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An Ecology Not Taking-Place: Analysing Ecocriticism's Move from Place and Space to Spacing and Displacement through Derrida, Morton, and Haraway

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Graduate Program in Theory and Criticism
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts
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Recommended Citation

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Abstract

Deconstructive readings of place-space dichotomies in ecological thinking reveal not only a repetition of the subject-object divide examined by Derrida and others, but also a spacing in between these categories. Morton and DiCaglio establish the importance of the in-between to ecological thinking and writing, and they demonstrate how literary and physical irony can reveal this spacing to the reader through an experience of displacement. By choosing to reject norms and instead linger in the spacing, individuals can enact a non-lieu-tenance that radically undermines sovereign systems, defers place, and opens up the possibility of new kinds of intimacy and community. By reading Haraway, Morton, and Derrida's works as critiques of one another, the in-between emerges as a literal (in multiple senses) ethical possibility recognising that, while survival might mean "living-on" one another, it also implies a responsibility to minimise violence against every individual, human or otherwise.

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Introduction

There is a complex divide represented in environmental literature: on one hand, there is the desire to theorise an experience of nature; on the other, there is the demand to stop theorizing in order to experience. Perhaps as a result of this internal conflict, many pieces of environmental literature are characterised by an ironic tendency to reject theoretical language, only to replace it with neologisms that are quickly reappropriated into the theoretical realm. Despite this ironic return, environmental writers have held fast to their jargon, using it as a tool to mark their endeavours as fundamentally different from traditional academic pursuits.

Since the 1980s, and with growing force, environmentally focussed academics across disciplines have taken interest in the tradition of ecological writing. Out of interdisciplinary meeting places emerged the term *ecocriticism*, which has named the critical engagement of theory — especially poststructural theory — with environmental literature since the 1990s. Laurie Ricou asks, in a preface to a 1991 edition of *Canadian Literature*, “How new is the approach labelled by the new term ecocriticism? [. . .] Can the infinite deferrals of a post-structuralist view of language engage the infinite interdependencies of an ecological system?” (5). Read in a certain way, one might understand this question to be asking if environmental literature can replicate, *per se*, an experience of nature. Though such an interpretation might mend the experiential-theoretical divide, ecocritics have given no definite answers to Ricou’s question. Poststructural analysis is embraced by some, such as Timothy Morton, as a complementary and powerful approach to ecological analysis. Others, like Walter Benn Michaels, see deconstruction as an impossible means to a consistent mode of speaking about the world (125-128).

Ecocriticism has brought forward concepts of nature and ecology that radically oppose themselves to much of 20th-century environmental writing. Feminist ecocriticism revealed the androcentrism of the history of environmental writing and thinking, and showed the self-destructive tendencies that this language constructs and enacts. Likewise, poststructural analyses contend that ecocentric approaches similarly inhibit the potential of ecology. Just as poststructuralists might envision themselves moving beyond philosophy, ecocritics like to imagine their work as a move beyond 20th-century andro-, anthro-, and eco-centric ecologies.

Representative of these seismic changes in the recent history of the ecological movement are pieces of environmental jargon that have disseminated themselves across theoretical borders. These 20th-century concepts live on by acquiring new meanings and applications that allow them to remain relevant within ever-evolving environmental discourses. Two prominent terms that have enjoyed such longevity are “space” and “place.” Ideas of space and place are prominent in 20th-century environmental writing and post-structuralist theory, and are located throughout ecological discourse and Canadian literature.

Henderson and Potter present dated but popular definitions of space and place when they call place “rich in personal meanings,” and space “empty of stories” (240). They suggest that story creation and narrative can turn a space — wild, remote, unthought — into a place — relational, historical, valuable. So configured, space and place often name a nostalgia for natural areas outside of urban centres. Such a concept sees the urban centre as the place where humans live, and whatever lies outside of these places as natural spaces. Henderson and Potter see place-making as a de-centring act for this reason; it makes marginal natural spaces central.

Contemporary ecocritics consider space and place, as they are used by scholars like Henderson and Potter, to be jargon that upholds anthropocentric environmentalism. Space and place continue to be discussed in contemporary ecocritical works, but in a new formulation: as spacing and displacement. Spacing and displacement maintain a link to, while separating ecocriticism from, space and place discourses of ecology. Like space and place, spacing and displacement are relational words, but they attempt to forego the subject-object hierarchy that space and place imply.

Place and space, to poststructuralist ecocritics, are reminiscent not only of a body of 20th-century ecological literature, but also deconstructive criticisms of structuralism. These critiques of structuralism view a “place” as an area delimited by the law of logocentrism, and a “space” as the consequent area of exclusion. Place and space are seen, structurally, as complementary structures that comprise a whole system. One of the principal ways that deconstructive analysis undermines this thought is by revealing the existence of in-betweens and excesses that cannot be contained within a dualistic structure. By showing how members of the place category can be displaced into the space category, and vice versa, and by revealing that there exist individuals who do not belong in either category, deconstruction argues that, even though a “space” originates as an excluded area, it, too, enacts an exclusionary rule. The existence of a doubly-excluded area in between place and space undermines the perceived wholeness of the binary system. “Spacing” describes the revelation (in a thoroughly nonreligious sense) of this in-between, and is sometimes used to name the in-between itself.

A secondary kind of displacement is made possible by the recognition of a spacing. In a structuralist system, displacement can only describe a move from place or space to place or space; displacement is always immediately followed by re-placement. The in-between

revealed by deconstructive analysis, however, can become the destination of a displacement which occurs as a move from place to no-place. Displacement and the no-place are concepts that will be explored throughout the second and third chapters of this thesis.

The poststructuralist leanings of many ecocritical analyses suggest that a deconstructive approach can help to trace the connections between ecology, spacing, displacement, space, and place. Timothy Morton writes in the introduction to *Ecology without Nature* that his work “is inspired by the way in which deconstruction searches out, with ruthless and brilliant intensity, points of contradiction and deep hesitation in systems of meaning” (6). Morton argues that a careful application of deconstruction to ecocriticism can both reveal and undermine what he calls “ecologocentrism” (*ibid.*). Morton makes his argument for the deconstructive approach precisely because he believes that it is unfairly rejected by the ecological tradition, in general. Likewise, David Mazel says that he aims to practice a poststructuralist ecocriticism, which he defines as “a way of reading environmental literature *and* canonical landscapes [. . .] that attends concurrently to the discursive construction of both an American environment and an American subjectivity” (xxi). As spacing and displacement gain traction as meaningful ways of engaging with literature, environment, and subjectivity, the case for a deconstructive analysis of these terms grows. This essay takes its methodological justification from the potential of deconstruction within the ecological sphere, as identified by Morton, Mazel, Derrida, and others. Each chapter will examine an ecological analysis that deconstructs an inside-outside division to reveal a spacing. The first chapter will do this by reading Derrida; the second, Morton; and the third, Haraway.

This essay begins with Derrida for two reasons. First, the analytical approaches of Morton and Haraway are both deeply influenced by Derrida. Second, by establishing useful Derridean terms in the first chapter, the second and third chapters of this thesis will be able to speak more concisely and contextually. Morton, especially, uses Derridean terms in his writing: the re-mark, the *sans*, the inside and the outside, and Derrida's critique of negative theology are all important to Morton's work (*Ecology without Nature*; "Ecology as Text, Text as Ecology"). Morton himself points the reader towards several of Derrida's essays that helped him to deconstruct ecological concepts of space and place.

It is not merely Morton's work which invites a Derridean approach. Other essays, such as those by Szerszynski, DiCaglio, and Marshall, suggest that environmental literature is configured around grammars and techniques with which deconstruction can powerfully engage. These texts demonstrate that irony, zeugma, and centring all play a role in ecological writing. A deconstructive approach to language allows for novel readings of these literary techniques, especially as they are presented in ecological texts. That is, deconstruction allows theorists to "read philosophers in a certain way," in two senses: first of all, texts, traditions, and thinkers can be read differently; second, the word "philosophers" can be read in a way that allows entry to individuals who do not conform to philosophy's anthropocentric history. "Reading philosophers in a certain way" could mean, according to the second interpretation of the phrase, learning to relate to landscapes or non-human individuals as philosophers. To do so would certainly constitute a "passage beyond philosophy" ("Structure, Sign, and Play" 8). As such, deconstruction might reveal new ways of doing ecology and being ecological, and could lead to a passage beyond ecology.

To follow these avenues more fully, this thesis will investigate the role of spacing in various ecological texts. By doing so, I will suggest how spacing might help us to reimagine ecological language and relationships as a matter of *sur-vival* — living-on. Analysing three interrelated approaches to spacing and displacement will reveal how ecocritical deconstructions undermine narratives of space and place to create more inclusive, less anthropocentric notions of ecology.

More specifically, the first chapter will focus on Derrida's *The Beast and The Sovereign*. The analysis will lay out significant terms and useful approaches to subject-object and human-animal divides, and will give the reader a strong sense of the foundations upon which Morton and Haraway's books are built. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the interconnectedness of subject-object and place-space divisions, and to show that the sovereign who retroactively posits these divisions always plays a place-taking role that ironically reveals an in-between. I argue that deconstructions of place-space dichotomies always eventually reveal or re-establish inside-outside divisions similar to the ones that they undermined. The displacement that characterises the deconstructive move is, therefore, always an ongoing task. The potential of displacement is constantly to be revealing the spacing in-between the next level of the inside-outside division.

The second chapter will continue to explore the spacing in between space and place by exploring ecocritical approaches to ecological literature. Timothy Morton's *Ecology Without Nature* will be central to this pursuit, though DiCaglio, Marshall, Kay, and others will offer lenses through which trends in environmental writing can be traced, and Morton's work evaluated. Ecocritical texts which focus on anthropocentrism, androcentrism, and ecocentrism will allow me to display ecological writing as a history "of substitutions of center for center" ("Structure, Sign, and Play" 2), a reading endorsed by DiCaglio, amongst

others. It will also demonstrate how irony can manifest as a literary tool that encourages deconstruction, and reveals the spacing that Morton insists is crucial to furthering ecological goals. Irony can do this because it “involves distancing and displacement, a moving from place to place” (*Ecology Without Nature* 98). The ironic move always reveals the incompleteness of an assumption by contrasting it with reality. Irony suspends past and future expectations and makes one unsure of previously assumed meanings. Studying ironic words, literatures, and lifestyles leaves one expecting nothing but the unexpected, and thereby opens up a mode of thinking where preconceived notions hold little value. Evaluating the specific machinations and potentials of irony will build on the work of the first chapter and will focus our lens squarely upon the environmental and literary manifestations of the space-place dialogue.

The first and second chapters will examine and deconstruct human-nature and place-space divides and will establish that a spacing can always be found in between dichotomous structures. Rather than deconstructing these divisions, establishing the spacing, and walking away, so to speak, this essay's third chapter will examine the spacing's potential for ecological community. By engaging with Haraway's *When Species Meet*, I will demonstrate that reading ecology in terms of spacing and displacement offers continuous opportunities to reform ecological communities. Along with *When Species Meet*, Jean-Luc Nancy's theory of community and Derrida's “*il faut bien manger*” will help to demonstrate that thinking ecology in terms of spacing and displacement, rather than space and place, allows access to productive ways of living in community with non-human others.

