and in doing so they learn to read "animals in and around (culturally inscribed) disciplinary structures" (McHugh, 2011, p.28). In this light, Orwell's classic becomes a valuable disciplinary resource for an educational system deeply beholden to the entrenched values of human exceptionalism (Haraway, 2013) undergirding our socio-economic relations and structures (Cole and Stewart, 2014; Pedersen, 2019). The allegorical erasure of animals from *Animal Farm* helps to affirm a culture of "carnism" (Joy, 2020) that reduces the animal characters to mere avatars that serve human purposes. This process (re)confines the anthropocentric boundaries of subjectivity and re-casts

animals as mere resources for human (symbolic) consumption. This hegemonic reading of *Animal Farm* illustrates what I call the anthropo-allegorical framing, an active analytical and educational and sociocultural process that effectively reads animals out of stories ostensibly devoted to them through the imposition of an anthropocentric interpretive orientation. It is a particularly perverse irony of animal erasure in a text that, on the surface, is about domesticated animals oppressed by the systems supporting human exceptionalism

Indeed, this de-subjectivizing anthropo-allegorical frame both obfuscates and reframes animals' suffering. Raymond Williams observed this interpretive blind spot quite early on, observing in *Culture and Society* that the "existence of a long tradition of animal analogies in animal terms allows us to overlook the point that the revolution being described is one of animals against men" (p. 293). Williams's emphasis on the primacy of animals to Orwell's story was not only an interpretive response to the text but also a matter of taking Orwell's preface at face value. In the original author's preface, Orwell explained that *Animal Farm* was inspired by witnessing a boy savagely beating a carthorse, which prompted him to "analyse Marx's theory from the animal's point of view. To them it is clear that the concept of a class struggle between humans was pure illusion, since whenever it is necessary to exploit animals, all humans are united against them, the true struggle is between animals and humans" (Orwell, Preface, p. 408). Curiously, Orwell's explicit reference to human oppression of animals as the foundation of all human oppression was widely ignored by subsequent generations of scholars until the 2000s when animal studies and posthumanist scholars returned to it (Tiffin, 2007; Harel, 2009; McHugh, 2009; Dwan, 2012; Eisenman, 2013; Cole, 2017). Literary interpretation is not beholden to authorial intention but to so conspicuously ignore or reject this statement, in many cases by scholars who seek to uphold authorial intention, reveals the degrees to which

anthropocentrism, and indeed, human exceptionalism, are embedded in literary analysis. It is important to note that children's literature has traditionally presented a "space for constructing critical conversations and interpretations, where both teachers and students negotiate meanings..." (Serafini, 2003, p.7). And the tradition of animal stories aimed at children such as *Black Beauty* and *Beautiful Joe* had been influential in drawing critical attention to the cruelty imposed on animals instrumentalized for human use value (Scholtmeijer, 1993; Cosslett, 2006; Nyman, 2015; Yudith, 2020), a tradition, as Williams indicates, to which Orwell had been aesthetically indebted.

It is perhaps for these reasons that the spectre of animal suffering and slaughter hangs over this iconic text like a purloined letter. Given *Animal Farm's* status as an operative text in the teaching of English Language Arts, its representation of animals, and what we choose to do with those representations, requires critical attention and reconceptualization. Therefore, in this paper, I will examine the limits of the anthropo-allegorical reading of *Animal Farm*, specifically the pedagogical and cultural implications of the anthropo-allegorical erasure. After synthesizing key literary analyses of the text, I employ a Derridean deconstructionist analysis to examine how linguistic frames consolidate cultural hierarchies that are consequential within and beyond the species divide. I then consider the historical humanist lineage of language, literacy, and literature as logocentric criteria and linguistic/discursive mechanisms used to define human subjectivity, aided by the cultivation of the English Language Arts educational project, and uphold the ontological premise of human exceptionalism with entangled semio-material consequences for animals and altered humans alike. Finally, I propose a hybridized reconceptualization of *Animal Farm* that acknowledges and confronts the intersecting human and animal oppression on which the allegorical conceit rests.

Animal Obfuscation in Formal Educational Spaces

These dynamics intersect with larger questions about the place of animals in education. Helena Pedersen (2010) argues that human exceptionalism pervades the Western educational system, in ways that effectively institutionalize animal erasure. Referencing the ideas of Baker (2001) and Berger (1980/2009), Pedersen suggests that education follows the humanist cultural edict to “render... animals, which are fully exposed to our view, effectively *invisible* – that is, either seen as mere vehicles for the transmission of symbolic meaning or drained of any significance whatsoever” (59, 2010). Pedersen argues that the ideology of animal capital (Shukin, 2009) and human exceptionalism is operative in educational settings codifying boundaries between human and animal interests. Accordingly, schools are implicitly invested in legitimizing the “animal industrial complex” (Noske, 1989). Indeed, Rowe and Rocha illustrate how this ideological messaging is embedded in the “hidden curriculum” (Giroux, 1983) through the continued proliferation of meat-based lunches offered in school cafeterias (2015). This takes place in school settings often saturated with “Disneyfied” animal images and stories. In this light, the educational rendering of *Animal Farm* becomes significantly less mysterious.

Animal Farm seems an ideal text to initiate middle and high schoolers into the governing ethos of instrumental rationality that upholds human exceptionalism. Matthew Cole and Kate Stewart argue that animal avatars and texts have been operationalized pedagogically in both official and hidden curriculum to redirect children’s empathetic attachments away from animals. Accordingly, children are taught to draw clear distinctions between themselves as subjects and animals as objects, as “manipulable matter” to meet human ends (2014, p. 34). For Cole and Stewart, the conventional pedagogical approach to *Animal Farm* would embody the ongoing Western rationalist project to “socially construct animals in ways that legitimize human uses of

them” (p. 7), one best understood as being guided by Weber’s notion of the “disenchantment” of the world. Through *Animal Farm* and similar texts, students learn to discipline their animal empathy redirecting their focus to instrumentalism: the animals are resources to be extracted and used to serve the transcendent humanist allegory.

In my own experiences teaching *Animal Farm* at both secondary and post-secondary levels, there are usually students who read this chapter through an animal lens, some sympathetically and others reactively, often resulting in heated classroom discussion. Certain more senior colleagues have expressed frustration with what they see as an increasing preponderance of animal-centric interpretations from students. Still, there is very little indication that many teachers are engaging with *Animal Farm* beyond the conventional anthropo-allegorical framing. Recent educational studies of how the text is being taught reveal that it is used to meet various teaching objectives including language/vocabulary development, critical pedagogy, and the social construction of meaning (Brent & Millgate-Smith, 2008; Cramer, et al, 2012; Yandel, 2013; Bibby 2014; Juan Miro, 2020). A wider survey of recent research beyond the global north suggests such anthropocentric interpretive and pedagogical models are pervasive. For example, Indonesian researcher Ruly Indra Darmawan (2020) focuses on a Bhabhasian postcolonial reading of *Animal Farm* that interprets the animals’ mimicry of human behaviour as an analogue for colonized peoples’ mimicry of the colonized. Similarly, Dian Fajjrina (2016) and Safnidar Siahaan (2018) focus on the value of teaching the book’s historical allegory. Other recent international scholarship examines the text linguistically; Iraqi scholars Mariwan Hasan and Najat Sayakhan (2017) analyse anthropocentrism as a linguistic method to deploy the central political allegory, while Sudanese and Spanish educational scholars Kalid Sharif Mohamed

(2016) and Marta Loro-Barrena (2019) emphasize *Animal Farm*'s value in teaching English as a second language. Again, all of these studies presuppose an anthro-po-allegorical reading.

As diverse as these teaching applications are, they all presuppose an exclusively allegorical interpretation of *Animal Farm*. A survey of the leading online sources for educational materials (*Teachers Pay Teachers* and Pinterest) reveals an almost identical commitment to the humanist allegory without reference to animal issues of any kind. Routine surveys of *Animal Farm* unit plans and curricular guides in the English-speaking world reflect a widespread dismissal of the animal. Erica Fudge points to Mitzi Brunsdale's *Student Companion to George Orwell* which presents a taxonomy explaining the allegorical meaning of each animal character (2009, p. 13). Such taxonomies are commonly placed in online teaching resources. A 2017 article from the popular British online educational blog that offers a educational news stories, resources, and teaching ideas offered the "English Editor's Picks – Eight Great Teaching Picks for Reading George Orwell's *Animal Farm* in KS4 English." The piece begins with a nod to the animal stories familiar to students and then makes an ironic gesture to animal liberation:

(y)our students have probably been reading books about farmyard animals as far back as they can remember. Not, however, quite like this. *Animal Farm* articulated the fear we all have that animals are poised, waiting for just the right moment to take over. You know, like a much cuter version of *Planet of the Apes*. OK, so perhaps there's more to it than that. (Burgess, 2017)

The author goes on to introduce his eight teaching strategies, all of which revolve around the conventional anthro-po-allegorical reading emphasizing the value of the animal characters to ease the students into symbolic and allegorical reading. The preponderance of these teaching and learning resources reflect the longstanding neglect of the animals of *Animal Farm* and reinforce the message that "to read *Animal Farm* as a text that might have something to say about animals

is to misread it” (Fudge 2009, p. 13). The ubiquity of the exclusively anthropocentric interpretations and the related pedagogical applications are clear across contexts.

Are Animal Represented in *Animal Farm*?

As noted, most scholarship on *Animal Farm* is thoroughly anthropocentric. Some exceptions are noteworthy, but they, too, contain surprising contradictions and omissions. In his lengthy analysis of *Animal Farm*, Richard Smyer identifies a link between “carnivoracity and colonial exploitation” (1988, p. 40) in Orwell’s essay “Marrakech.” Yet Smyer does not engage with the dynamics of carnivorism and oppression in *Animal Farm* itself, the book to which entire study is devoted. Similarly, Douglas Kerr (1999) references Orwell’s personal declaration from the essay “Why I Write,” that “most of the good memories from my childhood up to the age of twenty are connected with animals” (1999, p. 234-5). Kerr cites Orwell’s self-expressed animal sentiment as essential context for understanding his searing depictions of human-animal violence in *Burmese Days*, “Marrakech,” and “Shooting An Elephant,” as well as to illustrate the linkage between colonial and animal exploitation. Like Smyer, however, Kerr curiously does not extend his analysis to analogous concerns in *Animal Farm*.

The rise of animal studies and posthumanism has brought much needed critical attention to the anthropocentrism guiding literary analysis. Such analysis of *Animal Farm* came relatively late. The first literary scholar to directly analyse the depiction of animal suffering in the book was Helen Tiffin (2007) and she questions how the plight of the text’s eponymous animals could be ignored for so long. Tiffin refers to this as a “disappearing act” whereby animal literary representations are read reflexively by humanist scholars through the anthropocentric allegory. Tiffin posits that it may have been for this reason that the intervention of a non-literary scholar, psychoanalyst Jeffrey Masson, was required to announce the seemingly obvious and quite

subversive kernel belying the humanist allegory: the systemic immiseration and slaughter of domesticated animals for economic benefit. Returning to Orwell's now largely forgotten preface, Masson muses, "[C]onsidering that Orwell's small book is considered the greatest statement ever written about revolution, it is astonishing that Orwell's own revolutionary comment about humans and animals has been effaced from the public record!" (2003, 239 n. 4). Literary scholar Susan McHugh echoes these concerns and argues that the Western literary approach to reading animal representations exclusively as symbolic avatars for anthropocentric purposes demonstrates the pervasive degree to which we are academically conditioned to read animals "in and around (culturally inscribed) disciplinary structures" (2009, p. 28).

Following Masson, Tiffin, and McHugh's insights, Stephen Eisenman proposes an alternate reading of *Animal Farm*, one that positions it "in the camp of posthumanists (and) animal liberation. Suppose that instead of being concerned with human revolution, warfare, duplicity, treachery...animal farm was really about the animals? Suppose it was not an allegory about Soviet communism but was actually about pigs, horses, cats, dogs, and all the rest striving, but failing to achieve freedom?" (p. 235). Eisenman observes that one's capacity to read the text through an animal lens is somewhat limited by Orwell's insistence on a reductionist humanistic metaphor that diminishes the fundamental agency of the animals and their "capacity...to act altruistically" (p. 237). Undoubtedly, the humanist allegory limits the animals' subjective potential, but this should not obscure the fact that most of the animals in Orwell's story are altruistically sacrificing for the good of each other, as well as the good of all.

Similarly, Dwan (2012) acknowledges that the preface opens the door to an animal reading beyond the humanist allegory before finally dismissing its viability by stating, "when the assertion of animal equality in the novella is interpreted too literally the tale's broader allegorical

function collapses” (p. 667). For Dwan, an animalized reading fails because the animals ultimately reproduce the same systems of exclusion and domination displayed by their human masters. This argument would again seem to ignore the fact that even within the allegorical conceit most of the animals are very much committed to the egalitarian promise of animalism. It is this very idealism that renders them vulnerable to the cynical manipulation and oppression of their new minoritarian rulers – the pigs. His argument also overlooks the fact that the authoritarian pig vanguard has learned their odious ways from Mr. Jones and the broader human carnivorous economy to which they remain tethered. As Mikhaila Bishop observes, the pigs’ moral collapse reveals more about human avariciousness and the transformative effects of structural oppression than it does about the ethics of the animals themselves (2020).

Stewart Cole offers a more extensive and sympathetic analysis of the animal question in *Animal Farm*, but ultimately arrives at much the same conclusion, arguing that “[w]hile it is true that *Animal Farm* denaturalizes our exploitation of nonhuman animals by making it the key grievance from which a revolution is launched... Orwell makes abundantly clear his view that nothing need be done to end that exploitation” (2017, p. 349). The conclusion reached here is guided less by a textual analysis as it is from biographical observation, albeit parsed from the author’s vast oeuvre of essays. Specifically, Cole refers to Orwell’s critique of Gandhi and his religious commitment to vegetarianism, along with his more famous excoriation of the proverbial vegetarian who remains, “out of touch with common humanity (and) willing to cut himself off from human society in hopes of adding 5 years to his carcass” (p. 174). For the sake of precision, it must be stated here that Orwell’s ire clearly targets self-motivated, health-conscious vegetarians not what we might today call ethical vegetarians or vegans (i.e. the commitment aimed at alleviating animal suffering). Nevertheless, for Cole, Orwell’s rancorous

statement reflects his commitment to the “continued ratification of (human) superiority,” thereby embodying what “Derrida calls ‘carnophallogocentrism’—that is, a vision of authority as residing at the nexus of meat-eating, masculinity, and language-driven rationality, a position that nothing in Orwell’s writings contradicts” (p. 547).