Ultimately, this project will show that the ecocritical and poststructural literatures that engage with displacement and spacing are complementary to one another and that an

ethics of displacement emerges from their union that allows a deeper thinking of ecological relationships and responsibilities.

Chapter One

Setting the Table: What is taking-place?

Daniel Birnbaum and Anders Olsson: So you take Heidegger's ontological difference to be the boundary between what can be eaten and what cannot be eaten?

Jacques Derrida: Yes, exactly. The ontological difference is the boundary between what can be assimilated and what is already presupposed in all assimilation, but which itself is inaccessible.

"An Interview with Jacques Derrida on the Limits of Digestion", p. 2

In this chapter, I will show that a deconstructive approach radically undermines notions of human and nature, and space and place. By reading *The Beast and the Sovereign* as an ecological text, I will show how Derrida demonstrates the spacing and displacing actions that are always at play within ecocritical dichotomies, eternally rupturing and reforming logocentric structures.

Nature is always already an artifice. If it names everything that is, then "nature" becomes a mere synonym for existence. If it is more specific than this, then to say "nature" must imply a splitting of what is natural from what is not, and this distinction must always be, *a priori*, artificial. Hobbes defines Nature as "the art whereby God hath made and governs the world," and identifies man as God's imitator: "the art of man," by imitating the art of God, "can make an artificial animal" (7). Civilisation, then, is the greatest artifice of all, which imitates "that rational and most excellent work of Nature, man" (*ibid.*). Civilisation is, for Hobbes, "an artificial man, though of greater stature and strength than the natural[. . .]" (*ibid.*). The civil or political man, therefore, must always be distanced from both God and Nature: his are the artificial animals only. Political man, Hobbes suggests, distances himself

from animality by its very imitation; animality made artificial loses its beastly nature and becomes tame and domestic. Man, the greatest creation of nature, distances himself from his own bestiality, taming himself. Sloterdijk, perhaps ironically, states that “[if] there is one virtue of human beings which deserves to be spoken about in a philosophical way, it is above all this: that people are not forced into political theme parks but, rather, put themselves there. Humans are self-fencing, self-shepherding creatures” (“Rules for the Human Zoo” 25). That is to say, man, in the imitation of God, creates not only the artificial, non-bestial, domesticated animal, but also an artificial, non-bestial, domesticated self. Sloterdijk does not find himself in agreement with Nietzsche’s suggestion that men have deliberately “defanged” one another (*ibid.* 23), since many people still have quite a bit of bite, so to speak. Neither does he dismiss the notion, though, acknowledging that the “hybrid thought” of turning “wolves into dogs or ordinary men into professors” is “sufficient to encourage reflection on the humanistic defanging of humanity” (*ibid.*).

One can see clearly in the relation between man and animal the relation between man and (human) nature and, if one takes a further step back, the action at play which places man as subject, and displaces the other as object. The displacing of the other in these androcentric dichotomies — for it is always *man* and animal, *le souverain* and *la bête*, man and woman — reinforces the subjective right of the male to determine the limits of the world. At the same time, these divides reveal to us that “to say something about animals is to say something about humans, which is to subvert the underlying principles that we assume to separate them” (DiCaglio 463 n.22). This is already demonstrably true, since nature, insofar as it is a man-made concept, is certainly artificial.

Humans, it has been suggested, were made by God to be bestial like the wolf, and have been defanged by their own artifice. This “hybrid thought” of Hobbes, Nietzsche, and

Sloterdijk directs our inquiry towards *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Derrida's deconstruction of the notion of animality, by calling to mind the image of the werewolf — the hybrid man-wolf — a central figure in Derrida's discussion.

Derrida notes that Rousseau, in *Confessions*, calls himself a werewolf, which Derrida will alternately refer to as *loup-garou* and wolf-man (*Beast* 63). Derrida doggedly perseveres in his interrogation of Rousseau's language, delighting that, in Cohen's English translation of the *Confessions*, "'loup-garou' [werewolf] is translated as 'outlaw' " (*ibid.* 64). Derrida feels justified, therefore, in proclaiming that *loup-garou* is "a little like *rogue*, isn't it: *voyou*, unsociable, outside the law" (*ibid.*). By bringing together the *voyou* and the wolf-man, Derrida is able to advance his principal argument that the sovereign must always be and always be becoming the beast, because both are *voyous*. He writes that "the 'true' werewolf[. . .] like the beast or sovereign, places himself or finds himself placed 'outside the law,' *outlaw*" (*ibid.*). It is by being *hors-la-loi* — outlaw, outside-of-law — that the sovereign and the beast find themselves drawn together into a single likeness: the werewolf, *loup-garou*, the wolf-man. God is drawn into this complex, as well, for "God is beyond the sovereign but as the sovereign's sovereign" (*Beast* 50). That is, the place of the sovereign "always stands for the place of God [*tient lieu de Dieu*]" (*ibid.* 53-54). The sovereign, therefore, always "takes place as place-taking [*lieu-tenance*][. . .] standing in for the absolute sovereign: God" (*ibid.*).

The likeness of the wolf-man is twofold: first, it is the image of the werewolf; second, it is the attraction between the wolf and man, represented by the "-" which lies between them, drawing them together and holding them apart. This likeness puts us "again on the same track, sniffing out everything that might attract the one to the other, via this *like*, the

sovereign and the animal, the hypersovereign that God is, and the beast" (*ibid.* 50). The sovereign, so attracted to both godliness and beastliness, becomes a

[. . .] figuration of man as 'political animal' or 'political being,' but also a double and contradictory figuration (and figuration is always the beginning of a fabulation or an affabulation), the double and contradictory figuration of political man as *on the one hand* superior, in his very sovereignty, to the beast that he masters, enslaves, dominates, domesticates, or kills, so that his sovereignty consists in raising himself above and appropriating it, having its life at his disposal, but *on the other hand* (contradictorily) a figuration of the political man, and especially of the sovereign state *as animality* or even as bestiality (we shall also distinguish between these two values), either a normal bestiality or a monstrous bestiality itself mythological or fabulous. (*ibid.* 26, emphasizes Derrida's)

The sovereign establishes his sovereignty by demonstrating his superiority to the animal, and, in doing so, he becomes animal himself. The place-taking of god renders the *lieutenant* beastly, mythological, fabulous. In the image of the wolf-man, then, we see the attraction of sovereign, God, and beast consummated. By taking the place of God, the sovereign wishes to distance himself from the beast; his goal is to demonstrate his power and, in doing so, to position himself far above the animal. Yet his reappropriation to beastliness is already assured by this very action. His demonstration of power always becomes a demonstration. The figure of the demon is at once godly and beastly, and recalls the mythical beast that the sovereign always is, and is becoming: the *loup-garou*, the wolf-man: *il est mis hors-la-loi*, he is at once man, myth, and God, a fabulous man-beast, a werewolf. Despite the sovereign's ironic, and sometimes iconic, reappropriation of animality, though, the animal remains his property; the sovereign values the animal only for its labour and its flesh; the animal remains, his property.

The sovereign, as the wolf-man, appears as the figure who lies in between and differentiates man and animal. He does this by defining the borders that establish these divisions in the first place (a place retroactively defined by the sovereign). The sovereign, in the first place, displaces both sides of the human-animal dichotomy by exceeding both; sovereignty “makes the law in excepting itself from the law” (*Beast* 49). By creating the law, the sovereign splits nature from man — he denatures humankind, enacting what Hobbes might call the first artifice. Since the categories of human and nature are undefined in the absence of the sovereign, and because “the focus or the source of the myth are always shadows and virtualities which are elusive, unactualizable, and nonexistent in the first place” (SS&P 7), the emergence of the sovereign as wolf-man is always obscured. There is no “first place” of the sovereign myth, because the myth is what delimits the first place by its fabulous origin. The sovereign figure always already paws the boundary between man and beast, and in doing so, the sovereign determines what is proper to each. Derrida gives a more general name to this sovereign beast figure: divinanimality (*Beast* 127). The a-human other, divinanimality is the “quasi- transcendental referent, the excluded, foreclosed, denied, tamed, sacrificed ground of what it grounds: namely, the symbolic order, the human order, the law, justice” (*ibid.*). The animal whose animality is sacrificed in place of its life calls to Derrida’s mind the myth of the werewolf, whose being is neither *Dasein* nor animal, whose nature is neither human nor beast. Derrida affirms that the sovereign’s role is always one of sacrificial domestication and defanging.

To consider further the role of the sovereign who is also the beast, and who domesticates both humans and animals by taking onto himself the excesses of both, we can consider the Greek writer Solon, who says that

By the exercise of my power, blending together force and justice, [. . .] I wrote laws for the lower and upper classes alike, providing a straight legal process for each person. [. . .] I set up a defence on every side and turned about like a wolf among a pack of dogs. [. . .] I stood in no-man's-land between them like a boundary marker. (160-161)

The boundary marker is the wolf among dogs, the wolf-man who defangs men. The sovereign stands in a no-man's-land because he is no man. The sovereign, as boundary marker, defines the law by standing at its limit. The limit of the law is, then, also the limit of domestication. At the same time, it is the sovereign's location at the limit that allows him to give the law in the place of God, through an act of *lieu-tenance*. The lieutenant of God is uniquely placed outside of the law by the law itself: the law authorises him, and he, so author-ised, writes the law which he retroactively posits as his own authorisation. To authorise the author of the law is to give the right to write the law, which is the law's first function — in being written, to authorise its writing; here again, the "first place" is revealed as a fabulation of the sovereign. The figure of the sovereign emerges as the one or the many who authorise the law and are authorised by it. Sovereignty is, therefore, doubly outside of the law as its author and its authorised.

The wolf-man institutes a law that creates a border between man and the other. The sovereign's law gives the very concept "mankind" its structure; the sovereign man sits as the central figure of the history of man. As with all centres, the sovereign is "that very thing within a structure which governs the structure, while escaping structurality" (SS&P 1). The sovereign is both inside and outside of the structure. He is "at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality [. . . he is] elsewhere. The center is not the center" (SS&P 1). By creating the law that defines what is "proper to man," the sovereign also excludes that which is not. In a single movement, the sovereign gives

domesticated man his realm, and displaces all else that might have occupied that location — man is placed within a system proper to himself, and all else is displaced. What is proper is domesticated man, what is improper is *hors-la-loi*. Of this place outside of the law, Derrida says, “this theological model of the political, excludes from the political everything that is not proper to man, God as much as the beast, God *like* the beast” (*Beast* 50). Again we can see that in the sovereign’s excess, what is proper to man is domestication; to exceed the proper is to be like the excesses of man and animal, to live as God and beast.

This relationship of excesses is further complicated by Derrida, who says that *Dieu e(s)t la bête*. He offers his own interpretation of this, saying that,

God *e(s)t* with or without ‘s’, and so *with or without being*, the beast. The beast *e(s)t* God, with or without being (one). The beast is *God without being (one)* [*Dieu e(s)t, avec ou sans s, donc avec ou sans l’être, la bête. La bête e(s)t Dieu avec ou sans l’être, est Dieu sans l’être*] (*Beast* 50).

Derrida directs those who wish to further parse this phrase to follow “*Dieu sans l’Être*” through Jean-Luc Marion’s book of the same title, and then Derrida’s critique of Marion in *Psyche*. In *Psyche*, Derrida notes that the *sans l’Être* is tremendously difficult to translate, as “its very suspension depends on the grammatical vacillation that only French syntax can tolerate—precisely in the structure of the title—that is, of a nominal or incomplete phrase” (*Psyche* 306 n.3). Derrida continues, “*L’* may be the definite article of the noun *être* [. . .] but it can also be a personal pronoun—object of the verb to be” (*ibid.*). Referring to *Dieu sans l’Être*, this means that God is “who would not be what he is or who would be what he is *without being (it)* (*God without being God, God without being*): God with and without being” (*ibid.*). If we apply this parsing of “God without being (one),” to “The beast is God without being (one),” as Derrida suggests, we find that the beast is God without being God, is God without being the beast, is God without Being (at all). Moreover, God falls into the same

schema: God is the beast without being the beast, is the beast without being God, is the beast without Being (at all). As God and beast reciprocally imply and take the place of one another, and repeatedly vacate Being, the only clear figure that emerges is place-taking itself: *lieu-tenance*, that sovereign position that divides subject from object, *Dasein* from poor-in-world, and who always herds our reading away from any track or trace that might venture *hors-la-loi*.

In the *sans l'être*, the role of the 'without' marks both an inclusion and an exception, says Derrida. By making the beast and God exceptions to what is proper to (human) being, the *sans* of "*sans l'être*" hyper-essentialises its subjects, reappropriating them into the figures of the sovereign and the outlaw. Rather than defining what is proper to gods or beasts by positive qualities, the hyper-essential move defines them by their indefinability; one can refuse to say "god is . . ." or "the beast is . . .", but to do so is to admit that god or the beast is a thing about which we cannot say anything. To say this not only re-defines god and beast, it also re-establishes a border that defines the human being as one who cannot speak about god or beast. Language itself resists the displacement that "without" attempts, and so the subject-object, place-space dichotomy is upheld as godliness and beastliness are re-placed as the borders of human being. The border line always institutes the law of the dichotomy, which places one pole while displacing the other: this is the law of logocentrism. Some might argue that this inevitable reappropriation to the law is a theoretical argument in favour of giving animals rights under the law, since every alternative solution appears to reestablish the same anthropocentrism that sovereign law currently upholds. Whether establishing animals as persons holding rights under the law is a plausible solution is something that we will address in due course.

Remaining within the purely theoretical realm, for the moment, the complications of the reappropriative tendencies of the language of negation lead Derrida to ask, “how to avoid speaking? How to avoid saying? Otherwise, and implicitly: How to avoid speaking—of being? How to speak being otherwise? How to speak otherwise (than) being?” (How to Avoid Speaking: Denials 307 n.3). In other words, how to avoid defining *Dasein* as the human, and the rest as the other, ready to be assimilated or used to uphold the sovereign’s subjects? The urge not to speak drives us to read *sans l’Être* not just as “without being (one),” but also as *sans lettre(s)*: without language.

With a new understanding of the *sans*, and the reading of *l’être* as *lettre(s)*, a much wider spectrum of meanings of *sans l’être* is revealed to us. This third reading, without letters or without language, brings God, sovereign, animal, being, and language together. By the function of negative theology and the move of the *sans*, the beast’s tenuous relationship with being is shown to be shared, too, with language: the beast is with and without language. But what do “*Dieu sans lettre(s)*” and “*La bête sans lettre(s)*” mean? Perhaps that neither God nor the animal cannot be written or spoken of at all — the divine and the bestial lie outside of the realm of language. Then again, perhaps the *sans lettre(s)* indicates that neither God nor the beast can communicate with humankind via letters, and so the authority of the law is always deferred to a lieutenant, the sovereign. Alternatively, *sans lettre(s)* might indicate that choosing to communicate through (human) language always already reappropriates god and beast to an anthropocentric structure, and so their existences rely on being *sans lettre(s)*. Or, once again, perhaps we are meant to understand that the *sans* “transmutes into affirmation its purely phenomenal negativity,” which is to say, the *sans* places, as the transcendental centre of the structure, a system of letters which can never be truly experienced as such: language lies beyond man, god, and beast alike,

separating each from the other and making them unable to speak about one another. This last reading would appear to be favoured by Derrida, who says that the *sans* “deconstructs grammatical anthropomorphism” (*Psyche* 148), and that,

If one cannot make a convention with the beast, any more than with God, it is for a reason of language. The beast does not understand our language, and God cannot respond to us, that is, cannot *make known* to us, and so we could not know in return if our convention is or is not *accepted* by him. (*Beast* 55, emphases Derrida’s)

Tracing these readings thusly, one of Derrida’s principal projects emerges from the depths of the simple phrase, *Dieu sans l’être*. A first reading showed a sovereign God who stood beyond and ruled over being as a transcendental centre *per se*. In a rupture, an act of *lieu-tenance*, God is replaced at the centre of the structure by the sovereign being, which is to say, by *l’être*, which grounds an anthropomorphic grammar firmly within *Being qua Dasien*. Finally, this anthropomorphic tendency of language allows *l’être* to be read as *lettre(s)*, whereby another rupture and redoubling occurs. The centre is again replaced, and God and being both find themselves subjected to the letters that constitute and signify them. The sovereign being is removed and replaced by a literal constitution. This stage is redoubled as literal and as constitution — it is written in letters, it is constitutive, and it is called a “constitution”. A literal constitution is to be understood to the letter. In this final configuration, “to speak is [. . .] to ‘speak the law’ ” (*Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* 21; *The Beast and the Sovereign* 93), because, as we have shown already, there is a reciprocal relationship of replacement and deferral that exists between the sovereign and the constitution, each of which authorise the rule of the other. Language as *lieu-tenant* does not replace the sovereign so much as it obscures sovereignty by giving the law the appearance of being complete, *per se*.

In the emergence of the constitution, the sovereign is obscured; the literal constitution appears as the *lieu-tenant* of the sovereign. Such a literal figure of lieutenance distorts the relatively clear sovereign figure of pre-Hobbesian times. Freud offers a compelling definition of distortion with the German *Entstellung*: “it should not only mean to change something in its appearance, but also: to take it to a different place, to shift it elsewhere” (Freud 3). In addition to “displacement,” *Entstellung* can also mean “to distort the truth.” To create a constitution that re-replaces the sovereign is no simple distortion of history, precisely because a constitution’s *lieu-tenance* is simultaneously a repetition and a concealment of sovereign rule under the guise of authorisation and authorship, as we have already discussed. As Freud puts it, “the distortion of a text is similar to that of a murder. The difficulty lies not in carrying out the deed, but rather in removing its traces” (Freud 3).

Sloterdijk calls this thinking a “prelude” to Derrida’s *différance* (*Derrida, an Egyptian*). Sloterdijk reaffirms this by noting that the Derridean self-effacing trace also appears above. He is well-justified in doing so; in *Différance*, Derrida writes that, “constituting itself, dynamically dividing itself, this interval is what could be called *spacing*; time’s becoming-spatial or space’s becoming-temporal” (288). In the place-taking of the place-taker, therefore, we have found not only an *Entstellung* — a displacement — but also a spacing.

To begin to follow the tracks of this thought, we must follow its trace, in a very literal sense. Derrida offers many explanations of the trace, but is constantly revising his own definition, which he would contend is a necessary consequence of the trace itself. The trace refuses definition, always pointing instead to something anterior: “the trace is in fact the absolute origin of sense in general,” he says, “which amounts to saying once again that there is no absolute origin of sense in general. The trace is the difference which opens

appearance [l'apparaître] and signification" (*Of Grammatology* 36). Sloterdijk identifies one such manifestation: "[there is] an unmistakable trace on the earliest stage of Western philosophy. Perhaps philosophy itself, in the widest sense, is that trace" ("Rules for the Human Zoo" 24). Whereas Derrida's discussion of the trace in *Of Grammatology* is explicitly linguistic, Sloterdijk's is expressly concerned with the trace's physical, political manifestations. "[It] will not be a surprise," he says, "that this earliest trace," that is, the earliest history of Western philosophy, "took the form of a discourse over shepherding and breeding man" ("Rules for the Human Zoo" 24). Along with this discourse was born the notion that humanity itself becomes a zoo, or a theme park. Indeed, "the keeping of men in parks or stadiums seems [. . .] a zoo-political task" (*ibid* 25). Though we prefer to think of our political relations as *bios* rather than *zoe*, here Sloterdijk suggests that the distinction is unclear. The zoo-political is not *bios*, but neither is it *zoe*. The zoo-political tries to domesticate the beast without forfeiting its bestiality; one goes to the zoo to see animals in their "natural" states. The zoo-political is always trying to organise *zoe*, and in doing so, it is always becoming *bios*. The zoo-politic is forever indeterminate, always deconstructing itself. Sloterdijk zeroes in on the blurry borderline between natural and political life, and the philosophical trace that he identifies begins its work by moving from Derrida towards Agamben.

Following the trace of *The Beast and the Sovereign* reveals, especially in concert with Sloterdijk, a problem explored by Agamben in *The Open*. Agamben examines the spacing generated between man and animal. Like Derrida, he recognises the prominence of the hybrid figure that holds the categories of human and animal apart and together. Also like Derrida, Agamben sees language as a structure which divides animal and man in a way that is especially complex. Agamben writes,

What distinguishes man from animal is language, but this is not a natural given already inherent in the psychophysical structure of man; it is, rather, a historical production which, as such, can be properly assigned neither to man nor to animal. If this element is taken away, the difference between man and animal vanishes, unless we imagine a nonspeaking *man* — *Homo alalus*, precisely — who would function as a bridge that passes from the animal to the human. But all evidence suggests that this is only a shadow cast by language, a presupposition of speaking man, by which we always obtain only an animalization of man [. . .] or a humanization of the animal [. . .]. The animal-man and the man-animal are the two sides of a single fracture, which cannot be mended from either side. (*The Open* 36)

The confusion that emerges is precisely the zoo-politic at play: it is unclear what exactly the semi-domestication of the animal in a zoo, or the semi-animalisation of a person behind bars says about the human animal divide, but it *is* clear that, if it says something, then that speech act will be enough to re-institute the very division that it remarks (upon).