Cole’s pronouncement is as bold as it is sweeping. Invoking Derrida for the purpose of containing textual interpretation, indeed intimating there is one final interpretation, is ironic to say the least. Carnophallogocentrism is, of course, correctly, and quite pithily defined by Cole. Operationalizing this term to confine, and indeed singularize, the possible readings and interpretations of the book is highly problematic as there is no way to decontextualize carnophallogocentrism from the Derridean method of deconstruction. Moreover, discerning an author’s personal values (and only from a handful of essays) assumes the romantic position that a text coheres to the author’s intention – a decidedly anti-Derridean position. Indeed, the standard by which Cole determines Orwell’s values vis-à-vis animals might also cast Derrida himself as carnophallogocentric given his own ambivalence toward vegetarianism – a claim Derrida himself would be unlikely to reject given his critique was aimed at Western culture (of which he was a self-aware product) not at individuals (Calarco, 2004). Unquestionably, Orwell was implicated in carnophallogocentrism, but this does not prevent significant kernels of resistance and critique from emanating thorough his text. If anything, Orwell’s essays suggest a man of complex, and often conflicting, views surrounding animals and they therefore offer inconclusive, and certainly insufficient, criteria to guide interpretation. A full animal analysis (or reading) requires a deconstructive engagement with the text, not the author.

I return to the Derridean neologism to argue that even if it is established that Orwell embodied carnophallogocentric qualities, the text presents a clear challenge to

carnophallogocentrism. *Animal Farm* begins with a group of farm animals convening to reflect on their shared immiseration at the hands of their human oppressors. A senior pig, Old Major, leads the meeting and proceeds to outline a viscerally detailed litany of the horrors awaiting the farm's animal inhabitants. Before the reader commits to the narrow anthropo-allegorical reading of the book, they encounter a clear critique of what we know today as the "animal industrial complex," albeit in a pastoral setting (Noske, 1989). Indeed, this setting intensifies the critique as it recasts the enduring, anodyne notions of "Old MacDonald's Farm" into a dystopian space. The subject of animal cruelty has been presented sympathetically in a range of popular texts including Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*, Margaret Marshall Saunders' *Beautiful Joe*, Disney's *Bambi*, and Richard Adams's *Plague Dogs* and accepted at face value. However, such depictions of cruelty are typically isolated to the careless or sadistic actions inflicted on animals by individuals. Old Major identifies the larger source of animal subjugation and slaughter, and it is not limited to the individual evil of Mr. Jones, the proprietor of the farm. Consistent with Orwell's preface, Old Major indites humanity along species lines, declaring "the evils of this life of ours springs from the tyranny of human beings..." (p. 5). It becomes increasingly clear that Old Major's critique is also systemic in scope as he carefully identifies the economic processes supporting the practice of carnism (Joy, 2020) or carnivorism, as the oppressive human system that must be overthrown. His references to animal domination, exploitation, and slaughter are explicit, "the very instant our usefulness has come to an end we are slaughtered with hideous cruelty" and cannot be decontextualized from institutionalized carnivorism – at least not without a concerted effort (Orwell, p. 3).

Undoubtedly, the scene is crafted to support its allegorical Marxian tenor, but the affect generated through the viscerally detailed animal vehicle threatens to overwhelm the tenor. The

affective engagement recalls the tradition of promoting animal welfare through children's literature, as exemplified by *Black Beauty* and *Beautiful Joe*, and it becomes impossible to ignore or to seamlessly transpose onto its anthropo-allegorical tenor (i.e., the cruel exploitation of the proletariat). If the animal cruelty described by Old Major drives the allegorical affect, it raises an obvious though roundly neglected question: why should we not also be concerned with the animal oppression? Is it not more powerful to recognize animals' suffering along with the entangled human-animal oppression that belies the humanist allegory? The fact that such hermeneutical pains have been taken to repress this human-animal entanglement is quite telling and one that requires critical unpacking. In Derridean terms, *Animal Farm* has simply not been sufficiently deconstructed. Scholars and educators have quite successfully encoded a highly restrictive and enduring humanist interpretation that has persisted largely unchallenged for decades.

Deconstructing the Humanist Legacy

As outlined, the range of scholarly interpretation and analysis on *Animal Farm* is largely settled on the anthropo-allegorical reading. The more recent attempts to animalize *Animal Farm* have been more aspirational than analytical while attempts to analyse animality have largely concluded that the humanist allegory overpowers the animal. *Animal Farm's* interpretive boundaries would therefore seem largely settled. Is it *Animal Farm* itself that resists new readings or is our potential to (re)read uniquely restricted by a pervasive carnophallogocentric "terministic screen" (Burke, 1965) obfuscating the text's more troubling animal implications? As Derrida has argued, there is no final book and no final interpretation of the book – the book changes with us and this seems true of most literary classics. *Animal Farm* demands re-reading, re-interpretating and re-teaching reflective of our cultural moment, a culture increasingly

sensitive to issues of animal suffering and slaughter. Emphasis on a construct consensus of Orwell's authorial intention is perpetuated while his stated inspiration (human oppression of animals) is ignored. It is a very selective form of *authorization*, indeed. How is it constructed?

For Derrida, the idea that the textual form can be reduced to a singular authoritative reading is rooted in the 4000-year-old tradition of writing, one that attempts to reduce writing to a mere extension of speech. Accordingly, the text becomes a mere substitutive instrument manipulated by the author to extend (almost exclusively) *his* speech to geographical and temporal spaces (i.e., the future beyond the author's death) to safeguard the integrity of the speaker's (i.e., the author's) intention. As such, the text becomes analogous to the paternalistic desire to ensure the integral continuity of a father's offspring. For this reason, Derrida devised the neologism phallogocentrism to link patriarchy and rational-textual authority. For Derrida, this persistent, singular interpretive orientation of *Animal Farm* would be rooted in this desire for textual fidelity, so it coheres to a singular, paternalistic intention – that is to reflect the *authority* (typically the imagined authority) of the speaker/author but one that is more likely to reflect the dominant values of the context in which the text is interpreted. Authoritative interpretation aims to *tame* writing through a hierarchically imposed linearity (i.e., religious and later humanist-rationalist authority) to contain meaning and limit contestation. However, Derrida argues that such linearized projects were doomed to fail because the very structure of writing is founded on an inherent representational infidelity between signifier and signified or between sign and referent. Of course, this inherent interpretive infidelity would hold true for an animal-centric reading of the novel as well, but the question remains as to why the liberal humanist anthropo-allegorical interpretation must come at the expense of even a secondary animal reading? In other

words, why must the humanist interpretation wholly subsume any consideration for the surface level animal themes?

In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida argues that Western culture found itself positioned at a fulcrum point linking “two ages of writing because we are beginning to write differently, (and) to write differently, we must reread differently (1998, p.87). This looming transition marked the end point of a century-long revolution (beginning with the assault on the linear consensus of discourse led by Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud) that laid siege to the linear model of reading and writing upholding Western logocentrism. Linearity and singularity gave way to delinearized and “pluridimensional” modes of writing and reading. What was at stake here, Derrida understood, was the question of subjectivity and who defines it. For Derrida, this could not be reduced to a “simple regression toward the mythogram” as many of his contemporary critics argued, but “on the contrary, it makes all the rationality subjected to the linear model appear as another form and another age of mythography” (p. 87). In other words, the activation of new orientations, interpretations, and subjectivities casts scrutiny on who determines the dominant, linearized mode of authoritative logos – the supposedly transcendental subjectivity – repositioning it as a “white mythology” or what Donna Haraway would later call the “mythos of enlightenment transcendence” (1992, p. 298).

Central to Derrida’s project then is the requirement that we deconstruct the sources of textual authority and interpretation until they are rendered transparent. In *Animal Farm* then, we must consider why the authoritative linearized (i.e., anthro-po-allegorical) reading dominated the cultural, critical, and pedagogical imaginary well after the eruption of “pluridimensionality.” Could it be that these carnivoristic tensions, so overtly present in the book, point uncomfortably to an internal cultural contradiction (not to mention cultural trauma) that required repression? If

so, why even elevate such a potentially volatile text to the educational status it has long since occupied? One reason may be that the animal consumption economy was so naturalized that it was left largely unexamined in the broader culture and therefore logically ignored in a text in which it was so frankly depicted. A more compelling possibility may be rooted in what Helena Pedersen has identified as a pervasive “institutional anxiety...concerning the question of the animal” motivated by a desire to uphold rather than disrupt the human exceptionalism operative in both education and humanities-based academic research (2021). *Animal Farm*'s literal story of animal liberation being so adamantly disregarded (or ridiculed as Burgess's earlier comments attest) suggests a similar commitment to upholding human exceptionalism. Of course, with a text as enduring and as widely translated as *Animal Farm* there are a range of cultural and historical influences informing its reception and interpretation, but the near ubiquitous commitment to the anthro-po-allegorical suggests a near hegemonic exclusion of (even partial) animal-centric engagement. The commitment to the Soviet revolutionary allegory remains as entrenched in the post-Cold War period as it was during the Cold War. Perhaps more so given that with very few exceptions, as shall be examined, *Animal Farm* scholarship presupposes the historical allegory even when focusing on concerns such as propaganda and the manipulation of language (Elbarbary, 1992; Fowler, 1995; Sewlall, 2002; White, 2008; Bibby, 2014; Ferrari, 2020). *Questions* of animal subjugation and liberation are more effectively invalidated through this process of erasure and anthro-po-allegorical replacement. Hardt and Negri argued that the abstraction of a resource is designed to conceal its extraction (2020) and Nicole Shukin theorized how this same principle is operative in the economy of “animal capital” (2009) where symbolic disneyfied avatars populate the popular culture as an alibi for the mass slaughter of animals locked in the dystopian machinery of “animal industrial complex” (Noske, 1997). Accordingly,

systematic animal suffering and destruction is symbolically affirmed through its interpretive omission. To understand why literary scholars have ignored the animal in *Animal Farm* for so long we must explore the embedded legacy of human exceptionalism in literary education and scholarship.

In “Rules for the Human Zoo: A Response to the *Letter on Humanism*,” Peter Sloterdijk posits that literacy historically instilled cultural divisions that perpetuated a “yawning gulf between the literate and the illiterate...” one whose “insuperability amounted almost to a species differentiation” (p. 23). In Sloterdijk’s estimation, literacy offers the subject access to a humanism whose express purpose is to “tame” our animal nature. Along these lines, he observes wryly how the very “label of humanism reminds us (with apparent innocuousness) of the constant battle for humanity that reveals itself as a contest between bestializing and taming tendencies...” (p. 15). Here, Sloterdijk points to humanism’s implied but unspoken mission: to elevate humans above animals. Accordingly, he unveils the teleology of the humanist literary and pedagogical project – to define humanity in contrast to animality. As Cary Wolfe contends subjectivity is discursively constructed. Language (and by extension literacy) become(s) the determinants of subjectivity, a condition that excludes animal membership. Accordingly, the “formation of Western subjectivity...relies on tacit agreement that the full transcendence of the ‘human’ requires the sacrifice of the ‘animal’ and the animalistic” (Wolfe 2003, p. 6). Drawing on the work of German sociologist, Niklas Luhmann, Wolfe argues that the only way to distinguish language from non-language is *through* language.

In such fashion, language constitutes a framing mechanism that separates inclusion (inside) from exclusion (outside the frame). Wolfe connects Luhmann’s notion of exclusion to Derrida’s concept of “sacrificial structure” underlying symbolic economies (2003, p. 203). For

Derrida, the outside is “always to come” as it comprises the excluded voices that constitute the inside’s eventual source of “pluridimensionality” as barriers governing Eurocentric notions of subjectivity are challenged. For Wolfe, the crucial and enduring barrier is that which upholds the species divide between humans and animals. Sloterdijk’s analysis then reminds us why this boundary remains so resilient in the context of the humanist literary and pedagogical project – it is the foundation upon which the edifice stands. This is what is so revealing about *Animal Farm*’s pervasive and enduring anthropo-allegorical interpretive schema. The surface level animal themes constitute a challenge to the “transcendence of the human” and are consequently “sacrificed” or excluded from the interpretive schema altogether. Such exclusions, following Wolfe’s analysis, may simply constitute onto-epistemological “blind spots” to that which exists outside the humanist interpretive schema – they are rendered unrepresentable within the symbolic economy of the humanist allegory. Or an emphasis on the systematized immiseration and subjugation of animals raises irreconcilable ethical and ontological tensions with the transcendent humanist allegory despite Orwell’s avowal that it was the coterminous oppression of humans by humans and animals by humans that inspired the novel. Such conspicuous neglect of the animal in the overwhelming majority of scholarly interpretations of *Animal Farm* would seem to uphold what Sloterdijk and Wolfe separately argue, that the human cannot easily co-exist with the animal within the onto-discursive schema of literary humanism

Along such lines, literary scholar Robert McKay argues that the persistent dismissal of the animal in Western letters reflects the “compulsory humanity” that undergirds the Humanities. Extending Judith Butler’s concept (by way of Adrienne Rich) of “compulsory heterosexuality” McKay analyses Margaret Atwood’s symbolic application of animals in *Surfacing*, along with her explicitly stated literary theory (as explicated in *Survival*) that animals should only be written

and read symbolically in service of the human (master) narrative (2005). Accordingly, when an animal figuratively suffers or dies in a literary text, she or he is precluded from what Judith Butler has termed “grievable” status and interpreted as a symbolic manifestation of deeper human trauma.

In *Animal Farm*, the gruesome death of the perseverant work horse, Boxer, pushes this conceit to its limits. After the pigs betray the revolutionary principles of animalism and commit themselves to the same ruthless, instrumentalist rationality that guided their human oppressors, they come to similarly dominate their fellow animals. Boxer’s inexhaustibility is a crucial exploitable resource as well as an inspiration to the other animals. When his body finally breaks down and he ceases to be of exploitable value, at least as a living animal, the pig leaders surreptitiously resort to a carnivorous scheme – to sell Boxer to the knackers to extract his final value. Under the pretense of being taken to the veterinarian, he is loaded into a truck marked “Alfred Simmonds, Horse Slaughterer and Glue Boiler, Willingdon. Dealer in Hides and Bone Meal. Kennels Supplied” (p. 82).

Boxer’s slow realization that he is in fact going to be destroyed and sold for consumable parts presents readers with a scene of indelible and horrifying pathos. In terrified desperation, Boxer attempts with all his remaining strength to free himself from the knacker’s truck, “But alas! His strength had left him; and in a few moments the sound of drumming hoofs grew fainter and died away” (82). According to the prescribed linearized reading, Boxer’s death, in and of itself, is “ungrievable” because his animality is “radically excluded” (Butler, 1993) from our interpretive orientation – even in the presence of such visceral, animal-specific horror. The scene presents the reader with a rare depiction of an animal’s terrified realization and anguished

resistance in the face of imminent slaughter. Yet readers have been trained to re-direct their empathy to an anthropocentric abstraction.

However, anyone who has read this scene with students will understand that Boxer's death is eminently grievable, on his own terms. He is, first and foremost, a terrified horse before he is rendered metaphoric gristle for the anthroo-allegorical mill. This affective first response to the scene tends to be disregarded and callously redirected into anthroo-allegorical oblivion. It is one thing to frame this scene with allegorical meaning. But to interpret (not to mention teach) it as a uniformly human tragedy is quite another – a dissonant framing device that is not only willfully blind, but one that forces children and young adults to masochistically deny any personal traumatic response brought on by their “entangled empathy” with animal suffering (Gruen, 2015). To read Boxer's impending slaughter strictly metaphorically requires an ironic detachment that succeeds in amplifying the anthroo-allegorical impact while suppressing the affect that would otherwise be evoked. Indeed, this would seem to engender a coarsening and erosion of affective engagement with the suffering animal, illustrating Horkheimer and Adorno's claim that “to show concern for animals is considered no longer merely sentimental but a betrayal of progress” (2002, p. 211). In pursuit of children's developmental progress, the compulsory humanist imperative renders the animal casualties of carnivorism unreadable and therefore, “unintelligible” (Butler, 2011) unless it is refracted through the anthroo-allegorical interpretive frame. Undoubtedly, Boxer's gruesome demise embodies the ultimate tragedy of capitalism – that the very exploitable resources (human and otherwise) that produce value for the system are in some fashion, consumed by it. This is every bit as true for animals working on farms (or being bred for slaughter) as it is for the human workers who toil tirelessly until they cannot give any more, indeed more so, as they literally *are* devoured (and/or rendered) in

capitalism's dedicated animal capital paradigm (Shukin, 2009) fueled on the "blood of animals" (Drew 207, 2016). Read in this fashion, Boxer's death embodies the entangled, but asymmetrical, oppression of humans and animals trapped in the cold, dystopian machinery of instrumental capitalism that figuratively (in the case of humans) and literally (in the case of animals) eats those who serve it. (Coulter, 2016; Donovan, 2007).

Talking Animals: The Anthropomorphic Dilemma

If we want to re-subjectivize animals, attention and care are needed. Anthropomorphized animal representations, such as those in *Animal Farm*, have long been critiqued by critical animal studies scholars for appropriating animals in service of anthropocentric objectives (Crist, 2000; Beer, 2005). Indeed, Derrida, himself has argued that animal symbolic representation erases the animals' essential alterity. But crucially, this erasure is informed by the essentially carnophallogocentric reception and interpretation of the text – consistent with "compulsory humanity" – rather than being inherent to the text itself (2008). Onna Oerlemans argues that a carefully guided engagement with anthropomorphism can promote greater engagement with animal subjectivity (2007). Similarly, Sam Cadman argues that a progressive form of anthropomorphism offers a possible avenue for countering anthropocentrism from the inside out (2016). Still, Jane Desmond denounces the "magical fantasy of anthropomorphism (as) an extended instance of domination through incorporation" (1999, 210). Helena Pederson applies Desmond's insights to the school setting and sees parallels to Homi K. Bhabha's notions of indeterminacy and colonial mimicry. For Bhabha, the colonial other is "a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite...continually producing its slippage, its excess, its difference" (1994, p. 86). Pedersen sees a similar "double articulation" at work in the anthropomorphizing of animals, rendering them "*almost human, but not quite*" (p. 30). She

argues that students' repeated exposure to entertainment and educational anthropomorphic iterations work ironically, in Bhabha's terms, to "re-inscribe the same boundaries that they are challenging" (p. 31). This ironic reproduction of species difference works to contain animals in a subordinate, instrumentalized cultural position.

There remains, however, a crucial dimension of Bhabha's argument that requires further unpacking and that is his notion of the "enunciative split." Bhabha derives this concept from Frantz Fanon who observes that cultural enunciation is a double-edged sword for both colonizer and colonized, a key dimension of Bhabha's "double articulation" theory. Fanon's vision for revolutionary change resides in what Bhabha calls the "the intervention of the Third Space of enunciation" (2012, p. 54) opening an unstable, ambivalent space between colonizer and colonial or the dominant and dominated. This ambivalent space is frequently massaged away by the dominant group but, following Fanon, Bhabha sees the emancipatory potential to displace ideological orthodoxies supporting dominant interests. For Bhabha, the enunciative split establishes an "in between space" characterized by hybridity in a way that obliterates notions of a stable unifying culture or identity. Bhabha argues that this hybridic, ambivalent space is forged in negotiation, while the hegemonic narratives of the dominant interests remain products of negation... negation of the other's experience and value. By negotiating the hybridic potential of the "third Space", we may, Bhabha argues, "elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves" (p. 56).

Cary Wolfe (2003) applies Bhabha's enunciative cultural theories to his own analysis of mimetic power across species lines in Michael Crichton's *Congo* before concluding that Bhabha's "work remains captivated...by the figure of the human" (p. 188). Wolfe argues that because Bhabha's notion of the subject is "located" in the very same enlightenment liberal

humanism that he seeks to critique, his analysis necessarily “constitutes its own repression” (2003, p. 5). Jopi Nyman posits that postcolonial readings of animal narratives that seek to “redefine naturalized conceptions” of the animal and the human reveal how “interwoven the human and animal are and how they are constructed in relation to each other” (2003, p. 19). Yet, his own co-analysis of Bhabha’s hybridity neglects the question of the animal altogether (Kuoriti & Nyman, 2007). Even when applying Bhabha’s lens to anthropomorphic animal representations, as he does of *A Lion Called Christian*, he reads Christian’s “ambivalence and what can be seen as the basis for his transgressive agency” anthropocentrically as a postcolonial challenge to “monumental narratives of history and nation” (2012, p. 305) rather than what it reveals about Christian and species discourse itself. However, even if Bhabha’s subjective positionality may foreclose a broader cultural analysis of the emancipatory potential of more non-human subjectivities, it still generates critical space for the deconstruction of humanist discursive tropes (i.e., anthropomorphistic devices). If we are to interrogate anthropocentric narratives through Bhabha’s theoretical frame, then we must leave room for both sides of the double articulation that he sees operating in modes of cultural enunciation. Anthropomorphic narratives do indeed re-inscribe species boundaries between human and other, but this does so not through negotiation, but rather through negation. The orthodox anthro-allegorical reading and teaching of *Animal Farm* typically persists in negating the animal anthropomorphically, but it does not necessarily follow that anthropomorphic narratives must erase the otherness of animal experience, *especially* when read through Bhabha’s double articulation frame. By giving anthropomorphic voice to farm animals, *Animal Farm* offers readers a rare opportunity to engage empathetically with the plight of exploited and oppressed animals. In this way, we achieve Donna Haraway’s feminist epistemological goal to realize ‘splitting’ perspectives. For Haraway,

a commitment to ‘splitting’ perspectives recognizes that the “topography of subjectivity is multidimensional, and so, therefore is vision” (1991, p. 193). Accordingly, we may allow ourselves to see in new ways and from different perspectives. In this light, Old Major’s disquieting summation of the systematic, almost absurd, cruelty pervading farm animal existence rings perhaps truer today in the era of advanced industrial “farming” techniques:

(W)hat is the nature of this life of ours? Let us face it, our lives are miserable, laborious and short. We are born, we are given so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies, and those of us who are capable of it are forced to work to the last atom of our strength; and the very instant our usefulness has come to an end we are slaughtered with hideous cruelty. No animal in England knows the meaning of happiness or leisure after he is a year old. The life of an animal is misery and slavery: that is the plain truth. (p. 3)

While this passage may suggest a Marxian analogue of human exploitation, does it not evoke the literal reference to animal suffering first? Why does the human subtext so thoroughly “nullify” the animal text at the surface when the two can exist, indeed inform the other (Harel, 2009)? Students are tasked with reading through and beyond the animal suffering depicted in the book, treating the animals in these passages as a mere instrumental mirage serving a higher, human-centric purpose. Our reading is heretofore disciplined in accordance with Cartesian duality. Indeed, the negation of animals, and their suffering, resonates with the Cartesian negation of animal pain, reducing their cries and squeals to the soulless emanations of mere *machina anima*, albeit in the representational arena.

But of course, negation is something we learn through cultural inscription. The negation of the animal when teaching *Animal Farm* can only be achieved through an active process of silencing the literal story of the book. Students should be given the opportunity to negotiate the, the convergences and divergences between the animal and human concerns of the book. Reading in such fashion allows students to register the “others of ourselves” as Bhabha would have it,

seeing oppressive and predatory human customs as observed from the defamiliarized position of the non-human animal other as Old Major's declarations attests:

Man is the only creature that consumes without producing. He does not give milk, he does not lay eggs, he is too weak to pull the plough, he cannot run fast enough to catch rabbits. Yet he is lord of all the animals. He sets them to work, he gives back to them the bare minimum that will prevent them from starving, and the rest he keeps for himself (p. 4).

This passage is similarly inscribed with much of the same allegorical connotations as the previously cited passage. But when readers are encouraged to focus actively on the double articulation on which the allegory depends, both human and animal dimensions are foregrounded. The reader may see themselves reflected as other through the eyes of a subjugated animal. In many instances there remains a conspicuous slippage that cannot be tidily enclosed into the conceit of allegory but one that rather reverberates in ways that problematize the conventional anthropo-analogical reading, as Old Major's lament continues:

(N)o animal escapes the cruel knife in the end...every one of you will scream your lives out at the block within a year. To that we all must come – cows, pigs, hens, sheep, everyone. Even the horses and the dogs have no better fate. You, Boxer, the very day that those great muscles of yours lose their power, Jones will sell you to the knacker, who will cut your throat and boil you down for the foxhounds. As for the dogs, when they grow old and toothless Jones ties a brick round their necks and drowns them in the nearest pond (p. 5).

It is difficult to read this passage subordinately to the humanistic allegory that it would seem designed to support. Contrary to Dwan's (2012) argument, it is in fact the analogical abstraction that collapses under the weight of the all too real evocation of animal slaughter, one that does not extend neatly to the analogue of proletarian oppression. The visceral emphasis on animal death overpowers the relatively remote analogy to proletarian disposability, viscerally compelling one's attention to the terror and anguish of the doomed animals. At the very least, the book offers an unequivocal "consensus that animals ought to be treated humanely" (Robles 2016, p. 175).

The broader literary negation of the animal experience and their suffering only reveals empathetic limitations of “our speciesist interpretive bias” (Harel, 2009). This is not to reject the anthropo-allegorical subtextual conceit, but rather that the animal and human dimensions of *Animal Farm* need not be mutually exclusive. Indeed, through a Bhabhasian lens it becomes clear that an anthropo-allegorical narrative cannot have one without the other. As readers, scholars, and educators, we can privilege negotiated reading over one of negation.

Who’s Afraid of Virginia Wolf: Modernism’s Anxiety Over Animality

As Cary Wolfe observes, by way of Slavoj Žižek, modernism “repudiates animality and the primal forces unleashed (and necessarily repressed if we believe Freud’s *Civilization and Its Discontents*) at the margins of the *socius* whereas postmodernism is characterized by a more ambivalent relation to the animal...” (2003, p. 13). Modernism as a literary movement and style that flourished from the late 19th to mid-20th Century, reaching its pinnacle (known as “high modernism”) in the 1920s. Literary modernism was characterized by a deep pessimism, multiplicity of perspectives and an obsession with representing the urgent immediacy of the modern moment. Orwell’s dystopian dyad (*Animal Farm* and *1984*), published in the immediate post-war period as modernism was giving way to postmodernism, interrogates how subjectivity is contested and defined through language and discourse.

It is this emphasis on language’s formative (and oppressive) role in shaping subjectivity that gestures toward the postmodern and post-structural text-centric future of Foucault and Derrida. If modernism was characterized by a fundamental repression of the animal (as Žižek’s Freudian analysis indicates) it suggests humanist anxiety belying the culturally inscribed boundaries informing subjectivity. Language acquisition is the gateway to subjectivity according to Lacan as it initiates children into the symbolic order. Modernist writers seemed to anticipate

Lacan's analysis by employing language to increasingly esoteric ends, effectively imprinting their unique subjectivity onto the text to which Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* embodied the terminus extreme.

In contrast, postmodernism's ultimate challenge to the subject corresponds with its embrace of language's shiftiness, unreliability and its inherent "pluridimensionality." It is less invested in policing the boundaries of subjectivity as fervently as modernist humanism (Wolfe, 2003). Accordingly, postmodernism offers Mel Y. Chen's project to "feralize" discourse (2012). For Chen, language has been domesticated to serve the exclusionary framework of the dominant white supremacist, ableist, hetero-patriarchal and speciesist mode of subjectivity. They argue that a "feral" discourse is required to confront the hierarchically imposed shackles of linearity. The stakes for challenging language's linearization or what Chen calls "domestication" are high indeed, and such challenges present profound implications for the human and more-than-human alike. Building on linguist Michael Silverstein's work on "animacy hierarchies," (1976) Chen argues that entrenched linguistic hierarchies frame cultural perceptions of possibility. Animacy hierarchies help assign agential status to humans while denying agency to marginalized human and non-human others through a careful but largely invisible project of linguistic and discursive codification largely dependent on an uncontested and sedimented legacy of metaphorization.