Sloterdijk's zoo-political and Agamben's work in *The Open* are reminiscent of Derrida's "onto-zoo-antropo-theologico-political copulation: the beast becomes the sovereign who becomes the beast *and (et)* the sovereign (conjunction), but also the beast *is (est)* the sovereign, the sovereign *is (est)* the beast" (*Beast* 18). This copulation is how Derrida explores the blurred border that is the zoo-political task. Indeed, as Kelly Oliver notes, "[Derrida's] writings are full of various animals with whom he identifies[: . . .] worms, monkeys, horses, hedgehogs, squirrels, sheep, ass, wolves, birds, snakes, fish, ants, sponges, and even viruses. His writings are a regular zoo" ("Sexual Difference, Animal Difference: Derrida and Difference 'Worthy of Its Name'" 71). Calling Derrida's texts "a regular zoo" is not merely idiomatic; "zoo" need not be understood merely as "menagerie." Rather, we can read Oliver's passage as commentary on Derrida's politicisation of animality. Such a reading is destabilising, because when bare or bestial life becomes political, the divide between

civility and wildness, *bios* and *zoe* is radically undermined. It is “as though, through the maw of the untameable beast, a figure of the sovereign were to appear” (*Beast* 18). “Through the maw” suggests, perhaps, that the sovereign has been devoured by a beast, or that the sovereign is a beast who speaks the law. In such a configuration, the beast is not merely a background figure that allows the sovereign to appear; rather, he is “the *hôte* (host and guest), the hostage too, of a sovereign of whom we all know that he can be very stupid (*très bête*)” (*ibid.*). As such, the sovereign appears as a foreground lit up by the bestiality from which it emerges. The sovereign reveals itself to be bestial, and the beast to be sovereign: “the beast *and* (*et*) the sovereign (conjunction), but also the beast *is* (*est*) the sovereign, the sovereign *is* (*est*) the beast” (*ibid.*).

The zoo-politic undermines the categories of the sovereign, blurring the lines between human and animal, and forcing the subject to ask, “what does it mean to be human?” But the reappropriative power of the sovereign is up to this task: the question is, in its asking, its answer. The questioner already assumes his humanity; he does not seek to be reassured that he is human. The non-human has also been determined in advance; the question seeks justifications for answers that it assumes. When a chimpanzee uses a complex tool, or a dolphin displays linguistic capabilities, it is never asked, “is that individual human?” Rather, previous answers to “what does it mean to be human?” are found to be insufficient, and the language used to separate human from other is made more subtle in order to maintain the *status quo*. The border that defines personhood is always shifting; it is what Agamben calls the presupposition of speaking man. This drive to mark out a territory for “human” by exclusion is entirely natural, since to define “natural” is to perform the same act by excluding the other half of the equation. This linguistic presupposition of human and nature “defines the anthropological machine,” a mechanical process that, according to

Agamben, “necessarily functions by means of an exclusion (which is also always already a capturing) and an inclusion (which is also always already an exclusion)” (*The Open* 37).

Agamben identifies, as well, that there is an in-between, which he calls bare life.

The most prominent example of the in-between figure so far has been the sovereign, but his power is to politicise and otherise; the sovereign is not an example of bare life. But the unnatural-yet-beastly figure of the wolf-man is mirrored by many who live in between the politicised regions of human and animal. These figures are defined by one of the two variants of Agamben’s anthropological machine: ancient or modern, the animal-made-man or the man-made-animal, respectively. Agamben sees both the ancient and modern machines at play in contemporary life, bestialising and humanising, and constantly producing bare life. The emergence of bare life undermines any confidence Agamben could have placed in *bios* — he says, in fact, that no philosopher since Heidegger has believed “in good faith [in] the place of the *polis*” (*The Open* 75). For Agamben, the *polis* is merely “where the conflict between [. . .] the animalitas and the humanitas of man, reigns” (*ibid.*), where the anthropological machine constantly reproduces its consequences.

The Beast and The Sovereign follows the same trace as *The Open*, but the two texts come to different conclusions. Agamben believes that

to render inoperative the machine that governs our conception of man will therefore mean no longer to seek new—more effective or more authentic—articulations, but rather to show the central emptiness, the hiatus that—within man—separates man and animal, and to risk ourselves in this emptiness: the suspension of the suspension, Shabbat of both animal and man. (*The Open* 92)

The *sans lettre(s)* and our examination of the reappropriative tendency of negations already give us reason to suspect that Derrida will be wary of this solution. To simply suspend human and animal, to religiously abstain from thinking human or animal, is to solve a

problem by refusing to speak about it. The linguistic elements of the human-nature divide lead Agamben to suggest a move away from articulation and towards Shabbat. But this solution returns us to *Psyche*, where Derrida demonstrates that refusing to speak about something says a great deal about it. The realisation that silence can speak is what brings Derrida to the question, “how to avoid speaking?”

In more concrete terms, a “Shabbat of both animal and man” is simply not a reasonable approach to dealing with ecological issues. Agamben’s solution to the human-nature divide is to ignore the differences that exist within and in between *homo sapiens* just as much as those that exist within and in between the multitude of species described by the one word “animal” (*The Animal That Therefore I Am*). Agamben undermines himself by considering only the complexities of the human side of the equation; he uses the animalisation of Jewish people in concentration camps to demonstrate the atrocities that are legitimised when human beings are reimagined as animals. He does not, ironically, consider that this thinking assumes the legitimacy of animal extermination, and so *The Open* upholds the very division it sets out to undermine by reaffirming the animal as that which can be killed.

So, despite Agamben’s conclusion to the contrary, *The Open* is unable to escape the anthropological machine. Kelly Oliver says that Agamben “displaces the binary man-animal with the binary religion-science” (“Stopping the Anthropological Machine: Agamben with Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty” 3). In *The Beast and The Sovereign*, Derrida explores many similar points of entry to the human-nature divide. Perhaps aware of Agamben’s failure to escape his own machine, Derrida acknowledges that every avenue he explores eventually replaces him within another dichotomy, reenacting the logocentric history of *lieu-tenance* and the ever-deferring logic of the trace. Indeed, Derrida’s move from being (*l’être*) to

language (*lettres*) suggests that the very act of speaking is enough to re-essentialise a norm and to reduce an other, and so every displacement quickly becomes a replacement. Yet, as much as Derrida demonstrates the inescapability of the reappropriation to the inside-outside, human-nature divide, his repeated attempts to undermine dichotomies reveal deconstruction itself as a continuous point of resistance. More than any particular thesis, Derrida's process is his conclusion: the project of making difference irreducible is always ongoing.

With Derrida, therefore, all that this chapter can conclude is that the discussion must continue. In chapters two and three, the issues that Derrida discusses in abstract terms will emerge as literary and experiential concerns. For Haraway and, to a lesser extent, Morton, to ground ecological theory in real lives and experiences is crucial. The double categorical rejection that Derrida and Agamben discuss is a real experience that affects both human and non-human lives, and the language of animalisation and domestication takes on a new gravity when one is discussing individuals at risk in more specific terms. The next chapter will take Derrida's thought and show how Morton applies it to literature and ecology. In turn, Morton's move towards more grounded applications of Derrida's theory will lead us to Haraway, who will fully demonstrate how the "hybrid thought" that we have set out to explore always emerges in the real experiences of marginalised human and non-human individuals.

Chapter Two

Between Here and Nowhere: Finding a New Milieu

There is always a tension in landscape between the reality and autonomy of the nonhuman and its cultural construction, between the human impulse to wonder at the wild and the compulsion to use, manage, and control. [. . .] Seen thus, they bracket a range of environments, some destructive of life and some life-sustaining, some structured largely by human habitation, some a reminder that the human is only one possibility among many.

William Cronon, *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, p. 113

The figures of sovereign and beast always define what is proper to man. The sovereign is the author of the law that gives what is proper to man, and this law excludes animality from the realm of men. This dichotomy, instituted by the sovereign, is what Derrida deconstructs. We will follow a similar path, now, using space and place, and will show that every place is instituted by a similarly constructed law that excludes space. By deconstructing place and space with Morton and Derrida, we can reveal the self-undermining nature of the space-place dichotomy. This will lead to a deeper understanding of Derrida and Morton's term "spacing," as well as to a theoretical notion of displacement. Further, Robert Sullivan's *Rats*, a contemporary homage to *Walden*, will reveal how the ironic language of vanguard environmental writing and ecocriticism reveals and questions notions of spacing and displacing in an attempt to move towards a more just ecological ethic. The aesthetic and literary techniques employed by environmental writing will offer not only fruitful ground for analysis, but will also present the history of ecologocentrism as a series of substitutions of centre for centre ("Structure, Sign, and Play" 2).

Morton sets out to deconstruct place in *Ecology Without Nature*, but recognises that it is so closely tied to a concept of self that neither place nor self can be determined as “ontologically prior” to the other (*Ecology Without Nature* 143; 177). There might not be a self in the first place, but by refusing to determine priority, Morton refrains, too, from admitting a place in the first self. Rather, he sets an infinite regression in motion, continuously tracing self into place, and back again. This entanglement of self and place leads Morton to read deconstructions of subjectivity as critiques of place and space, and vice versa. In turn, this allows Morton to apply a number of Derridean deconstructions to place-space divisions.

One of the most significant complications to emerge in the last chapter was the move from *l'Être* to *lettres*. Morton recognises that to follow Derrida's methodology requires an acknowledgement of the question of language, especially as it pertains to ecology. In our reading of Derrida, this question was explored by investigating connections between being and language, and by asking, “how to avoid speaking?” The issue reemerges in *Ecology Without Nature* in a new, physical form when Morton suggests the intimate relationship between environment and text: “All poems are environmental,” he says, “because they include the spaces in which they are written and read — blank space around and between words, silence within the sound” (“Ecology as Text, Text as Ecology” 11). Derrida's question of language prompts the reader to question and trace the connections between being, language, and the human-nature divide. Morton, similarly, complicates the division between place and space by remarking for the reader the environment that lingers behind the text on her page, and the silence that hides behind the sounds in her ears. The reader is set onto a trace, revealed as much in the ecology of language as it is in the language of ecology. The trace reveals no first place, but neither does it prioritise a space.

Rather, environment-as-space or as-place is shown to be radically indeterminate, and infinitely tied up in problems of language. As the borderlines of the environment dissolve, nature itself becomes nonsensical. In Morton's words,

the environment is that which cannot be indicated directly. We could name it apophatically. It is not-in-the-foreground. It is the background, caught in a relationship with a foreground. As soon as we concentrate on it, it turns into the foreground. In ecological terms, nature becomes bunny rabbits, trees, rivers, and mountains — we lose its environmental quality, though this is what we wanted to convey. (*Ecology Without Nature* 175)

To read literature not as mere text, but as a complete aesthetic, to see that environmental writing is as much page as it is ink, as Morton calls us to do, deprioritises the text on the page, and makes literary questions just as physical as they are abstract. Naming environment apophatically, however, merely begins to follow the trace; Morton goes on to caution that the space on the page or around the subject ought not to be thought merely in terms of absence, for precisely reasons that Derrida objects to the language of negation. One cannot describe the background as the *sans* of a foreground, or as the page without text, or as nature without human beings, because to do so turns negation into assertion, exclusion into inclusion.