Pluralizing the Cultural and Literary Discourse: Beyond Metaphorization

As Derrida asserts, metaphorization is a crucial component of the logos's affirmation of "white mythology" and is instrumental in calcifying cultural tropes that sustain dominant ideologies. Metaphor in this sense works as a linearizing linguistic mechanism that frames our thoughts and perceptions through a constructed lens of analogized similarity, which promotes commensurability and familiarity. Metaphor and its linguistic siblings, simile, symbolism,

personification, and allegory serve the same reductive, linearizing function. In such fashion, *Animal Farm* has been read, analysed, and taught almost exclusively anthropo-allegorically reducing the animal representations to mere traces on which an anthropocentric symbolic interpretation can be realized. Here, the “animacy hierarchy” subordinates the animal reflecting onto-epistemological imperatives of Western logocentrism and human exceptionalism. As Derrida, Wolfe, Chen, and others have demonstrated, this has profound consequences for humans and animals alike

Cary Wolfe’s discursive theorization of the species divide hinges on this Derridian “structural sacrifice” that excludes animals from subjective status. For Wolfe, like Horkheimer and Adorno before him, the animal is the original sacrifice forming the basis for “other *humans* as well by marking *them* as animal (2003, p. 6). Zakiyyah Iman Jackson challenges Wolfe’s contention that “discourse of the species” constitutes the origin of all oppression. She argues instead that “anti-blackness prefigures and colours animal abjection” (14, 2020). Jackson offers a critical contribution to understanding how Western humanist onto-epistemology (and its surrogate discourse) devalues black and animal bodies through embedded discursive linguistic conventions. Building on Frantz Fanon and Sylvia Wynter’s theorization of sociogeny, Jackson observes that black bodies have been “held captive as a resource for metaphor” to serve embedded racial hierarchies characterizing Western discourse, a discursive captivity shared with animals (2020, p.13). Extending Wynter’s racial-historical analysis of the Post-Columbian, Western humanist assignation of “significant ill” (2003) onto racialized (particularly black) peoples, Jackson argues that “anxieties about conquest, slavery, and colonial expansionism provided historical context for both the emergence of a developmental model of ‘universal humanity’ and a newly consolidated generic ‘animal’ that would be defined in non-human and

human terms” (2020, p. 16). For Jackson, the intersection of anti-black animalization and animal subjugation are incommensurate yet deeply entangled through their incorporation into codified discursive and linguistic hierarchies and for this reason critical race and anti-oppression must also address the oppression and exploitation of animals. This is because anti-black animalization represents a “distinct modality of semio-material violence leveraged against humans and animals” (2020, p. 23). These linguistically and semiotically assigned hierarchies lay the cultural foundation for the material oppression of racially altered humans and animals through mutually reinforcing exclusionary and subjugating linkages shaped by “contiguous and intersecting histories...” (2020, p. 23). Through this prism, the “sacrifice” of the animal story in *Animal Farm*, that is to say, the interpretive refusal to acknowledge the book’s animal dimension, is interwoven with discursive legacies of anti-black exclusion and oppression. Scholars and educators must carefully and critically attend to the mutual entanglement of related, but distinct, forms of human and animal oppressions. Given *Animal Farm*’s enduring status as a foundational teaching text, acknowledging the animal suffering, along with the allegorical human suffering, would offer a generative opportunity for approaching the issues of the entangled but asymmetrical oppressions shared by animals and marginalized people.

The reductionist anthropo-allegorical frame through which *Animal Farm* is read, theorized, and taught is therefore not only limiting but also deeply implicated in the linguistic-discursive reification of exclusionist and oppressive cultural hierarchies. In the early 1930s, Stalin’s farmland collectivization program inspired a propagandistic project to associate farmers with pigs – the crude analogical implication being that farmers now shared the expendable status of the slaughter animal (Snyder, 2017). The confiscation that followed led to the Great Soviet Famine and the Holodomor in Ukraine. Orwell re-imagines the land confiscation with the

chickens representing the farmers. Napoleon, the pig post-revolutionary Stalinist autocrat, enforces an egg collectivization program that the chickens refuse. Napoleon selects three of the hens and numerous other animal “traitors” and publicly slaughters them one by one, “leaving the air heavy with the smell of blood, which had been unknown since the expulsion of Farmer Jones” (p. 57). Understanding Stalin’s weaponization of metaphor to link farmers to their own slaughter animals presents an additional, and essential, allegorical tension, one that also sheds light on Orwell’s selection of pigs as the post-revolutionary oppressors.

As slaughter animals, pigs are “made killable” (Haraway, 2013). The distinction between farmer and pig (slaughterer and slaughtered) is dissolved by Stalin’s metaphorical alignment of farmer and pig. The Soviet farmers soon shared the “killable” status of their slaughter animals. In *Animal Farm* this power dynamic is inverted but the metaphoric alignment is preserved – the farmers are no longer pigs but rather the pigs have become farmers, as in the leaders of the farm. Here, we see the volatility of metaphoric associations and their oppressive power. Orwell’s allegorical representation of this historical tragedy reveals the intersecting depths to which animal and human oppression, and indeed slaughter, are connected and even mutually reinforcing. Erasing the animal dimension from *Animal Farm* upholds the mythology of human exceptionalism while negating what should be two essential and intersecting lessons from the book: that human and animal oppression are semio-materially entangled and that domesticated animals suffer terribly at the hands of their human oppressors.

Language and discourse determine power and those holding a monopoly on discursive power (first the humans, then the pigs) determine the value systems (in this case, a cold instrumentalism) that will govern the others. But how the empowered class justifies their privilege is a pressing concern for Orwell. *Animal Farm*’s iconic axiom “All animals are

equal...but some are more equal than others” (Orwell, 90) represents the most famous of many aphorisms operationalized by the pigs to constrain the subordinated animals. It is important to remember that this cynically ambiguous aphorism devolves from a simple revolutionary edict: “All animals are equal” but is later qualified with the second clause to validate the pigs’ privilege and dominance over the other animals. There are six other revolutionary commandments that are programmatically qualified until they are divested of their original emancipatory intention and potential. The other animals are confined in this linguistic web and are unable to resist the pigs’ gaslit project of discursive manipulation that gradually narrows their material conditions to the point that they are returned to pre-revolutionary levels of immiseration. Although the original edict pronouncing animal equality signified animal liberation and upheld a clear species divide between non-human and human animals, the qualified edict begins to blur that very distinction. Towards the end of the book, the pigs begin walking upright on two legs rather than four, violating the second commandment that proclaimed, “whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy” (p. 15). The pigs now chant, “four legs good – two legs better!” (89) further dissolving the human-animal divide.

In this light, the qualified edict “some animals are more equal than others” assumes a different character now that the pigs are emulating human qualities. In the book’s final passage when the pigs confer with human farmers, the species line is fully dissolved when some of the subordinated animals gather to spy on the congregants and they shift their attention, “from pig to man and from man to pig...but already it was impossible to say which was which” (p. 95). It becomes clear that the most exceptional, or “more equal” animal here is the human animal confirming the thesis of Orwell’s oft neglected preface. It also resonates with Cary Wolfe’s contention that species boundaries are discursively constructed while suggesting the

“arbitrariness behind the concept of equality, and to reflect on our most fundamental attitudes and practices involving animals” (Boremyr 2016, p. 5).

Animal Farm presents a world in which animals are granted access to subjectivizing language and paradoxically their collective subjectivity (notwithstanding the pigs) is slowly undermined and all but erased by the very language and discourse that shapes their world. Similarly, the hegemonic anthropo-allegorical interpretation, guided by literature’s “compulsory humanity,” consigns the animal characters to humanist avatar status that erases not only their essential animality but crucially disregards the representation of human-imposed systemic animal immiseration. The “talking animals” of *Animal Farm* unequivocally disclose the legacies of animal blood that have fueled carnophallogentrism, and the literary and educational dismissal of their perspectives reflects the miasmatic embeddedness of these values in our culture and institutions.

If we lack the ethical commitment and capacity to confront animal exploitation and slaughter, both discursively and materially, for the sake of the animals themselves then we might consider it for the sake of the students we are tasked with educating. Helena Pedersen points to Greta Thunberg’s disavowal of an education for a future denied by ecological catastrophe (2021). Implicit in Thunberg’s challenge to education is an awareness that education is not only neglecting the challenges of the future but is in fact complicit in accelerating our demise through its commitment to recalcitrant values and ideologies that are radically opposed to our long-term survival. She is pointing to a new educational possibility disassociated from the kind of human exceptionalism that turns a blind eye to the cruelty of agricultural animal containment and slaughter and one that also understands in these pandemic times how human-animal fates are fatally entwined. Such a pedagogical orientation requires an ethical commitment beyond the

parochial species-specific narcissism of humanism to one that recognizes the shared, but asymmetrically distributed, frailties that confront all animals, human and otherwise. When such an educational vision is enacted to confront the ethical and existential limits of human exceptionalism, the book's long repressed animal story may finally be heard.

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Conclusion

Two central questions propelled this project:

- 1) How can the values of human exceptionalism embedded in the humanist literary tradition and undergirding English literary/literacy education be disrupted and reconceptualized as part of a multispecies curriculum that promotes empathy with animals as well as critical thinking/analysis and action competence engaging with animal issues?
- 2) How can a multispecies animal commitment in English Language Arts curriculum support and promote a more widely inclusive anti-oppressive educational culture and curriculum?

To these ends, I have analysed the humanist legacies informing the anthropocentric frames of exclusion pervading literature and literary scholarship, literacy/literary curriculum, and pedagogy in order to identify spaces for promoting possibilities for the circumvention of animal exclusion. The field research undertaken at the west London ECE offered the starting point for my dissertation. As an intermediate and secondary English teacher, the milieu of Early Childhood Education initially seemed to me quite far removed from the high school context. Unquestionably, the ages of the children (ranging from 3 to 5 years of age) presented distinct challenges and required different approaches to engagement.

However, my supervisor, Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, had no concerns about integrating a novel study into a pre-school class where children were only beginning to acquire the barest rudiments of literacy. Inspired by my first year as a researcher on Dr. Pacini-Ketchabaw's animals and climate pedagogies research project I began to consider pedagogical interventions that would be effective for younger children.

Re-encountering Charlotte's Web

In the past when teaching *Animal Farm*, I started integrating Youtube videos of Esther the Wonder Pig at the end of the novel unit to diffuse any animosity students may be feeling toward pigs after concluding the book. I thought that Esther's videos, which had become considerably slicker in the intervening years, would be well suited to engaging younger children to understand agricultural abuses of animals in an affirming, non-threatening way. I began to consider books aimed at younger readers and *Charlotte's Web* was a favourite among many of my research colleagues and this prompted me to re-read E.B. White's children's classic. I was struck by the many ways in which Esther's story resonated with Wilbur's and realized the complementarity of these pig narratives. As I outline in Chapter 1, Esther's story offers a real-life narrative complement to Wilbur's experience in *Charlotte's Web*. As I researched the book's literary reception and educational application, I observed how the anthro-po-allegorical interpretive frame had been deployed to erase or invalidate direct animal representations and any ethical tensions emerging from the agricultural power relations presented in the book.

In this way, the academic reception and educational deployment of *Charlotte's Web* had resonated deeply with *Animal Farm* as both works offer highly critical representations of agricultural practices with particular emphasis on human callousness towards farm animals. Most literary analysis of *Charlotte's Web* ignored the literal animal dimension and interpreted Wilbur's experience through a humanist allegorical frame with the most common reading emphasizing the acceptance of mortality theme as Charlotte helps Wilbur appreciate the natural cycles of life (Kinghorn, 1986; Haag & Compton, 2014). These readings tend to ignore Wilbur's visceral yearning to be spared a decidedly unnatural death from the farmer's axe blade or treat it as a mere plot requirement that leads us to the revelation of the "deeper" humanist theme (Tiffin,

2007; McHugh, 2009). It is exceedingly rare for literary scholars to address Wilbur's desire for survival on its own terms and rarer still to address the anthropocentric power relations that reduce Wilbur to killable or "bare life" status (Arendt, 2003; Agamben, 1999). The humanist interpretive frames of literary scholarship largely ignore Wilbur's encounters with the dystopian absurdities and cruelties characterizing animal agriculture despite White's documented concern with what he perceived as the irreconcilable paradoxes of animal agricultural stewardship that required "caring" stewards to inevitably slaughter the animals under their care (White, 1948, 1950).

Chapter 1 then addresses research question one by interrogating the humanist interpretive frame that has guided most of the *Charlotte's Web* scholarship and educational application away from questions challenging the logic and ethics of systematized cruelty toward animals. The chapter proposes alternative frames that emphasize White's clear critique of animal slaughter rather than conventional interpretive frames that obfuscate this violence while foregrounding "universal" themes of mutability and mortality but from a decidedly human perspective. This re-framing offers teachers an alternative interpretive framework to re-orient their pedagogies, one supported by E.B. White's essays, particularly "Spiders and Pigs." Teachers may integrate the "Spiders and Pigs" essay, or excerpts, as a pedagogical extension that invites students to identify connections between the author's non-fiction and fiction and to reflect on White's personal beliefs and how they may have influenced the ideas explored in *Charlotte's Web*. The article also offers suggestion on how to integrate connections to current social media and internet sensation Esther the Wonder Pig and the parallels between her journey and that of Wilbur's. It also presents the opportunity to engage with the story of Steve and Derek and their ongoing

commitment to rescue farm animals destined for slaughter and their global campaign to raise awareness of the cruelties of animal agriculture.

Accordingly, the goal informing Chapter 1 builds on the rare counter-anthropocentric scholarly readings (Ratelle, 2014) of *Charlotte's Web* to develop an animalized reading that could in turn guide an animalized teaching of the text. "Webs of Empathy" established much of the theoretical and pedagogical framing for the *Charlotte's Web* literacy project taken up with the pre-school class from January to March 2020. It was this research period that became the basis for Chapter 2. The pre-school educators and affiliated research colleagues were asked to read Chapter 1 to re-orient our framing beyond the anthropocentric. Neither of the educators expressed concern with this counter-hegemonic orientation. We had informed the parents through an emailed memo that, consistent with our earlier climate change and animal pedagogical orientations, we would be approaching *Charlotte's Web* from the animal perspective drawing connections to the wild animals in the forest and the remnants of the farm that once filled the forest space. Not a single parent expressed concern with this approach. One educator revealed to me that a vegan parent had expressed enthusiasm for approaching *Charlotte's Web* in this fashion and had always wondered why the book's implicit critique of animal slaughter had been ignored.

Such responses reaffirmed that literary scholarship and literary educational practice have not kept step with the growing cultural and concerns with animal well being (Schiemer & Gook, 2019; von Mossner, 2021; Gray, 2015; Lawo & Esau, 2020). It is also important to note that this ECE was located in an affluent, suburban area where the parents were unlikely to have direct connection to the animal rendering economy. If this study had been proposed in a rural setting, the parental responses may not have been as supportive. Aslanian and Moxnes (2021) pursue an

essentially antithetical framework in a semi-rural Norwegian community where pre-school children were enlisted to witness a cow slaughter and encouraged by the educators to participate in its aftermath by incorporating rendered parts of the slaughtered cow into their play. This despite the fact that some of the children in that study expressed feelings of revulsion, and some even questioning the reasons for the slaughter practice itself. It is of note that the authors did not pursue these ethical dilemmas or any of the ethical questions raised by the children themselves. Still, the positive receptiveness to my suburban study prompted me to consider how generational change might affect intermediate and secondary literary education 10-15 years in the future when their children will be of high school age. Will there be an opportunity to shift away from the anthropocentrism and indeed, the anthroo-allegorical framing that de-animalizes animal texts?

Chapter 1's re-animalized re-orientation of *Charlotte's Web* offered much of the conceptual foundation that guided the field work in Chapter 2. This piece then extends upon the interpretive framing proposed in Chapter 1 to address the question of how the human exceptionalism undergirding literacy education may be disrupted and reconceptualized as part of a multispecies curriculum. Chapter 2 explicates a range of pedagogical and curricular approaches to circumvent anthropocentric literary pedagogies by connecting the reading to the material and animal surroundings beyond the classroom space. In this chapter, I explore ways in which such material and animal encounters can enrich the pedagogical engagement with the text and how the text opens possibilities for interpreting the more-than-human experiences we encounter beyond the classroom with an emphasis on exploring the children's "entangled empathy" with animals (Gruen, 2015). The chapter also addresses the question of how these animal pedagogies may align with anti-oppression education with particular emphasis on decolonizing and Indigenising pedagogies. The article proposes ways in which relational ontologies and Derridean hauntology

converge with various Indigenous cosmologies as articulated through the Indigenous scholarship of Vanessa Watts (2020), Leanne Simpson (2014), Billy Ray Belcourt (2015), Kim Tallbear (2015), and Margaret Robinson (2013; 2020) and how commitments to a more-than-human onto-ethico-epistemology (Barad, 2007) aligns with the larger Ontario curricular commitments to Indigenize education.

Intertemporal, Intersectional, Interspecies Entanglements – Beyond Western Subjectivity

A truly inclusive literary mission would expand beyond Western humanist frames that promote notions of individual autonomy that are detached from nature, animals, and other phenomena. This project is explored more explicitly in Chapter 2 which enlists Barad's notion of "intra-activity" to analyse the limits of anthropocentrism in both material and textual-discursive contexts. As Kuby, Spector, and Thiel argue, we must disrupt the humanist trappings that situate us at the centre of our literary, as well as material, worlds (2019). Humanism's individualist ethos also promotes what Derrida calls a "neoliberal rhetoric" focused on the immediate present, one that is decontextualized from what has preceded it and what is yet to come (2006). Derrida's notion of "hauntology" then addresses the temporal problems that humanism and enlightenment ontology tend to ignore, what he calls, the "staging of the event" (2006). Just as Barad has argued that human influence (outsized though it may often be) is but one component of wider intra-active physical phenomena, Derrida presented an alternative temporal frame that decenters Western humanism's ontological relationship to time. Whether we know or not, Derrida contends, we cannot extricate ourselves from the legacies of the past whether they be historical, material, or genetic.

Similarly, Barad's notion of "space-time-mattering" expanded upon the concept of quantum temporality arguing that the past is always imprinted in the present as well as the future

to come (2017). Much of Barad's recent writing is devoted to reconciling Derridean hauntology, and his emphasis on remembering the past for a justice to come, with her own notion of "space-time-mattering." Barad acknowledges that such a project would be irreconcilable with Western humanist ontology but suggests that such "radical political imaginaries might usefully join forces with Indigenous and other subjugated knowledge practices..." to achieve a justice otherwise denied to the human and more-than-human casualties of colonial – imperial violence (2017, p. 63). This commitment emphasizes an intersectional, interspecies, and intertemporal "ethico-onto-epistemological" re-orientation that aligns with Indigenous cultures (Simpson, 2014; Robinson, 2014; Watts, 2020). Increasingly, there are numerous opportunities for educators in settler-colonial nations to engage Indigenous knowledge keepers to Indigenize their own pedagogical practices. Here in Ontario, the recent commitment by a number of school boards to teach exclusively works of Indigenous writers offer at the Grade 11 level offers a space to disrupt hegemonic Western humanism. For instance, the works of Mi'kmaq poet Rita Joe are prominently featured on these indigenized Grade 11 reading lists. Rita Joe's poetry often draws on the Mi'kmaq legends of Glooscap which, as Margaret Robinson has argued, offer educators great opportunities to challenge settler-colonial human-animal-nature hierarchies and to promote an ethic of care and responsibility toward animals (2013, 2014). This is not to generalize Indigenous perspectives and literature or to suggest that all Indigenous authors are committed to representing nature and animals; diverse subjects explored in Indigenous literature. Rather, it is to further elucidate how commitments to decolonization and a broader multispecies commitment can be mutually supportive projects.

Are there Animals in *Animal Farm*?

The article, “Re-animalizing *Animal Farm*” goes deeper in connecting the entangled human and animal oppression and how addressing these concerns are mutually supportive educational projects. By tracing the roots of the persistent anthropocentrism in Western literature and curriculum the article analyses its roots in humanist notions of subjectivity that have privileged a very particular form of Eurocentric, patriarchal, heteronormative, able-bodied notion of the human. The article explores how *Animal Farm*’s enduring status as an iconic educational text offers a powerful opportunity to re-orient a literary pedagogy that promotes the intersecting interests of humans and animals in the age of climate emergency while also reflecting the entangled oppression of animals and marginalized humans. The article also addresses how *Animal Farm* is uniquely positioned as a canonical ELA text to promote critical competence and engagement with the ethical issues of animal immiseration and slaughter and establish connections to environmental sustainability.

If we could begin to address the entangled issues of agricultural cruelty towards animals and human encroachment on animal habitats in an early childhood setting, then why would we not address these issues in intermediate and senior educational contexts? Early Childhood Education is not as implicated into the humanist imperatives informing later stages of education (Hargraves, 2019). As Cole and Stewart argue, education becomes more invested in instrumental rationality that is perpetuated literary education by an escalating commitment to anthropocentric frames as they progress in educational levels (2014). As literary education is guided by the tenets of humanism (McHugh, 2011; Tarc, 2015), it, in turn, promotes an anthropocentric “onto-ethico-epistemology” (Barad, 2003) that devalues most animal species. In “Re-animalizing *Animal Farm*” I sought to specifically analyse the source of the human exceptionalism embedded in academic scholarship and literary education and how this pervasive anthropocentric project

manifests in the systematic de-animalization of the most iconic of animal themed texts, *Animal Farm*. It is a book that has been a fixture in English education for generations but one that has been so rarely interpreted, analysed, and taught beyond the anthropocentric frame in much the same fashion as *Charlotte's Web*. What would it mean to reclaim this classic work and restore the animal frame of entangled had human and animal oppression that Orwell emphasizes in his under-read preface to the Ukrainian translation (Letemendia, 1992).

As is the case with *Charlotte's Web*, *Animal Farm* is an established animal themed text that has been incorporated to advance a human exceptionalist/instrumentalist ideology that both texts clearly problematize. The imposed anthropo-allegorical frame narrows the acceptable interpretive frame to an anthropocentric consensus that renders animal characters and experiences as symbolic resources to be mined for humanist value (Fudge, 2009; Oerlemans, 2018). This is particularly true for *Animal Farm* in which the interpretive frame is confined to a codified symbolic scheme that symbolically maps each animal and event onto an anthropocentric parallel history that serves as the master narrative (Tiffin, 2007). The implicit message revealed to students is that animal characters and stories present no value on their own terms; they are mere resources to be extracted to advance human interests. In such ways, the symbolic space of literary education upholds the power relations and economic imperatives constituting what Nicole Shukin calls “animal capital” by reproducing the logics of animal exploitation in the English Language Arts classroom (2009). To understand this process, Derridean deconstruction (1998) is required but we must go beyond merely deconstructing *Animal Farm* the text – we must deconstruct the interpretive frames, theories and traditions that inform the ongoing reception and educational utilization of Orwell’s classic in order to reclaim it.

Central to Derridean deconstruction, as outlined in *Of Grammatology* and *Margins of Philosophy* (Derrida, 1998; 1982) is hegemonic frames of interpretation are established through the systematic exclusion of pluralistic voices and perspectives, what Derrida calls “pluridimensionality” (1998). Accordingly, the imposition of a hegemonic frame, or what Kenneth Burke referred to as “terministic screens,” are constituted to forestall interpretive contestation, or to contain it within the bounds of acceptable ideological, as well as onto-epistemological engagement (1966). Raymond Williams has argued that hegemony is always contested and that its legitimacy is dependent on its ability to “incorporate” organic cultural shifts (2020). Similarly, Derrida argues that pluridimensionality threatens hegemonic interpretive frames by expanding the frames of interpretation to be inclusive of diverse and previously marginalized voices. The ensuing contestation of the literary canon yielded the diversification of primary and secondary ELA reading lists since the 1990s (Dodge, 2019; Sarrouh, 2021). Despite the ensuing intersectional progress that has emerged (i.e., the inclusion of diverse identities and subjectivities previously excluded) the humanist frame continues to promote human exceptionalism by holding the line at the species divide. Western humanism is therefore ethically and ontologically deficient as a means of looking beyond the human as its essential cultural mission is to act as a mirror that reflects (but more accurately, refracts) an anthropocentric image of the world. Accordingly, the “Re-animalizing *Animal Farm*” article examines the limits of literary humanism to not only address animal perspectives and broader more-than-human concerns but also the inability to reconcile human subjectivities and cultures that do not align ethically or ontologically with humanist exclusivity.

Settler Incursions into Animal Spaces

When we arrived at the ECE centre in September 2017, the physical structure of the school had only existed for one year. The nascent suburban neighbourhood emerging around it

was only partially formed. There were open fields on one side of the school marked with foundational holes signifying future habitational spaces for families yet to come. On another side, there had been the completed homes in which families had already settled. I would soon learn that those families had arrived no earlier than three years prior. Adjacent to these freshly formed streets and corresponding homes were two massive foundations on which high-rise “luxury” condo towers would be erected. All around there was a sense of recency pervading this rapidly appearing enclave. Indeed, upon our arrival, the ECEs director informed me that the most exciting dimension of leading this particular centre was the opportunity to watch the children grow with their surroundings. Although I could appreciate this sentiment to some degree, I was struck by the affirmative apposition between real estate growth and children’s development - especially when it was almost immediately apparent that the rapid appearance of this neighbourhood had been achieved through the equally rapid disappearance of spaces and animal lives that had pre-existed this new settlement.

Such affirmative parallels between childhood and real estate development imagine the land without a past - as an unformed tabula rasa awaiting settler-colonial, capitalist intervention to shape it into a recognizably exploitable form. Such preconceptions have deep and troubling legacies in the settler-colonial context within which the presences of Indigenous peoples were and are ignored, denied and/or erased by the European settlers through displacement and dispossession (Tuck, McKenzie and McCoy, 2014). Over time, the failure to remember these colonial legacies by emphasizing newness and development came to constitute what Tuck and Yang would call “settler futurism” (2012). They emphasize that such an orientation is made possible only by the erasure and eradication of what preceded it. This is true on a material level as well as on a cultural-symbolic level. On the historical and cultural-symbolic level, the legacies

of the past remain unacknowledged when capitalist, settler-colonial enterprise advances in an unexamined, relentlessly linear (but never backward looking) trajectory. Accordingly, we learn to appreciate what is appearing and growing and not what has receded and disappeared or has what and who has been displaced.

At the ECE, it became evident that the most visible manifestation of these trends toward and disappearance was the forest surrounding the back end of the school. When we first started visiting the school, the forest had been a source of pride and wonder for educators, children, and parents. Carefully planned and managed visits to the forest had already started when we arrived but our broader collective project sought to make spontaneous forest encounters a central and definitive component of our research engagement. As we all became more intimately connected to the forest and the animal lives within, we also became witnesses to its human imposed precarity. Over time, the forest increasingly becomes a source of anxiety as we, along with the educators and children, observed the relentless encroachment of housing developments and other curatorial interventions swallowing the forest and displacing the animal lives within.

In the first year of our research collaboration at the ECE, we would encounter deer who we could safely observe from a comfortable distance. In the second year, deer sightings became quite rarefied. In the third year, there were no deer sightings. The forest area was also heavily populated with turkey-vultures in 2017-18 and we would encounter them travelling in large groups. By the third year, they had vanished; their ghostly presence only recounted from memory as older children would describe these magical beings who had once roamed the space surrounding the school to younger children who listened with a combination of wonder and incredulity.

At the forest's edge there was a pond populated by numerous geese. In the first two years of our research project, we would walk to the pond and observe the geese. On a few occasions we would see a gander minding her goslings. We would always stress to the children how important it was to always maintain a safe distance from the pond so as not to arouse the concern of the gander. In the summer of 2019, the pond was unceremoniously filled in and it became the rear parking lot for a small strip mall that would be added the following year. By the time I initiated my intensive literacy project integrating *Charlotte's Web* into the pre-school classroom and beyond in the winter of 2020, the forest had become something of a husk of its former self. In 2018, the forest had a lushness and vastness that amplified its transportive power. We could venture into its depths with groups of children and educators and feel disassociated from the suburban sprawl engulfing its edges. It was an expansive enough space to lose ourselves in. Indeed, a group of children, researchers and educators actually did lose their way for a short time before finding their way back, afterward regaling the rest of the school with this most unlikely and enrapturing of adventures.

All the while, we understood that our presence in the forest was a manifestation of the human, settler-colonial encroachment that subsumed the forest and surrounding fields and displaced large segments of the wildlife within, and this presented an ethical dilemma that we sought to confront directly. We guided the educators to help the children understand our complicated positioning in this unfolding erasure. Our goal was to foster self-awareness, to bring the repressed to the surface, in order to re-orient our perspectives and ultimately to begin the process of disrupting the normalized modes of instrumental rationality that informs neoliberal, settler-colonial subjectivity. In so doing, we engaged the children with Anna Tsing's (2015) "arts of noticing" to attune our senses (and sensibilities) to the "polyphonic assemblages"

otherwise absent from our attention and in away that was always respectful and deferential to the animals within the forest. When we encountered animals, we would stop and listen and when the opportunity presented itself we would leave the space as gently as possible to avoid further disturbance.