DiCaglio notes a similar thought when he argues that a move from anthropocentric ecology to ecocentric thinking does not represent a step forward for ecology. DiCaglio contends that "ecocentrism becomes an act of resituating two conceptually intact entities: nature and humans" (DiCaglio 451-452). That is, ecocentrism replaces "man" with "environment" as the central thought of ecology, and by doing so, continues to define the one by its exclusion from the other. Ecocentrism is a form of negative theology for DiCaglio, because it maintains the privileges of the human category through an act of negation. To

describe negatively, for both Morton and DiCaglio, is to commit the same ontotheological reappropriation that Derrida criticises in Jean-Luc Marion's *Dieu sans L'Être*, and which we have already discussed (*Ecology without Nature* 45; "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials"). This reappropriative error occurs "by effects without cause, by the *without cause*" ("How to Avoid Speaking: Denials" 146). To speak in purely negative terms, via a "without," commits the very error it sets out to avoid; by making something an exception, it re-essentialises it by its exclusion. To read environmental writing with Morton, then, is to try to read "background as background," rather than as the exclusion of foreground (*Ecology without Nature* 45). To be able to do so, says Morton, one must recognise the re-mark which makes the separation of background and foreground occur (*ibid.* 48). The remark is revealed in the trace of the foreground that, in its attempt to make an idea material, brings into question the ideality of the idea and reveals the in-between of material and idea. Derrida says that

This 'materialism of the idea' is nothing other than the staging, the theater, the visibility of nothing or of the self. It is a dramatization which *illustrates nothing*, which illustrates *the nothing*, lights up a space, re-marks a spacing as a nothing, a blank: white as a yet unwritten page, blank as a difference between two lines. (*Dissemination* 208)

The re-mark not only reveals the background as background, it does so by lighting up an in-between. The re-mark always moves from a place, "lights up a space, re-marks a spacing." In this turn of phrase around a comma, the role and meaning of place and space are fundamentally reimagined, as the re-mark transforms space into spacing. To read Derrida's spacing as closely related to ecological notions of space and place does not falsely equivocate fundamentally different ideas; Morton identifies the role of the remark himself, in "Ecology as Text, Text as Ecology," when he writes that "If it ever existed 'before' the

poem pointed it out, the blank page is never totally blank. Space is already distorted. Significance is already taking place. This is how ambient art explores the re-mark" (12). Significance, here, is not merely that which has a place, it is that which is always already taking-place, revealing, in turn, a space that is always "already distorted," *Entstellt*. This taking-place is a *lieu-tenance* that reveals place-making as "a series of substitutions of center for center." (*The Beast and the Sovereign*; "Structure, Sign, and Play" 2).

Place-making is an active process, always taking-place via place-taking, and space is whatever is included in the exclusion from place. The *Entstellung* of space by the place-making process reveals a trace, which in turn re-marks an in-between. The re-mark reveals, undermines, and distorts space and place but, as we observed in the previous chapter, these moments of displacement are always followed by a place-taking which reinstitutes the law. Ecological history can be read in this way as a series of lieutenancies which define, always by mutual displacement, the relationship between human being and nature, between place and space.

Morton reads the history of environmental writing in precisely this fashion. He calls early environmental writing anthropocentric, the Deep Ecology movement ecocentric, and ecocritical literature and "new nature writing" de-centering. Such a reading of Morton, and of ecocriticism in general, is supported by DiCaglio's "Ironic Ecologies." DiCaglio says that "both anthropocentrism and ecocentrism—as well as the process of decentering that moves from one to the other—imagines a conceptual space where the entity called 'human' becomes situated in a new relation to the entity called 'nature' " (DiCaglio 453). Morton has a more general term for the historical tendency of environmental writing to uphold the structure of this relationship: ecologocentrism.

Ecocritical deconstruction is skeptical of anthropocentric structures because of their tendency to divide and define the relationship between human and “nature.” Nature, in this instance, is placed in quotation marks because it is both constructed and essentialised by ecogocentrism. An anthropocentric structure places the human at the centre of the structure, and therefore outside of it — if the human centres the structure, then it lies both inside of and outside of the “nature” which it defines. “Nature,” as such, is displaced and essentialised.

On the other hand, ecocentrism places nature at the centre of the structure that defines the relationship between human and environment. It thereby endorses the idea of a transcendental nature that displaces and defines humanity. Thinking nature as transcendent enforces a theology of nature, and thus “nature” returns to its quotations, reappropriated by ontotheological language for reasons that we have already discussed in our readings of “How to Avoid Speaking” and “Stopping the Anthropological Machine.” We can see, then, that when DiCaglio says, “ecocentrism becomes an act of resituating two conceptually intact entities: nature and humans,” he is talking about a rupture of anthropocentrism, a displacement of the human from the centre, and then a replacement that puts nature at the centre and fixes the human in relation to it (451-452).

As such, both anthro- and eco-centrism create and define nature as fundamentally separate from humanity. What would remain, should ecogocentrism be deconstructed without succumbing to a subsequent substitution of centre for centre, would be humankind dispersed, says DiCaglio. Morton issues a similar call for an ecology without nature, that is, an ecology that does not continue the place-taking history of the ecogocentric tradition. If ecocriticism were to succeed in such a displacement and dispersal, it would be left with no strict sense of humanity or nature. In a deconstructed ecology, “the difficulty we face,” says

DiCaglio, “lies in determining what we mean by this undoing of the ‘strictly human’” (449). Similarly, in the undoing of the strictly natural, the ecological imperative is opened up to new meanings, understandings, and relevances.

Such an analysis only begins to outline and trace the ecocritical notions of space and place and the historical priority of place over space in ecology. Morton recounts, “every time I teach a class on ecological language, at least one student asserts that ‘place’ is what a person makes of ‘space,’ without reference to an outside” (*Ecology without Nature* 49). These notions of place “are retroactive fantasy constructs determined precisely by the corrosive effects of modernity. Place was not lost, though we posit it as something we have lost” (*ibid.* 11). To feel that one has lost place is precisely the troubled ecological dis-position that poststructural ecology wishes to dispense with altogether, by reimagining place and space in terms of re-mark, spacing, and *lieutenance*. Ecocritics are, in a manner of speaking, attempting to literally denature concepts. Perhaps the literary tool best suited to this goal is irony.

When Morton writes that “ironically, to contemplate deep green ideas deeply is to let go of the idea of Nature” (*Ecology Without Nature* 204), the reader should understand ‘ironically’ to name the method by which one lets go of the idea of Nature. DiCaglio and Marshall describe irony as the means by which one can enter into the distance in-between place and space, subject and object. Exploring this distance in between, rather than simply doing away with the dichotomy, is important because, in Morton’s words,

If we try to get rid of distance too fast, in our rush to join the nonhuman, we will end up caught in our prejudice, our concept of distance, our concept of “them.” Hanging out in the distance may be the surest way of relating to the nonhuman. (*Ecology Without Nature* 204-205)

How can we conceive of this in-between in spatial terms, and by what means can we come to linger there, in between the categories of the dichotomy? The act of entering the spacing requires a double-displacement. As has been demonstrated, “man,” “nature,” “animal,” and other terms that name the subject or object in a dichotomy begin to deconstruct themselves by crossing the borders that attempt to separate them. Man is bestial as much as animal is domestic, the artificial is as natural as the natural is artificial, etc. — deconstruction reveals that each pole contains within itself its opposite, and that between any two poles there lies an infinite greyscale of possible identities (“Sexual Difference, Animal Difference: Derrida and Difference ‘Worthy of Its Name’” 72-73). These identities, scattered and intermittent, reveal in the spacing between them *différance* at play. Spacing, then, is a function of a *différance* which defies dichotomies and defers definitions, preferring to reveal only that there is more to come (*à venir/avenir*). DiCaglio and Morton see the dispersal of the human and an ecology without nature, respectively, as ecology’s end. Both agree that learning to live in the spacing in between human and nature is the first step towards that goal.

“New” environmental writing works towards this first step; authors display a keen awareness of many of the tropes which Morton criticises, and carefully use literary techniques to play with these histories in ways that reveal the re-mark to the reader. This is done ironically, by means of irony. The power of irony is that it can force the reader to read differently, that is, to read the difference between the text and its meaning. In DiCaglio’s words, irony is able to “[enact] the doubled critique of ecology. It dislocates the perception of conceptual location, allowing readers to begin to experience the dispersion of the human implied by ecology” (DiCaglio 459). A “conceptual location” is certainly a place. That it can dislocate the perception of place, even (or perhaps especially) on a grammatical level, is the power of the ironic move. Irony reveals the place as non-place by dis-locating location.

“Irony involves distancing and displacement, a moving from place to place,” says Morton (*Ecology Without Nature* 98). A moving from place to place is a re-placement, an acknowledgement of the seemingly inevitable continuation of ecocentrism. Were it not resigned to ecocentric re-appropriation, Morton’s sentence might read instead, “irony involves distancing and displacement, a moving from place to no-place.”

Despite their agreement on irony’s potential for displacement, the fruits that Morton and DiCaglio see it bear are ostensibly different. Morton contends that “irony must forge intimate relationships with strangers” (*Ecology Without Nature* 101), whereas DiCaglio sees irony as a critical step towards “the identity-dispersing reality of ecological thinking” (451). For DiCaglio, rather than forging them, irony radically undermines relationships by dissolving the very notions of self and other upon which they were built. Further investigation reveals, however, that Morton’s thinking is more or less in agreement with DiCaglio’s. The stranger of whom Morton speaks is Derrida’s *arrivant*. The *arrivant*, which Morton translates in “Queer Ecology” as “strange stranger,” replaces “animal” after the dissolution of the human-nature complex. Freed from the bounds of the human-nature dichotomy, Morton argues, the *arrivant* can be encountered honestly, in all of its strangeness. His claim that “irony must forge intimate relationships with strangers,” can be read very differently, when the word “stranger” is understood in this way. For Morton, “the identity-dispersing reality of ecological thinking” is exactly what allows intimate relations precisely because it allows the stranger their strangeness; it makes differences irreducible, and allows for a previously impossible kind of intimate relationship. Though DiCaglio might see identity dispersal as relationship-destroying, this would only be the case insofar as those relationships were built upon problematic notions of self and other. Irony can recreate the ground upon which relationships are built, opening new possibilities for living-with:

Rather than taking us back to the human, the ironic doubling of recent nature writing always takes us to the ecological. That is, they take the critiques of anthropocentrism (which have brought us to the nonhuman) and add a further critique (taking us back to the human) in order to subvert the categorical separation implied by the distinction. (DiCaglio 459)

Bringing DiCaglio and Morton together, then, one can say that irony is able to forge intimate relationships with strangers in proportion to the identity-dispersal that it inspires. To begin to relate in new ways, though, requires a doubled ironic move, the result of which is not a revelation of the omnipresence of nature or man, but a conceptual displacement of both.