To facilitate this reorientation, I developed a manifesto titled “Witnessing the Ruins of Progress” that became the guiding mission of our collective research engagement at the centre. Of course, as outlined in an article outside of this dissertation, witnessing is not the end goal of our initiative but merely a place to start (Drew and McAlpine, 2020). If pedagogies and curriculum are going to be designed to counter hegemonic forms of productivist subjectivity we would need to identify and diagnose the problem and children need to be engaged in this process. However, the degree to which children and animals intersect and interact must be carefully managed. Children’s safety concerns are paramount, but it is also important that children understand that they need to respect the autonomy, welfare, and comfort of the animals. The children participating in our research learned that they should render their presence as discreetly as possible to avoid spooking the animals. At the same time, we did not want to perpetuate or encourage surveillance-based attitudes with regards to our engagement with animals (Haraway, 2008). In our encounters with the animals, we were respectfully co-sharing and co-experiencing the space with deference to the animals. Importantly, there are scholars who argue the best thing humans can do for animals is to segregate ourselves away from them (Francione and Garner, 2010; Wren, 2012). Patricia MacCormack (2016; 2017) argues that human depopulation is the only means to remedying the problem of animal precarity and goes so far to suggest that human species extinction will be required in order for animal species to truly thrive (2020).

Undeniably, the combination of human encroachment upon animal habitats with the instrumentalization, slaughter, and rendering of animals for economic production and consumption presents a nightmarish legacy of callousness and injustice against animals (Noske, 1997; Shukin, 2009). At the same time, we must remember that humans are not equally positioned in the structures of power that displace, oppress, and render animals (Kim, 2015; Tuck, McKenzie & McCoy, 2014; Jackson, 2020). Animals, as Orwell famously observed are uniquely, and almost ubiquitously vulnerable to human exploitation and violence. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that human cultures are not equally culpable in the violence committed against animals. Western and settler colonial cultures are particularly committed to instrumentalizing animals by advancing an ethico-ontology of human exceptionalism that had been imported into colonized spaces and rupturing the cultural narratives and transforming the identities of the colonized peoples (Kheel, 1993; Nibert, 2013; Belcourt, 2015; Koleszar-Green & Matsuoka, 2018). Deborah Bird Rose (2004, 2011) and Elizabeth Povonelli (2016) have documented how Australian aborigine cultures were (and continue to be) committed to living in balance with nature and did so for thousands of years until Western settler-colonialists arrived and imposed ruthless instrumentalist imperatives with horrendous consequences for the animal, as well as Indigenous, populations.

The story in what is now called North America was very much the same. Indigenous cultures across these lands were (and continue to be) diverse with unique cultural relationships to land, animals and nature. Many relied on wild animal populations to hunt for sustenance while other Indigenous societies perceived various animals as sacred and of near equal status to humans (Watts, 2020). Mi'kmaq scholar Margaret Robinson has argued that Mi'kmaq culture's contemporary commitment to a more instrumentalized form of hunting had been imposed by

European settler-colonialism that had desperately coveted animal furs and meat (2014). She argues that Mi'kmaq hunting culture emphasized relations of reciprocity and respect for the animal before colonial intervention imposed a more instrumentalized view of animals. She argues that the Glooscap legends and Mi'kmaq oral tradition indicate a cultural commitment to animal wellbeing citing numerous examples condemning the unnecessary killing of animals. It is important to acknowledge therefore that Western and settler-colonial attitudes toward animals are not indicative of all human relations with all animals. The bloody legacies of violence against animals are, by no means, evenly distributed across cultures and when we speak of human culpability, we need to emphasize Western and settler-colonial capitalist culture's vastly disproportionate role in the global immiseration and destruction of animal life. We need to also understand the interspecies/intersectional manifestations of violence against animals and how these are extended by Western and settler-colonial propagandistic frameworks (for example, the recent escalation in white supremacist violence) to reproduce forms of symbolic, as well as literal, violence against Indigenous as well as marginalized people and people of colour more broadly (Chen, 2012; Arvin, Tuck & Morrill, 2013; Jackson, 2020).

All of this is to say that we require more engagement with animals – not less. And we need to think more intensively about the intersectional implications and consequences for the instrumentalist attitudes toward animals and nature perpetuated through mainstream education today (Simpson, 2014; Nxumalo & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2017). A central goal of the Common Worlds Collective is to encourage greater awareness of the mutual vulnerabilities we share with animals and nature (Taylor, 2014; Pacini-ketchabaw and Nxumalo, 2016). Animals are the immediate victims of the “animal industrial complex,” human encroachment and anthropogenic climate change and experience the devastating consequences of these systems and trends directly

(Noske, 1997; Lloro-Bidert, 2017). Humanity is increasingly experiencing the indirect consequences of these crimes against nature and animals, and it is the most precarious and impoverished populations to be afflicted first and worst. Understanding how we are positioned in relation to animals and the power differential between human (children) and the animals they encounter is necessary in shaping awareness of the systems that subjugate and exploit animals and nature. Children need to see and experience the vibrancy and agency of animals as they struggle to survive against the violence and devastation wrought by anthropocentrism, either directly, discursively, virtually, or textually. My dissertation not only makes animals more visible in pedagogy and curriculum but also renders the processes of anthropocentric subjugation, exploitation, and devastation of animal life visible for students to see and question. Correspondingly, I also aim to demonstrate the linkages between interspecies anti-oppression education and intersectional anti-oppression pedagogy as well as with the ongoing commitments to decolonize and Indigenize education in Ontario.

The commitment to fostering multispecies empathy along with critical thinking and action competence for issues of animal oppression builds upon the emerging anti-oppression and indigenizing curricular infrastructure. Anti-oppression and Indigenizing curriculum emphasize commitments to challenging narrow Eurocentric notions of identity and subjectivity. Students are encouraged to engage with a diversity of cultural identities, perspectives, and knowledges beyond the confines of Western onto-epistemology and to identify and challenge the embedded hierarchies and modes of exclusion subordinating marginalized people (Chen, 2012). This project draws on the scholarship that posits the entangled oppression between animals and subordinated human groups (Tallbear, 2011, 2015; Jackson, 2020) but, as mentioned, recognizes that not all human cultures are equally complicit in violence against animals. The violence

inflicted upon animals by humans exists on an escalating continuum to which industrial agriculture and ecological devastation require the most attention. These twin generators of mass animal suffering and death are the offspring of Western industrial capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism.

Therefore, assigning equal blame to all human cultures for animal immiseration dubiously flattens levels of responsibility and obfuscates the highly disproportionate share of responsibility that European and settler-colonial societies have for systematically brutalizing animals over the last few centuries beginning with global proliferation of the fur trade (Shukin, 2009). The capacity to kill and render animals accelerated exponentially with the emergence of the “animal industrial complex” characterized by “production facilities” that extinguish the lives of billions of terrified sentient mammals annually but not before subjecting them to dystopian levels of cruelty and indignity during the course of their brief lives (Francione, 1995; Noske, 1997;). These processes are deeply entangled with legacies of colonialism and imperialism and if we are to educate students about the consequences of these destructive legacies towards oppressed human groups, we also require a curriculum that addresses the entangled consequences inflicted upon animals and a critical awareness of how these forms of systematic violence are connected (Kopnina & Cherniak, 2015; Horsthemke, 2018 Pedersen, 2019).

Final Thoughts

In the future, I hope to extend these analyses to other canonical animal themed ELA texts such as Richard Adams’ *Watership Down* and Anna Sewell’s *Black Beauty*, emerging and more recent animal themed works including Barbara Gowdy’s *White Bone* and Andre Alexis’s *Fifteen Dogs*, and Indigenous work like Rita Joe’s poetic works and the Glooscap legends now being integrated into ELA reading lists. There are compelling opportunities for diverse scholars to

interrogate key texts by critiquing the anthropo-allegorical framing, by interweaving hauntological analysis with indigenized and place-based experiential learning, and by seeking out new readings that cultivate inter-, intraspecies, and multispecies subjectivities -- and solidarity (Coulter, 2016).

My longer-term goal is to develop a book form analysis of these texts and to promote counter-anthropocentric interpretations and pedagogies for teachers. Beyond this commitment, I hope to further examine Indigenous literatures and cosmologies in the context of Ontario's commitment to indigenizing Grade 11 English classes in concert with decolonizing efforts at other levels to propose animal and more-than-human possibilities that align with those efforts. The end goal is not to replace the representation of the human or our interests/concerns but rather to facilitate pedagogies and curriculum that can be inclusive of animals while also reflecting how human and animal welfare issues often overlap, particularly in the context of addressing anti-oppression education that promotes the equity of marginalized groups.

This project aims to promote a deeper and more reflective interrogation of the embedded human exceptionalism in education more broadly and ELA education specifically, and to inspire educators and researchers to consider the ethical limits of this hegemonic orientation. How is education positioned to prepare children and young adults for the existential challenges looming in an ever more proximal future? How might literary education facilitate an inclusive, anti-oppressive future while committed to while filtering these goals through a narrow concept of Western humanist subjectivity that excludes animals and nature that correspondingly alienates, and/or subordinates, other cultural notions of subjectivity? Only by expanding our critical and anti-oppressive educational frameworks beyond the human will it begin to confront the climate emergency and its attendant symptoms while also facilitating the intersectional commitment to

identity and cultural inclusions. A literary education positioned to address questions of animal cruelty and exploitation in addition to human oppression emphasizes the entanglement of oppression and how we cannot achieve justice for some while consigning others to misery whether they be human or non-human animals.

A Final Word on Literary Pedagogy and (Non-Human) Subjectivity

Literary pedagogy retains a powerful influence in the formation of subjectivity (Nikolajeva, 2009). It influences not only the subjectivity of the student reader but also has the capacity shape their awareness of the subjectivity of others, a subjectivity that might otherwise be less understood, or perhaps altogether ignored and/or unrecognized (Tarc, 2015). The literary pedagogical project to diversify the literary canon beyond the works of “dead white men” was one that helped validate the subjective experiences of those identities that existed beyond the privileged and highly limited scope of androcentric/Eurocentric subjectivity (Madsen, 1999; Kolbas, 2018; Bintz, 2018; Cooper, 2020). The commitment to literary diversification in educational spaces has promoted empathetic awareness of marginalized or minoritarian identities with discernable success (Van Vaerenwyck, 2017; Kiser, 2017; Findora, 2020). Although animals cannot express their subjectivity directly through the written word, they still have stories that matter and those stories generate a space through which their subjectivity may be recognized and appreciated by human readers (Fawcett, 2002; McHugh, 2011; Rule, 2014). Interspecies empathy and compassion were primary goals of humane education, but these objectives provide a necessary foundation that would allow critical animal pedagogy to build a critical consciousness and engagement upon. Too often, animal stories have been curated to uphold hegemonic anthropocentric, and even carnistic (Joy, 2020) values (Cole and Stewart, 2016). Canonical animal stories, like *Animal Farm* and *Charlotte's Web* have been largely

hermeneutically drained of their critical potential to disrupt and challenge anthropocentric violence. But I argue that these texts have the potential to invigorate student engagement.

In the case of our *Charlotte's Web* study, we can see how even young children may engage with the aesthetic representation of animals – both fictional and real - and I posit that the potential is further amplified with older children. Those possibilities are undoubtedly worthy of further study. Similarly, *Animal Farm*'s critique of entangled human/animal oppression presents powerful possibilities to challenge anthropocentric (and instrumentalist) paradigms when it is not confined exclusively to its hegemonically assigned humanist allegory as the vast majority of literary and educational scholarship positions it. There are compelling opportunities to develop school-based studies that integrate the frames presented here and then engage students to become more attuned to a diverse range of entangled phenomena and modalities. Overall, this project contributes to an expansion of the boundaries of subjectivity beyond the limits of anthropocentrism through an animal inclusive critical and relational literary education, and, as a result, I hope offers hope.

This project was a multilayered engagement in a variety of ways, notably in its methodology and the age and educational levels of both the children and the readings. Although I began the journey with intermediate and senior grade level considerations for *Animal Farm*, it quickly became clear to me how the novella itself has been educationally deployed as a threshold for students to pass through on their way to maturity. As it is often taught in Grades 7-9, *Animal Farm* reaches children on the precipice of looming adulthood; it is often the first “grown-up” book they encounter. The conventional anthropocentric reading and teaching therefore promote the idea that animals are “kids’ stuff” unless they can be exploited and operationalized to serve human needs – this is how adults relate to animals. So, I realized that this project would be well

served by also reaching back to earlier ages and levels to better understand the pedagogical dimensions of human exceptionalism and to perhaps help circumvent it. Accordingly, the similarly porcine-focused, and similarly ubiquitous children's novel *Charlotte's Web* became an essential extension, one that I could first re-theorize before embarking on the field research for Chapter 3. Chapter 4 then carries many of these ideas forward into the higher grade levels and brings the project back full circle. All of the chapters are unified in their commitment to re-imagining literary education beyond the parochialism of anthropocentrism to promote a wider consideration for ethically sustainable futures in the 21st century, and hopefully beyond.

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Letter of Information and Consent

Climate Action Network: Exploring climate change pedagogies with children Letter of Information and Consent – Families

Principal Investigator

Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, Faculty of Education
Western University, [REDACTED]

1. Invitation to Participate

Your child is being invited to participate in this research study about developing climate change pedagogies with children because he/she is enrolled in [NAME OF CHILD CARE CENTRE] and one or more of the educators at your child's classroom have agreed to participate in this study. The child care centre is a partner in the project. The Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (AECEO) and Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia (ECEBC) are also partners in the Climate Action Network.

2. Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this project is to advance our understanding of children's relations with their environment in order to synthesize knowledge at local, national, and global levels regarding children's creative responses to the impacts of climate change. We are interested in how children engage creatively to address climate change related impacts on animals, trees, food, energy, and weather within their own local contexts. Your child is invited to participate in an inquiry on climate change. In addition, we are interested in the roles early childhood practitioners play in working with children to creatively and locally respond to climate-related issues. We hope that such knowledge will help us create effective and engaging new curricula, pedagogies, and policies.

3. How long will you be in this study?

It is expected that your child will be in the study for one school year, between 6 to 9 months. The collection of data will begin after [DATE (September, xxxx)] and will be ongoing during this academic year.

Your child will participate in the project during regular child care hours. Researchers will visit your child's classroom once or twice a week (approximately 3 hours per visit) during this period to work alongside classroom educators.