Any move into the in-between of a dichotomy must be a double displacement, equally enacted upon both subject and object. When the subject leaves a place, it also relinquishes the space that was defined by its exclusion from that place. To be located in spacing, then, is to locate oneself in both a not-space and a not-place; this in-between uniquely allows individuals to work towards the dissolution of conceptual categories. This applies not only to human and nature, but also to the dichotomies that are inexorably tied up in this opposition:

natural is masculine. Rugged, bleak, masculine Nature defines itself through contrasts: outdoorsy and extraverted, heterosexual, able-bodied [. . .] There is no room for irony or for ambiguity that is more than superficial. There is scant space for humor, except perhaps a phobic, hearty kind. (“Guest Column: Queer Ecology” 279)

In this passage the trace reemerges, revealing that there is always another level of ‘place’ to be abandoned. Like deconstruction, entering the spacing is an ongoing task of identifying and abandoning norms. The infinite possibility of displacement which spacing allows is where DiCaglio and Morton find the possibility of a truly just ecology, precisely because spacing must always be actively occurring; its dynamisms resist the urge to claim spacing as

one's own and, in doing so, to re-place oneself. The constant displacement that spacing requires is an infinite function of a *différance* that is always revealing new differences, and always deferring place and space. Absent of social, political, and biological norms, justice takes on entirely new characteristics in the spacing ("Sexual Difference, Animal Difference: Derrida and Difference 'Worthy of Its Name'"). Indeed, Derrida says that to move beyond the injustices of man/animal, man/woman, man/nature divides requires "the determination of this singular "beyond-place" or "no-place" [*non-lieu*]" ("FORS" 77) — quite the opposite of a *lieu-tenance*. This beyond-place would be a "no-place or non-place within space, a place as no-place" (*ibid.*). The possibility of this dis-placed place is a justice that lies beyond the realm of the law. The *non-lieu* "indicates that the space of acquittal or engagement should never even have been drawn up" (*ibid.*), it reveals that the law of man is always already unjust to that which is displaced: woman, animal, nature, the other, etc. Derrida insists that "it is necessary to keep, *save* (except for, *hormis, fors*) (,) in a no-place the *other* place" (*ibid.*, emphasizes Derrida's). The role of 'save' in this sentence is deliberately ambiguous, and opens the imperative to multiple, contradictory readings. This tension and constructive ambiguity is precisely the possibility of the *non-lieu*.

As a result of the identity dispersal which the move from place to no-place enacts, the very idea of relationship, traditionally thought, is undermined. Without a determined, subjective self to make the other into object, relationship must be reconceived as a complex and contextual interaction between *arrivants*; relationship in the *non-lieu* opens a new *mi-lieu*. Relating in the in-between, in a milieu of the displaced, there is opportunity for "intimate relationships with strangers," especially since the self, in the loss of subjectivity, becomes stranger to itself. If ecocritical irony achieves its goal, the reader experiences displacement to such an extent that her very sense of identity is complicated and

undermined, and she experiences what Marshall calls an “effect of defamiliarization” with both the other and herself (292). When irony successfully reveals to the reader the *différance* at play in between place and space, self and other, taking-place ceases to be a question of the present self, and becomes, instead, the complex and contextual question of a multiplicity of presences and their futures. That is, “what is taking place” ceases to be a descriptor of the present; it becomes an interrogative, “what is taking-place?,” that calls the *lieu-tenant* into question, reveals the in-between that undermines his law, and chooses to work towards a future built around intimate relations between *arrivants*. This deferral of taking-place from present to future allows one to linger in the spacing, though there always remains the threat of a taking-place to-come (*à venir*). It is in this perpetual deferral of the law that the possibility of just relationships emerges.

In light of this analysis, we can come to a reading of irony that combines two Derridean neologisms — *non-lieu* (“FORS” 77) and *lieu-tenance* (*The Beast and the Sovereign* 54). If it moves the reader from place to no-place, and allows intimate relationships that do not enact subject-object dichotomies, then irony functions as a *non-lieu-tenance*; irony is not-taking-place, it is taking-no-place. *Non-lieu-tenance* refuses to be placed within a structure or hierarchy, it discontinues the process of “a series of substitutions of center for center,” and it questions the existence of the location in and of the first place (“Structure, Sign, and Play” 2). Precisely by its inaction irony reveals the potential of the deferral (*différance*) that it endorses.

At the very least, “an ironic environmentalism would encourage forms of labelling which involved more complex modes of transparency, ones which encourage critical reflection about the limits and assumptions of any given frame” (Szczesny 352). Even when structures resist the deconstructive tendencies of ecocritical irony, the doubled ironic

movement forces the reader to critically engage with the question of framing, and to see the structure at play which separates text from page, inside from outside, place from space. By not-taking-place, the subject lingers in-between these dichotomies, open to myriad possibilities that, in the absence of norms, each appear uniquely strange. The subject, doubly displaced by irony, becomes the individual not-taking-place. Irony, in this way, opens up new possibilities for identities and relationships, be they “catastrophic, monstrous, nonholistic, and dislocated, not organic, coherent, or authoritative” (“Guest Column: Queer Ecology” 275).

Continuing his discussion of the potential for intimate relations between strangers, Morton contends that, after the dissolution of dichotomies, individuals are freed from the constraints of community, and are free to engage with one another as a collectivity. For Morton, it seems as though the transformation that changes the subject into an individual also changes the community into a collective. In other words, community, to Morton, always implies a totality or a world-making, and therefore it always establishes an inside and an outside:

Community is a holistic concept, used for instance in Aldo Leopold’s acclaimed notion of ‘biotic community.’ For the sake of the whole, parts might be left to die — the whole is bigger than their sum, after all. By contrast, collectivity results from consciously choosing coexistence. This choice cannot be totalizing. Collectivity is always to come, since it addresses the arrivant, evanescent to the same extent as she, he, or it (how can we tell for sure?) is disturbingly there. We shall achieve a radical ecological politics only by facing the difficulty of the strange stranger. This brings us to the epigraph from the Christian theologian George Morrison. Ecological coexistence is “nearer than breathing, closer than hands and feet” (106). We have others — rather, others have us — literally under our skin (Clark). This is about

symbiosis, but it's also about what Donna Haraway calls 'companion species.'

("Guest Column: Queer Ecology" 277)

This passage leaves us with a web of references to untangle. First, the biotic community is cast as an eco-centric notion. This communitarian sense, ironically, justifies the elimination of some from the community in order to support the totality. Morton advocates instead for a collectivity to come, a reference to the Derridean *à venir*. He also says that the type of relationship this allows is like Haraway's companion species.

In "A Cyborg Manifesto" and *When Species Meet*, Haraway displays contempt for the inside-outside divisions of communities: "monsters have always defined the limits of community in Western imagination," she says ("A Cyborg Manifesto" 180). Yet, she also begins "A Cyborg Manifesto" by saying that she is attempting

[. . .] to build an ironic political myth faithful to feminism, socialism, and materialism. Perhaps more faithful as blasphemy is faithful [. . .] Blasphemy protects one from the moral majority within, while still insisting on the need for community. Blasphemy is not apostasy. Irony is about contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes, even dialectically, about the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and true. (149)

Haraway sees the problems of community similarly to Morton, but she also insists on the necessity of community. As more than a mere literary device, for Haraway, irony insists that community is at once the problem and the solution. The very embodiment of Morton's goal — Haraway's companion species — marks for Haraway a return to a kind of community, though in a radically different, ever-ironic sense. For Morton, community is world-building — *mondialisation* — and this pursuit is always totalising, and always damaging, since "world fits mind, and mind fits world. The teleology implicit in this chiasmus is hostile to inassimilable difference. [. . .] Worlds have horizons: here and there, inside and outside" ("Guest Column: Queer Ecology" 278). Morton's conclusion is to propose collectivity as a

tertium datur, made possible by ironising community. Haraway, conversely, proposes companion species and *When Species Meet* not as a previously unseen alternative, but as an *autre-mondialisation*, an “other-world-making” that occurs as a constant deconstruction of world-making that is always learning how better to be in relationship with one another as individuals and as collectives. Perhaps Morton would identify this transformed community as the collective which he seeks, or perhaps he would contend that “community” carries too much baggage to remain a productive term. With guidance from Morton, as well as from the authors who establish his process and his goal — most prominently Derrida and Haraway — we will return to the question of community in the next chapter.

For now, though, we will continue discussing the ability of irony to transform subjectivity into individuality and *mondialisation* into *autre-mondialisation*. Robert Sullivan’s *Rats* exemplifies the potential of irony in environmental writing. In *Rats*, the first move of irony reveals that the human being has been displaced from nature. The second move displays that nature continues to exist within the city, inside of and beneath man’s greatest artificial achievements. *Rats* uses language and imagery from *Walden* in order to subvert traditional categories that nature writing has historically upheld. Whereas *Walden* begins,

When I wrote the following pages, or rather the bulk of them, I lived alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts, and earned my living by the labor of my hands only. I lived there two years and two months. At present I am a sojourner in civilized life again. (1)

Robert Sullivan’s *Rats*, which Marshall refers to as an exemplar of the “new” Nature writing, begins,

When I wrote the following account of my experiences with rats, I lived in an apartment building on a block filled with other apartment buildings amidst the approximately eight million people in New York City, and I paid rent to a landlord

that I never actually met — though I did meet the superintendent, who was a very nice guy. At the moment I am living out of the city, away from the masses, in a bucolic little village with about the same number of inhabitants as my former city block. (1)

Sullivan's text, from the very start, denatures *Walden* by use of ironic effect. It does this in two senses: first, Sullivan's language, which closely follows Thoreau's, makes it abundantly clear that the nature of *Walden* will be absent from *Rats*. The reworking of Thoreau's words, therefore, indicates that *Rats* can be read as a *Walden* without Nature, or a *Walden*, denatured. Marshall notes that, in *Rats* and other contemporary ecological works, "because the allusive layering is essentially ironic, the invocation of — and then deliberate departure from — the nature writing tradition serves to clarify the nature of the shift taking place in our recent conceptions of nature" (292).

The second denaturing is a result of the *sans* — the "without" — and the ironic turn that it institutes. "There is a deconstructive impulse to all this," says Marshall. "[*Rats* is] privileging the unprivileged, reversing assumptions about what is natural and what is not, in order to destabilize our assumptions. And what is being deconstructed are the romantic assumptions of the nature writing tradition" (286). In other words, *Rats* not only reads as a *Walden* devoid of nature, it equally presents the New York City back alley as teeming with nature, but of a different sort. By revealing to the reader the nature present underneath piles of restaurant garbage, Sullivan undermines the very concept of nature that Thoreau presents. Whereas Thoreau declares, "I learned this, at least, by my experiment [. . .] If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them" (286), Sullivan "learned this, at the very least, by sitting in a rat alley: [. . .] Life is vile and mean in many ways, but exterminators advance towards society's depths and meet life there and see it for what it is, in some cases" (217). If *Walden*

is, itself, a castle in the air, Sullivan attempts to build, in *Rats*, a foundation beneath it. Ironically, this foundation de-stabilises the text, rather than offering it support. The very idea of nature, as well as the civilisation that it displaces, is undermined by Sullivan, who, by showing how the two intermingle, coexist, and support one another, fundamentally undermines the very division that he is exploring. “It’s about realizing our place in the world, as it is,” declares Marshall: “[. . .] not as idealized visions suggest it could be or ought to be. Walled-in instead of Walden” (Marshall 288). To realise this place, though, as an “un-ideal” (*ibid.*; Sullivan 27) is equally to recognise the background or the space which it de-prioritises. Place is revealed as an un-ideal, walled-in, by the recognition of a spacing. We do not move from a place of ideals to somewhere hopelessly tangible, but to a place in between Walden and walled-in, to a non-lieu that insists ideals take on new forms and reject hypocritical impulses, like the one that would have us see Concord as more “natural” than New York City. The in-between is where ideals must contend with the abundant strangeness of reality. What Sullivan reveals through his double de-naturing of *Walden* is the potential of irony to enact the *sans* without saying it.

This is a critical point: doubled irony can perform the displacing move of the *sans* without committing the hyper-essential reappropriation; it allows the reader to linger in the distance in-between assertion and negation. When irony acts upon itself as it does in *Rats*, revealing sewer rats as nature in New York City, but also demonstrating the non-existence of nature in the first place, it avoids the re-appropriative move that Derrida reveals as intrinsic to the *sans l’être*, because at every step it re-displaces itself. As such, doubled irony has the potential to skirt the ecologocentric tradition of substituting centre for centre by constantly revealing what was thought to be central to be at some location “over there.” When it is infinitely deferred, the place “over there” is a place to-come.

Writers who use irony as Sullivan does offer a new method of approaching ecology, because they “double the decentering critique of anthropocentrism by critiquing ecocentrism,” according to DiCaglio. This is the first displacement that irony performs. The second is the more powerful: “instead of returning us to a kind of anthropocentrism, a critique of ecocentrism leads us to an anticentrism: a decentering of the idea of a center itself. Realizing this lack of centrality is the equivalent, in spatial terms, to the dispersal of the human” (DiCaglio 458-459). A lack of centrality, “in spatial terms,” is lack itself, as “the notion of a structure lacking any center represents the unthinkable itself” (“Structure, Sign, and Play” 1). This unthinkable anticentrism is, again, a manifestation of *non-lieu-tenance*, a location that exists in no-place, a structure lacking centrality.

The structural irony of *Rats* is matched by a more personal irony which reveals the same *non-lieu-tenance* at play. This irony is revealed in a few ways. Sullivan’s diction, at times, places words together in ways that create ironic tensions, calling the appearance of a rat, for example, a “perverse miracle” (185). The “perverse miracle” recalls Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto” insofar as it seeks “to build an ironic political myth faithful [as blasphemy is faithful] to feminism, socialism, and materialism” (149). The tension that Sullivan creates between the perverse and the miraculous is no mistake; Sullivan later praises “my Rat King, [. . .] I saw him as a star among stars in the deep and capacious alley of rats. For me, this rat cast a transcendent sublimity[. . .]” (193). The Rat King here is an image both blasphemous and faithful because it exalts, in thoroughly ironic fashion, a replacement for the human sovereign. Furthermore, Sullivan doubles the ironic effect by recalling Martin Luther, who famously referred to the pope as a *Rattenkönig*, suggesting that the papacy was “a group of powerful rats joined at their tails and fed by other, subservient rats” (Moore 29). Luther’s critique of the rat *lieu-tenant* of god is recalled by

Sullivan's invocation of the term "Rat King," but in a bizarre and destabilizing way. Whereas Luther uses the term as a deeply blasphemous criticism, Sullivan does not mean to disparage his Rat King, but to exalt him as an actual rat who is king, "a star among stars" (193). Whereas Luther's Rat King is immoral, living off of the labour of others, Sullivan's has a particularly amoral quality: the ideal that Sullivan's Rat King invokes is of "the Brute Neighbor in all of us, the representative Unrepresented Rat" (193). This phrase is replete with irony. Sullivan's Rat King is representative of the unrepresentable, somehow speaking to Sullivan what cannot be spoken. Sullivan identifies the Rat King as the "brute neighbor" (Thoreau's term for non-human co-habitants) within himself; a doubled irony wherein the animal emerges in the human, and the neighbour emerges in the self. Sullivan's Rat King exists in between godliness and beastliness, human and nature, self and other. The Rat King represents the unrepresentable, existing in a location that is no-place at all. Luther and Sullivan's Rat Kings do share one thing in common: both are faithful as blasphemy is faithful. Sullivan's, though, uses ironic effect to present the Rat King as an ironic political myth.

The myth of Sullivan's Rat King emerges as an ironic reproduction of Derrida's sovereign. Though the figure of beastliness emerges from the term Rat King, it rears its head as the brute neighbour in Sullivan, rather than in the Rat King, *per se*. In fact, rather than beastliness, the rat who is king embodies, for Sullivan, a particular civilising sociality:

My rat, my leader of rats, my rat that doesn't seem to so much lead as to coerce — my Rat King, which I called it even though I knew it was not a huge Rat King that sat on a ring of other rats' tails. [. . .] I saw him as a star among stars in the deep and capacious alley of rats. For me, this rat cast a transcendent sublimity that united these unwanted inhabitants of the ally in particular and the city in general, even if they are abhorred. (193)

Sullivan's approach to sovereignty comes from the opposite direction entirely of Derrida's — Sullivan works out of animality, not humanity. As such, *Rats* can be read as a supplement to Derrida's deconstruction of the sovereign.

By thinking not only about human culture, history, and society, but also rat culture, history and society, Sullivan's work achieves a collision of "the geographic, historical, and animal" (Sullivan 187). Sullivan's use of literary ironies reveals the deep interconnectedness of human and rat, and lingers somewhere in between the two. Haraway holds this kind of deep entanglement as the starting place for building companion species relationships. *Rats*, therefore, serves as a literary guide that shows how Morton's thinking in *Ecology Without Nature* might lead us towards the sort of relationships that are his long-term goal, as he indicates in "Queer Ecology."

The literary move that *Rats* makes does not start in a theoretical location or abstracted category, though. Rather, it begins with Sullivan

in fleece and wind-resistant overcoat, furiously scribbling notes [. . . ,] looking up, amazed, because [he] saw the rat, the rat with the tail [. . . , and with him] understanding a little bit about this community of rats, recognizing some traits, some habits, some of the players in the colony. (192)

Even more than his scientific understanding that emerges from observations and research, Sullivan's ability to think from the category "rat," rather than from "human" emerges from a creative kind of listening that identifies locations of sympathy between a specific man and specific rats.

After so much time spent in his alley with his rats, Sullivan is one evening surprised by a garbage collector. His reaction is decidedly rat-like, and carefully mimics the reactions of his rats to a sous-chef who had invaded their alleyway for a smoke: "[. . .] I startled. I backed off as the trash was taken away [. . .] I was up against the wall when the driver

approached" (193). Sullivan is so thoroughly engrossed that he is surprised when the sanitation worker nods and greets him with a smile. He is even more taken aback when the driver says to him, "Did you see the big one with the tail? [. . .] He's big, boy. I've seen him walk up stairs" (*ibid.*). This moment reveals the last hold of Sullivan's subject-object thinking: Sullivan saw the Rat King as his alone. The truth, though, is that the rats are in complex relationships with a diverse milieu of others, human and otherwise. In the breaking of the illusion of possession, Sullivan recognises himself as just another subject of the Rat King, rather than as the subject who makes the rat a king. The reader realises, in this moment, that Sullivan is not the only one to whom the rats speak.

Reading *Rats*, one reads about a man reading rats. Together with Sullivan, the reader understands that human and rat histories, cultures, and behaviours interact with and entangle one another. As Sullivan becomes inseparable from a specific group of rats, we begin to recognise that we are all always already entangled in rat culture, geography, and history. Moreover, Sullivan's experience with the driver is a humbling reminder that this kind of transformative entangling is not esoteric or elevating.

The literary and personal ironies that Sullivan weaves into *Rats* are enough to reveal the displacing tendencies of irony as a literary tool. Beyond that which exists between and within *Rats* and *Walden* lies another layer of irony, both narrative and linguistic, which is particularly pertinent to the ecological aims of all of the works we have discussed. Namely, each of these books has its text embossed upon the dead, pressed flesh of trees. There is, in the very physical presence of parchment or paper, a certain anthropocentrism that inevitably attempts to reclaim text, and which is all the more likely to succeed if the ironic reading of the ecocritic neglects to break the inside-outside divide of the physical book itself.

Tracing the history of the written tradition back to the animal-hide pages of medieval tomes further complicates this historical relationship between writer, reader, and the ecological text that brings them together. Sarah Kay discusses these ironic complications in *Animal Skins and the Reading Self in Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries*. She notes in particular the separation between reader and ecological subject that paper allows, because the death of a tree is so much less immediately felt in paper than that of an animal in its skin. This separation is reinforced by the sovereign law discussed in the first chapter, though this distinction is complicated by multiple valences of irony. Kay writes,

Parchment's ambiguous appearance between human and animal is illumined differently by sacrifice, which moves arbitrarily to install the animal within the realm of human concern, than it is by sovereign decision, which installs an arbitrary separation between the agent of violence and its object. But although they take opposite directions, both sacrifice and the slaughter of bare life may disclose the extent to which they are arbitrary, whether because metaphorical identifications fail to convince, or because categorical separations fail to satisfy. Either outcome opens up a space of exception between the terms "human" and "animal" on which they rely and which the parchment, insofar as it appears undecidably one or the other, mutely occupies. Authors, book designers, scribes, artists, and readers all contribute to shaping the oscillations of overlap and separation between human and animal which constitute each page as an ambiguous space. (91)

Kay deftly illustrates that, within its historical context, paper plays a dual role — at once an embodiment of the environmental *mi-lieu* that separates human and animal and a continuation of the tradition of embossing human language upon the dead flesh of the other. If "to speak is [. . .] to 'speak the law' " (*Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* 21; *The Beast and the Sovereign* 93), as Kay would probably affirm, given her references to Agamben in the passage above, then to etch this law into the flesh of the other that the law

excludes is certainly a doubled affirmation of the gulf that exists between human as subject and the other as object, even though the product of this etching re-marks the page as an in-between. Reading reenacts the complexities of this deconstructive relationship, and becomes even more convoluted when the book in question is an ecological text. The ability of irony in these contexts to push conflicting agendas and to affirm contradictory truths allows Kay to simultaneously argue that even though

pages result from killing animals and cutting them open [. . .] some of the scenes depicted on them implicate the reader in this violence, turn that violence against humans like him- or herself, or create uncertainty attaching to the whole question of who or what is being cut. The relation of the reader to the creatures in the bestiary and the substance of its pages may be mellowed by the aura of sacrifice or insulated by the boundaries of sovereign power, but it is always also problematized by the vulnerable skin which they are all assumed to share and which they are all represented as violating. (107)

The particular power of depicting the wounded animal upon animal hide is, for Kay, that the reader realises as much through the text as through the medium her own role in the violence that the bestiary represents, and in this moment the page does a certain violence to the reader. When this is achieved, the human-animal relationship that the text itself embodies is undermined by the identification of the reader first with the animal on the page, second with the animal that *is* the page, and third with the violence that is represented by both the image and the page. When the reader attempts to reconcile these identities, “categorical separations fail to satisfy” (91). This separation is embodied by paper, the vegetal category remaining obscured by the human-animal divide, doubly objectified. Kay calls the disconnect between these categories the “space of exception,” a region embodied by paper, insofar as it reenacts the same history while refusing to conform to human or animal categories. In the ecological text, the physical text itself, considered as

both a product of vegetal bodies and as a continuation of a history of crafting from the flesh of the other, continues the ironic decentring that leaves both the reader and the book constantly displaced. The *sans lettres* of the ecological text speaks at once to language that attempts to reaffirm sovereign law and to the blank paper that remarks an in-between.