Please note that the educator might or might not choose to extend the activities with children (without the researchers being present) more than twice a week, during the regular programming.

4. What are the study procedures?

This is a participatory and collaborative project. If you agree to voluntarily let your child participate, her/his participation will be through his/her engagement in classroom activities and the pedagogical documentation that reflects this participation.

As outlined in the provincial pedagogical documentation is part of the regular pedagogical practices in your child's classroom. Children and educators participate in pedagogical inquiries and documentation as part of the regular activities and events of the child care program. This project is distinct from the regular pedagogical activities of the centre in that selected data will be collected from the regular documentation for analysis and dissemination beyond the centre.

The process of pedagogical documentation involves recording of the inquiry (both by educators and by project team), and individual and collective discussions with educators and children based on the recordings. The purpose of these discussions will be to:

- (a) make visible the learning that takes place in everyday practices in the program;
- (b) deepen and extend the activities observed; and
- (c) follow children's interests and curiosities.

Daily practices that relate to issues of [select one: food, weather, plants, animals, and energy] will be recorded using video, photographs, and field notes. Videos and photographs of your child will be taken only with your permission. In addition, if we have your permission, we will ask children to provide verbal assent to indicate their voluntary participation in the photos and videos.

It is anticipated that researchers will share with others the results of this project in the following ways:

- Through an art exhibit
- In publications and presentations, for example in books, chapters, articles in refereed and professional journals, academic and professional conferences, white papers.
- In masters or doctoral theses.
- In project website and professional social media (see below for more information)

Photographs and video recordings that include children's faces might be used in publications and presentations, if permission is given. However, NO images of children's faces (i.e., images where children are recognizable) will be used online. (Please see the section on Anonymity & Confidentiality below for more information.)

Some of the information collected and the ongoing analyses will also be shared through the project's website (e.g., in a blog) and professional social media accounts (e.g., Twitter). Circulating research knowledge through online platforms will increase the scope of the provincial, national and international audience that our research is shared with. Utilizing a professional research website and Twitter allows researchers to readily connect and share inquiry analyses in an accessible form with early childhood educators, students, scholars, and research institutions and units worldwide. This is vital for the sharing of learning to help build knowledge in the field of environmental early childhood education pedagogy and to improve climate change practices for children.

An example of research websites where ongoing pedagogical documentation is shared through a blog is the Common World Childhoods Research Collective at <http://commonworlds.net>. Examples of social media use (i.e., Twitter) with research inquiries can also be found on this site.

Your child's educator will act as co-researchers in the process of the research. The educator will have access to the pedagogical documentation collected in the program to use according to your Centre's guidelines. The educator might or might not choose to:

- incorporate ideas generated through the project into his/her daily practices for further observation and interpretation
- display some of the information collected and the ongoing analyses in your classroom.
- communicate the ongoing analyses through regular updates via your classroom's newsletter so you are aware of the activities in which your child is participating as well as the learning that takes place in everyday practices at the centre
- disseminate the findings in articles in professional magazines, and at conference presentations.
- contribute entries to the project website blog and professional social media accounts.

5. What are the risks and harms of participating in this study?

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study. However, participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to your child.

An inconvenience for children might be the interruption or intrusion of being recorded while engaged in daily activities. Since both photography and video are currently used in the centres by the educators, the intrusion will be the presence of the researcher collecting documentation. If this occurs, recording will be stopped. It is expected that the children will eventually become familiar with the presence of the researchers and this will stop being intrusive.

6. What are the benefits of participating in this study?

The potential benefits to your child include the learning that will take place during their participation in the project.

The possible benefits to educators may be to have further insights into how to engage pedagogically with issues related to climate change.

This research project may generate potential benefits to society, such as the possibility of increased understanding about how to address issues of climate change through early childhood education practices. It may also help researchers understand how young children can learn about climate issues.

7. Can participants choose to leave the study?

If you decide to withdraw your child from the study, you have the right to request withdrawal of information collected about your child. If you wish to have your information removed please let the researcher know. Choosing to withdraw from the study will not impact your relationship with the child care centre or any other institutions connected with the research study.

However, please note that it will be very difficult for us to remove what your child had said during group conversations. This is due primarily to the fact that after removing one person's dialogue in a discussion, the entire conversation might not make sense in total. We will minimize your child's data to respect your decision to withdraw him/her while ensuring that we can still gain a good understanding of other participants' experiences and insights.

When photos/videos are involved, we will crop the images and delete clips that involve your child.

8. How will participants' information be kept confidential?

Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

Your child's participation in this study will not be kept confidential from their educator. The educators participating in the study will know which children are participating in the study in order to know who can and cannot be included in pedagogical documentation shared with the researchers.

While we do our best to protect your child's information there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so. The inclusion of your child's images through photographs and videos may allow someone to link the data and identify him/her.

Any photographs and/or video recordings to be shared on the project website and through professional social media accounts (e.g., Twitter) might have partial images of children (e.g.,

hands visible, feet visible) but will NOT have images of children that are recognizable (i.e., no faces will be visible).

We acknowledge the importance of your child's privacy, but are not able to assure absolute confidentiality. As with any person working with children, we are bounded by the professional and legal obligations of duty to report.

The researcher will keep any personal information about your child in a secure and confidential location for a minimum of 5 years. A list linking your child's study number with his/her name will be kept by the researcher in a secure place, separate from his/her study file. As well as making sure any identifying information is stored securely please note the following:

- If the results of the study are published, your child's name will not be used.
- Researchers might use your child's personal quotes in the dissemination of the project.
- Please be advised that although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of group research with children prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researchers would like to families to respect the privacy of other children participants in the classroom and not repeat what is said in the group meetings to others.
- In addition, your child will be able to be identified by the child care setting community (i.e., educators in your centre, other families) and potentially by other child care settings in the community (given the size the community).

9. Are participants compensated to be in this study?

You and your child will not be compensated for participation in this research.

10. What are the rights of participants?

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to let your child take part in this study. Even if you consent for your child to participate he/she has the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. If your child chooses not to participate or you choose to withdraw your child from the study at any time it will have no effect on your child's care and education.

It is possible that you may feel influenced to participate because your child's educator is a participant or because [NAME OF CENTRE] is a partner in this project. It is important to stress that your child's participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you feel influenced to be involved because of this perceived power-over relationship, you should decline participation.

We will provide you with an update if the nature of the research changes during the duration of your child's participation in the study, this will ensure that you always have current information in making decisions of whether you would like your child to remain a participant in the study.

You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

11. Whom do participants contact for questions?

You are encouraged to ask any clarifying questions with regard to your child's participation in this research and I will answer your questions to the best of my knowledge and your satisfaction.

If you have questions about this research study please contact Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, vpacini@u[REDACTED]

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Consent

Project Title: Climate Action Network: Exploring climate change pedagogies with children
Letter of Information and Consent – Families

Principal Investigator

Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, Faculty of Education
Western University, [REDACTED]

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree for my child to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree for my child to be photographed in this research

YES NO

I agree for my child to be audio-recorded in this research

YES NO

I agree for my child to be video-recorded in this research

YES NO

I consent to the use of images of my child (including his/her face) obtained during the study in publications and presentations

YES NO

I consent to the use of partial images of my child (e.g., hands visible, feet visible) obtained during the study in the project website and researchers' professional social media accounts

YES NO

I consent to the use of my child's personal, identifiable quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research

YES NO

I consent to the use of my child's unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research

YES NO

My signature (Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw) means that I have explained the study to the participant named above. I have answered all questions.

_____	_____	_____
Print Name of Person	Signature	<i>Date (DD-MMM-</i>
Obtaining Consent		<i>YYYY)</i>
Child's Name:	_____	

Parent / Legal Guardian / Substitute Decision Maker (Print): _____

Parent / Legal Guardian / Substitute Decision Maker (Sign): _____

Parent / Legal Guardian / Substitute Decision Maker (Date): _____



Letter of Information and Consent

Climate Action Network: Exploring climate change pedagogies with children Letter of Information and Consent – Educators

Principal Investigator

Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, Faculty of Education
Western University, [REDACTED]

1. Invitation to Participate

You are being invited to participate in this research study about developing climate change pedagogies with children because you are an educator at [NAME OF CHILD CARE CENTRE]. The child care centre is a partner in the project. The Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (AECEO) and Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia (ECEBC) are also partners in the Climate Action Network.

2. Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this project is to advance our understanding of children's relations with their environment in order to synthesize knowledge at local, national, and global levels regarding children's creative responses to the impacts of climate change. We are interested in how children engage creatively to address climate change related impacts on animals, trees, food, energy, and weather within their own local contexts. You are invited to investigate children's responses to climate change. In addition, we are interested in what roles early childhood practitioners play in working with children to creatively and locally respond to climate-related issues. We hope that such knowledge will help us create effective and engaging new curricula, pedagogies, and policies.

3. How long will you be in this study?

It is expected that you will be in the study for one school year, between 6 to 9 months. The collection of data will begin after [DATE (September, xxxx)] and will be ongoing during this academic year. The anticipated total time commitment for this study is approximately 234 hours.

You will participate in the project during your regular working hours. Researchers will visit your classroom once or twice a week (approximately 3 hours per visit) during this period to work alongside you. You may or may not choose to extend the activities with children (without the researchers being present) more than twice a week, during your regular programming.

In addition, there will be a 2 hour evening group discussion meeting once a month during the school year to revisit and interpret the documentation collected in which other participating educators from the centre and researchers will be present.. You may or may not choose to dedicate additional time to your own analysis of the pedagogical narrations. If so, you will determine the minimum/maximum amount of time beyond work hours devoted to this project.

4. What are the study procedures?

If you agree to voluntarily participate you will be asked to engage in pedagogical documentation, as described in *How does Learning Happen*, in your classroom.

Your specific responsibilities will be to facilitate and document, alongside researchers, a pedagogical inquiry related to climate change. Part of facilitation includes photographing, video/audio recording, and taking field notes of pedagogical moments, discussions and investigations to contribute to a collaborative pedagogical inquiry.

As you are aware, the process of pedagogical documentation involves recording of moments of practice (both by yourself and by the researchers), and individual and collective discussions with you (both during activity time and in scheduled meetings) based on the recordings. The purpose of these discussions will be to:

- (a) make visible the learning that takes place in everyday practices in the program;
- (b) deepen and extend the activities observed; and
- (c) follow children's interests and curiosities.

You may or may not choose to incorporate ideas generated by these analyses into your daily practices for further observation and interpretation.

Practices will be recorded using video, photographs, and field notes. Videos and photographs will be taken of you only with your permission.

You will also be responsible for attending evening discussion meetings related to the pedagogical inquiry. Researchers will also take notes during/after evening discussion meetings. Some of the scheduled meetings will be video or audio recorded for later revisiting. During these meetings, videos of you will be taken only with your permission.

You will have access to the pedagogical documentation collected from your own program to use according to your Centre's guidelines.

It is anticipated that researchers will share with others the results of this project in the following ways:

- Through an art exhibit
- In publications and presentations, for example in books, chapters, articles in refereed and professional journals, academic and professional conferences, white papers.
- In masters or doctoral theses.
- In project website and professional social media (see below for more information)

Photographs and video recordings that include educators' faces might be used when sharing results of this project, if permission is given.

Some of the information collected and the ongoing analyses will also be shared through the study website (e.g., in a blog) and professional social media accounts (e.g., Twitter). Circulating research knowledge through online platforms will increase the scope of the provincial, national and international audience that our research is shared with. Utilizing a professional research website and Twitter allows researchers to readily connect and share inquiry analyses in an accessible form with early childhood educators, students, scholars, and research institutions and units worldwide. This is vital for the sharing of learning to help build knowledge in the field of environmental early childhood education pedagogy and to improve climate change practices for children.

An example of research websites where ongoing pedagogical documentation is shared through a blog is the Common World Childhoods Research Collective at <http://commonworlds.net>. Examples of social media use (i.e., Twitter) with research inquiries can also be found on this site.

As a co-researcher, you might or might not choose to:

- display some of the information collected and the ongoing analyses in your classroom.
- communicate the ongoing analyses through regular updates via your classroom's newsletter so parents are aware of the activities in which their child is participating as well as the learning that takes place in everyday practices at the centre.
- disseminate the findings in articles in professional magazines, and at conference presentations.
- contribute entries to the project website blog and professional social media accounts.

5. What are the risks and harms of participating in this study?

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study. However, participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you. Engaging in discussions related to your pedagogical narrations during staff meetings might detract you from other activities.

An inconvenience for children and for you might be the interruption or intrusion of being recorded while engaged in daily activities. If this occurs, recording will be stopped.

Another potential inconvenience to you, if you choose to be part of the project outside working hours, is that that time will be taken from other non-work related activities of your life.

6. What are the benefits of participating in this study?

The potential benefits for children include the learning that will take place during their participation in the project.

The possible benefits to you may be to have further insights into how to engage pedagogically with issues related to climate change.

This research project may generate potential benefits to society, such as the possibility of increased understanding about how to address issues of climate change through early childhood education practices. It may also help researchers understand how young children can learn about climate issues.

You will be provided with a certificate that acknowledges your participation in monthly, evening meetings.

7. Can participants choose to leave the study?

If you decide to withdraw from the study, you have the right to request withdrawal of information collected about you. If you wish to have your information removed please let the researcher know. Choosing to withdraw from the study will not impact your relationship with the child care centre or any other institutions connected with the research study.

However, please note, that it will be very difficult for us to remove what you have said during the group sessions. This is due primarily to the fact that after removing one person's dialogue in a discussion, the entire conversation might not make sense in total. We will minimize your data to respect your decision to withdraw while ensuring that we can still gain a good understanding of other participants' experiences and insights. When photos/videos are involved, we will crop the images and delete clips that involve you.

8. How will participants' information be kept confidential?

Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

While we do our best to protect your information there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so. The inclusion of your images through photographs and videos may allow someone to link the data and identify you.

We acknowledge the importance of your privacy, but are not able to assure absolute confidentiality. As with any person working with children, we are bounded by the professional and legal obligations of duty to report.

The researcher will keep any personal information about you in a secure and confidential location for a minimum of 5 years. A list linking your study number with your name will be kept by the researcher in a secure place, separate from your study file. If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. You may however want to consent for us to reveal your identity when you are co-authoring articles/chapters/presentations with us. We will ask for your consent every time an opportunity for publication arises.

In addition, given the collaborative nature of this research, you might decide to waive your confidentiality.

Researchers might use your personal quotes in the dissemination of the project.

Please be advised that although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of group meetings prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researchers would like to remind participants to respect the privacy of your fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the group meetings to others.

In addition, you will be able to be identified by your own child care setting community (i.e., colleagues in your centre, families) and potentially by other child care settings in the community (given the size of our community).

9. Are participants compensated to be in this study?

If you agree to participate in this study, we will issue a certificate of participation for the meetings that take place outside working hours which could be used towards your professional development hours. Please note that this certificate must not be coercive. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants. If you would not participate if the compensation were not offered, then you should decline. If you agree to participate in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive.

Letter of Information and Consent – Educators

Principal Investigator

Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, Faculty of Education

Western University, [REDACTED]

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to be audio-recorded in this research

YES NO

I agree to be video-recorded in this research

YES NO

I consent to the use of images of myself obtained during the study in the project in the project website and researchers' professional social media accounts

YES NO

I consent to the use of personal, identifiable quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research

YES NO

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research

YES NO

I agree to have my name used in the dissemination of this research

YES NO

Print Name of Participant

Signature

*Date (DD-MMM-
YYYY)*

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above. I have answered all questions.

Print Name of Person
Obtaining Consent

Signature

*Date (DD-MMM-
YYYY)*

Climate Action Network: Exploring climate change pedagogies with children Letter of
Appendix C - Children Assent

Principal Investigator

Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, Faculty of Education
Western University

Hello, thank you for having me at your group time. My name is ------. I work at the [University Name]. You might have seen me before when I came to your centre. I have another job. That job is a researcher. Researchers are interested in finding things out. I am interested in finding out what happens at your centre. To do that I am going to take some photographs and videos of you and your educators doing the things that you do and then your teachers and I are going to look at the pictures and discuss them so we can understand better what happens here. I will also show you the photos and videos we take. Eventually I will write it all down so that other people can read about what we do here.

I have asked your mom/dad for permission to do this and I also want to ask permission from you. Every time I come, before I take pictures and video-recordings I will ask your permission if you want to be in a photo or video that day. If you decide sometimes that you don't want me to take your picture or video record you can tell me and I will not do it.

Do you have any questions?

I hope that we can have fun together

APPENDIX D
Confidentiality Agreement
CAN

(To be signed by co-applicants, research assistants, and educators co-researchers)

1. Confidential Information

I understand confidential information will be made known to me for the study Climate Action Network: Exploring climate change pedagogies with children being conducted by Professor Pacini-Ketchabaw of the Faculty of Education, Western University.

Confidential information shall include all data, materials, photographs, video, and other information disclosed or submitted, orally, in writing, or by any other media, to _____ by _____.

2. Obligations of Co-Applicants/Collaborators/Research Assistants/Educators

A. _____ hereby agrees that the confidential ‘**Climate Action Network: Exploring climate change pedagogies with children**’ research study and is to be used solely for the purposes of said study. Said confidential information should only be disclosed to employees of said research study with a specific need to know.

_____ hereby agrees not to disclose, publish or otherwise reveal any of the Confidential Information received from Dr. Pacini-Ketchabaw, research assistants or other participants of the project to any other party whatsoever except with the specific prior written authorization of Dr. Pacini-Ketchabaw.

B. Materials containing confidential information must be stored in a secure online location at Western University (and then deleted from computer) so as to avoid third persons unrelated to the project to access said materials. Confidential Information shall not be duplicated by _____ except for the purposes of this Agreement.

3. Completion of the Work

Upon the completion of the work and at the request of Dr. Pacini-Ketchabaw, _____ shall return all confidential information received in written or tangible form, including copies, or reproductions or other media containing such confidential information, within ten (10) days of such request.

At _____ option any copies of confidential documents or other media developed by _____ and remaining in her possession after the completion of her work need to

be destroyed so as to protect the confidentiality of said information. _____ shall provide a written certificate to Owner regarding destruction within ten (10) days thereafter.

With his/her signature, _____ shall hereby adhere to the terms of this agreement.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of Principal Investigator: _____ (please print)

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX E
Confidentiality Agreement
CAN

(To be signed by co-applicants, research assistants, and educators co-researchers)

1. Confidential Information

I understand confidential information will be made known to me for the study Climate Action Network: Exploring climate change pedagogies with children being conducted by Professor Pacini-Ketchabaw of the Faculty of Education, Western University.

Confidential information shall include all data, materials, photographs, video, and other information disclosed or submitted, orally, in writing, or by any other media, to _____ by _____.

2. Obligations of Co-Applicants/Collaborators/Research Assistants/Educators

A. _____ hereby agrees that the confidential ‘**Climate Action Network: Exploring climate change pedagogies with children**’ research study and is to be used solely for the purposes of said study. Said confidential information should only be disclosed to employees of said research study with a specific need to know.

_____ hereby agrees not to disclose, publish or otherwise reveal any of the Confidential Information received from Dr. Pacini-Ketchabaw, research assistants or other participants of the project to any other party whatsoever except with the specific prior written authorization of Dr. Pacini-Ketchabaw.

B. Materials containing confidential information must be stored in a secure online location at Western University (and then deleted from computer) so as to avoid third persons unrelated to the project to access said materials. Confidential Information shall not be duplicated by _____ except for the purposes of this Agreement.

3. Completion of the Work

Upon the completion of the work and at the request of Dr. Pacini-Ketchabaw, _____ shall return all confidential information received in written or tangible form, including copies, or reproductions or other media containing such confidential information, within ten (10) days of such request.

At _____ option any copies of confidential documents or other media developed by _____ and remaining in her possession after the completion of her work need to

be destroyed so as to protect the confidentiality of said information. _____ shall provide a written certificate to Owner regarding destruction within ten (10) days thereafter.

With his/her signature, _____ shall hereby adhere to the terms of this agreement.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of Principal Investigator: _____ (please print)

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX F
Confidentiality Agreement
CAN

(To be signed by co-applicants, research assistants, and educators co-researchers)

1. Confidential Information

I understand confidential information will be made known to me for the study Climate Action Network: Exploring climate change pedagogies with children being conducted by Professor Pacini-Ketchabaw of the Faculty of Education, Western University.

Confidential information shall include all data, materials, photographs, video, and other information disclosed or submitted, orally, in writing, or by any other media, to _____ by _____.

2. Obligations of Co-Applicants/Collaborators/Research Assistants/Educators

A. _____ hereby agrees that the confidential ‘**Climate Action Network: Exploring climate change pedagogies with children**’ research study and is to be used solely for the purposes of said study. Said confidential information should only be disclosed to employees of said research study with a specific need to know.

_____ hereby agrees not to disclose, publish or otherwise reveal any of the Confidential Information received from Dr. Pacini-Ketchabaw, research assistants or other participants of the project to any other party whatsoever except with the specific prior written authorization of Dr. Pacini-Ketchabaw.

B. Materials containing confidential information must be stored in a secure online location at Western University (and then deleted from computer) so as to avoid third persons unrelated to the project to access said materials. Confidential Information shall not be duplicated by _____ except for the purposes of this Agreement.

3. Completion of the Work

Upon the completion of the work and at the request of Dr. Pacini-Ketchabaw, _____ shall return all confidential information received in written or tangible form, including copies, or reproductions or other media containing such confidential information, within ten (10) days of such request.

At _____ option any copies of confidential documents or other media developed by _____ and remaining in her possession after the completion of her work need to

be destroyed so as to protect the confidentiality of said information. _____ shall provide a written certificate to Owner regarding destruction within ten (10) days thereafter.

With his/her signature, _____ shall hereby adhere to the terms of this agreement.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of Principal Investigator: _____ (please print)

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Curriculum Vitae
John Drew

Citizenship: Canadian
Languages: English, French (Competence)

Education

PhD Education, The University of Western Ontario, Fall 2017-January 2022.

PhD, Interdisciplinary Humanities, Critique and Social Transformation Stream, Brock University, 2014-2016 – voluntarily withdrawn

BEd, With Distinction, The University of Western Ontario, 2007

- Junior, Intermediate, and Senior: English, History

MA, English Language and Literature, Concentration: Gender and Culture, Wilfrid Laurier University, 2004

Honours BA, English and Film Studies, The University of Western Ontario, 2002

Award

Best Graduate Student Paper Prize at the *Animals and Us: Research Policy and Practice* conference, University of Windsor, 2018, for “Towards Multispecies Subjectivity in Language Arts Education.”

Employment History

Lecturer/Assistant Professor, Department of English, French, and Writing, King’s University College at Western University, 2021-2024

Publications

Peer Reviewed Articles and Chapters

(Forthcoming) “Re-animalizing Animal Farm: Challenging the “Anthropo-allegorical” in Literary and Pedagogical Discourse and Practice.” *Humanimalia*.

(Under Review) “Unsettling Romantic and Colonial Multispecies Renderings in Early Childhood Education.” Invited paper for *Childhood Geographies*. Co-written with Narda Nelson.

(2020) “Witnessing the Ruins: Speculative Stories of Caring for the Particular and the Peculiar.” *Journal of Childhood Studies*, 45(2): 27-39. Lead author, co-written with Kelly-Ann MacAlpine.

(2016) “Rendering Visible: Animals, Empathy, and Visual Truths in *The Ghosts in Our Machine* and Beyond.” *Animal Studies Journal* 5(2): 202-216.

Peer-Reviewed Conference Presentations

“Animals in Education and Schooling: From Theory to Practice.” With Maria Helena Saari (University of Oulu). Paper accepted at the American Educational Research Association, April 2020. Conference cancelled due to COVID-19.

“Beyond the Anthro-allegorical: Recognizing Animal Subjectivities and Reshaping Literary Education.” Paper accepted at the Comparative and International Education Society, March 2020. Conference cancelled due to COVID-19.

2019. “Wilbur, Napoleon, and Esther: Teaching with Three Not-so-Little Pigs.” Paper presented at the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics Summer School, July 24, University of Oxford, England.

2019. “H.G. Wells and Interspecies (Re)Encounters: Challenging the Anthropocentric Gaze of Literary Education.” Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, April 8, Toronto, Canada.

2019. “Living in a Common World: Storying Young Children’s Relations with the More-Than-Human.” Paper presented at Multispecies Storytelling in Intermedial Practices, January 25, Linnaeus University, Sweden.

2018. “Towards Multi-species Subjectivity in Language Arts Education.” Paper presented at Animals and Us: Research Policy and Practice, October 12, University of Windsor, Canada.

2018. “Toward Multispecies Subjectivities in Education.” Paper presented at CSSE, May 28, University of Regina, Canada.

2017. “Beyond and Behind the Allegory: Teaching Interspecies Empathy through Orwell’s *Animal Farm*.” Paper presented at Living with Animals 3, March 25, Eastern Kentucky University, USA.

2016. “A Dog’s Eye View: Animal Agency in *White God* and in the Making of *White God*.” Paper presented at the Film Studies Association of Canada, May 31, University of Calgary, Canada.

2015. “Killing the Messenger? Masculinity, Class, and the Cultural Politics of Interspecies Empathy in *The Deer Hunter* and *The Hunt*.” Paper presented at the Film Studies Association of Canada, June 2, University of Ottawa, Canada.

2015. “Disassembly Lines: Enlightenment Thought and the Intersections of Human-Animal Production.” Invited presentation at the Brock University Department of Philosophy’s Research in Progress Colloquium, March 20, St. Catharines, Canada.

2014. “Interspecies Internationalism: The Politics and Poetics of Animal Studies in Globalized Classrooms.” Presented at the Interdisciplinary Interspecies Community Conference, November 16, 2015, University of California-Davis, USA.

Conference Panels Organized

2020. “Ways of Transforming Human-Animal Relations Through Education and Schooling: Translating Existing Theories into Practice.” Panel co-organized with Pauliina Rautio and Maria Helena Saari for the American Educational Research Association, April. Cancelled due to COVID-19.

2019. “Big Little Lies: Contradictions, Distortions, and Fictions in Human-Animal Education.” Panel co-organized with Pauliina Rautio and Maria Helena Saari for the American Educational Research Association, April 8, Toronto, Canada.

Public Pedagogy/Media Articles

2020. “It’s easy to become an enemy of the public – in historical drama and today.” *The Conversation*, June 4.

2020. “Four ways you can keep Ontario wildlife safe this spring.” *TVO.org*, May 26. Co written with Kendra Coulter.

Teaching Activities

Lecturer, King’s University College at Western University, Writing 3700G, Writing Humans and Other Animals in the Climate Emergency, 2022 (Winter)

Lecturer, King’s University College at Western University, Writing 1002G, Writing for University, 2022 (Winter)

Lecturer, King’s University College at Western University, Writing 2208F, Writing Pedagogy, 2021 (Fall)

Lecturer, King’s University College at Western University, Writing 1020F, Introduction to University Essay Writing, 2021 (Fall)

Workshop Developer and Leader (online), Early Childhood Pedagogy Network, Western University. “Engaging with Worlds and Subjectivities Through Intentional Writing.” July-December, 2020

Workshop Developer and Leader (online), the Faculty of Education at Western University's Writing Commons for the Curriculum Centre. "Writing Comprehensively" and "Writing Attentively and Intentionally." October-November, 2020.

Instructor, Western University, EDUC 5208, Curriculum and Pedagogy in Intermediate/Senior English, 2019-2020 (Fall-Winter)

Instructor, Brock University, LABR/SOCI/PCUL 3P06 Class and Culture, 2017 (Spring) and 2018 (Winter)

Instructor, Brock University, LABR/CHYS 3Q96 Children and Youth at Work, 2016 (Spring), 2017 (Winter)

Instructor, Brock University, LABR/CHYS 3Q96 Children and Youth at Work, 2016 (Spring)

University and Academic Service

Tutor Pedagogy and Writing Across the Curriculum Expert at the Write Place, King's University College at Western University, July 2021-present.

Grant writer, SSHRC Partnership Grant Application "Children Co-Designing Cities of the Anthropocene," 2020-present

"Critical Friend" for the *Journal of Childhood Studies*. This involved serving as a mentor and editor for a first-time writer's article, 2020

Supervisor for Western Education's Virtual Alternative Field Experience, overseeing BEd students' creation of a critical literacy and critical race multi-unit plan, 2020

Writer and Online Knowledge Mobilizer, Common Worlds Collective, 2018-present

Program Representative, Interdisciplinary Humanities Program Committee, Fall 2016

John Drew, February, 2022