Though there are more and less eco-friendly approaches to publishing and reading, the ecologically-minded reader can never escape her role within the production of a text that likely argues for the conservation of the very thing that was killed to produce it. At some level, the ecological book is just another pulp fiction, so to speak. This is why Kay calls the page an ambiguous space, and it is why ecocritical readings like Morton's, which takes the physical page into consideration as much as its literary content, are so important when pursuing ecological goals.

As a modern day reproduction of animal-hide crafted instead from vegetable-flesh, this very page reenacts a long history of impressing human norms upon natural bodies. The text on this page, which so quickly relegates the paper to the background, enforces the law, dividing the human subject from the animal object. That only a trace of the animal remains in the paper page is one of many ironic displacements that we can experience when we consider all of the elements of an ecological text. If you are reading this on a screen, rather than on paper, then the trace becomes even more difficult to track, as the animal-hide history becomes technological, mechanical, and cybernetic. Let us proceed, therefore, to consider the in-between space that the ecological text embodies on the page or the screen, in order to question the ethical potential of this *mi-lieu*.

Chapter Three

Entr(é)e-nous: Being and Eating (with) the Other

First I purred, then I discovered that inimitable talent of waving my tail in the most graceful of coils, and then the wonderful gift of expressing joy, pain, delight and rapture, terror and despair, in short, all feelings and passions in their every nuance with the single little word, 'Miaow'. What is human speech compared to this simplest of all simple means of making oneself understood?

E.T.A. Hoffmann, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, p. 11

Annie Dillard muses on a neighbour of hers who is trying to teach a stone to talk. She is unsure how exactly one might accomplish such a goal, but her best guess is that “the ritual involves sacrifice, the suppression of self-consciousness, and a certain precise tilt of the will” (86). Unlike her neighbour, Dillard prioritises listening over speaking. “Nature's silence is its one remark, and every flake of world is a chip off that old mute and immutable block,” she says (87). Her conclusion is decidedly unclear: she does not know if the stone will speak, or if its silence is already everything that it has to say. One thing is clear, though: “Distinctions blur” (94). Derrida, a true lover of blurred distinctions, responds with a similarly hazy conviction to Jean-Luc Nancy, in “Who Comes After the Subject?”:

J-LN: When you decide not to limit a potential “subjectivity” to man, why do you then limit yourself simply to the animal?

JD: Nothing should be excluded. [. . .] The difference between “animal” and “vegetal” also remains problematic. (106)

Once the subjectivity of the human being is dissolved, it becomes unclear how, philosophically, one might differentiate human, animal, vegetable, and mineral. Traditional justifications of the boundaries that separate these terms become hollow; a creative mind

can imagine a stone learning to speak, and a human learning to listen. Dillard recalls a chimpanzee fluent in American Sign Language who informed her handlers that she felt sad; “I’m sorry we asked,” says Dillard, keenly aware of the ironies of such anthropomorphisation (89).

Several questions arise from the dispersal of “human,” or the displacement that is experienced in the loss of subjectivity. The question “what next?” appears as a pressing concern. This final chapter will attempt to answer the questions raised in the previous chapters by theorising a community and an ethic that could follow the collapse of the human-nature divide. This will be done by investigating Jean-Luc Nancy’s theory of community, an endeavour that will be supplemented by “‘Eating Well,’ or the Calculation of the Subject,” an interview between Jean-Luc Nancy and Jacques Derrida published in 1991. Although this chapter takes inspiration from Nancy and Derrida, it will begin by demonstrating an anthropocentric reappropriation committed by their thinking. This error will be shown with guidance from Haraway, Tsing, and Derrida himself, all of whom will help us to more fully reveal the substantial possibilities for community that Nancy began to uncover thirty years ago. Ultimately, this chapter will seek to establish that community exists as a displacing relationship that moves beyond concepts of innocence, sacrifice, or salvation. Community emerges from the uncomfortable recognition that one must always live-on another to survive; to be in community, one must always be and eat (with) the other. This realisation will also complete the synthesis of the ecological and poststructuralist uses of spacing and displacing that this thesis pursues.

Derrida breaks philosophical ground in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* when he brings into question traditional philosophical divides between human and animal. Yet Donna Haraway

criticizes Derrida's answer to his own guiding question: "And say the animal responded?" Haraway argues that Derrida does not "seriously consider an alternative form of engagement"; that is, Derrida refuses to consider his cat in its felinity. Haraway praises Derrida for refusing to see his cat as a singular manifestation of the animal, or the cat, in general. But Derrida, in his complete refusal to submit to these categories, ironically omits a great deal of who his cat is when he responds to her gaze. Haraway laments that Derrida did not know "something more about cats and how to look back, perhaps even scientifically, biologically, and therefore also philosophically and intimately" (20). To understand an animal's response, for Haraway, does not mean to teach it sign language, or to subject it to any other form of human communication. Rather, it means to learn about that particular species and that individual, to understand response in the animal's terms. Derrida resists the philosophical tendency to see his cat as a mere non-human, but his restraint leads him to ignore the ways that cats generally do communicate with their companions. Derrida called his cat "Logos" — ironically, this makes *The Animal That Therefore I Am* the one instance where Derrida ought to have been more Logos-centric.

The Animal That Therefore I Am recognises the being of Logos, the cat, but does not explore the possibility of a being-with that considers her point of view, rather than merely her gaze. Derrida thinks being-with a (specific) cat as a (specific) human, but does not imagine being-with a human as a cat, and so he fails to consider half of the relationship at play. Similarly, Jean-Luc Nancy's "Being Singular Plural" attempts to think community and being in non-anthropocentric terms, but does not think what community and being might mean to a non-human. Perhaps Nancy and Derrida refuse to perform this imaginative task because they wish to resist putting words into the mouth of another (in multiple senses). Sarah Kay voices a similar observation when she comments that "when Derrida enjoins

humans to desist from killing animals his call to ‘sacrifice the sacrifice’ both resists and reaffirms its lure” (89).

This reappropriation is a tendency that continuously undermines attempts for ecological justice. For example, in the fall of 2017 in Colorado, Jason Flores-Williams filed the lawsuit *Colorado River Ecosystem v. State of Colorado* on behalf of the Colorado River. The suit references nations — India and New Zealand — that have already recognised the legal personhood of certain ecosystems, thereby granting them rights under the law. *Colorado River Ecosystem v. State of Colorado* seeks to do the same; the plaintiffs of the case “request that this Court declare that the Colorado River Ecosystem is a ‘person’ capable of possessing rights” (par. 64), and that, as such, the “Colorado River has certain rights to exist, flourish, regenerate, and naturally evolve” (par. 4). The irony of this ought to be apparent: the lawsuit can only establish that the river is deserving of rights by arguing for its “personhood.” Yet, if a river is, in fact, an individual with inherent rights, then certainly it deserves those rights due to its self-sameness, not its similarity to a human concept of personhood. The very structure of law undermines attempts — even ostensibly successful attempts, like those in India, New Zealand, and Ecuador — to give rights to nature by reappropriating nature to a concept of personhood in order to secure those rights under the law. If a river is to have rights, it can only be insofar as that river is a person. To humanise a river is to repeat a machination of Agamben’s anthropological machine.

Colorado River Ecosystem v. State of Colorado never made it to court. On December 4th, 2017, the suit was dismissed with prejudice, and Attorney General Coffman released a statement which says that it “unacceptably impugned the State’s sovereign authority to administer natural resources for public use.” Coffman also notes in her press release the very difficulty that deters Derrida and Nancy from considering the other’s point of view: “I

do not doubt the personal convictions of those groups and individuals *who claimed to speak on behalf of the ecosystem*,” Coffman says, making clear by her diction that she considers their claim to be entirely invalid (emphasis mine). *Colorado River Ecosystem v. State of Colorado* set out to resolve the issue of the human-nature divide, but it appears as though the failure to let nature ‘speak for itself,’ so to speak, resulted not in a dissolution of the human-nature border or a discovery of an in-between, but in a movement which sought to bring members of the “nature” category into the “human” while leaving the border intact. Championing the non-human by making it human, or the object by making it subject is precisely the ironic error that Haraway criticises in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, and that Nancy repeats in “Being Singular Plural”.

Nancy talks about nature and the loss of subjectivity in “Being Singular Plural.” Nancy says that the *ego* “is a more or less explicit reference to ‘nature’: universal nature, human nature, natural to each person or natural to a people” (“Being Singular Plural” 53). Curiously, although such a nature resides inside of the *ego*, it is also “at a remove from exteriority and contingency, which, in other places, are marks of a ‘nature’ that is ‘outside’ us” (*ibid.*). This doubling of nature plays an originary, displacing role for Nancy; it is that “to which we are exposed and without which our exposition would not take *place*” (*ibid.*, emphasis Nancy’s). The *ego* is “from the very start removed from that exteriority and contingency without which it is impossible to expose it *as ego*” (*ibid.*). Such reasoning is constantly shifting its location — nature is both within and without, and its exteriority is what allows the ex-position of an interiority in the first place. In fact, Nancy’s emphasis on “place” suggests that the first place-taking takes place precisely because of this exteriority. If this is the case, the exteriority that exposes the *ego* is always already contained within as an originary trace. This dis-location from outside to inside also calls into question the *ego*’s taking place *in the*

first place. Nancy attempts to dodge the reappropriative logic by constantly displacing the human-nature categories into each other.

However successful Nancy is, his thinking does not surpass the human-nature divide entirely; at best, he blurs the lines between the two. “We would not be humans if there were not ‘dogs’ and ‘stones.’ [. . .] I would no longer be ‘human’ if I did not have this exteriority ‘in me,’” he says, suggesting a move beyond anthropocentrism (“Being Singular Plural” 18). He immediately reappropriates himself, though, by clarifying that “existence, therefore, is not a property of *Dasein*; it is the original singularity of Being, which *Dasein* exposes for all being” (*ibid.*). Even after acknowledging the deep historical, genetic, and chemical interconnectedness of the human and the other, for Nancy, the other being’s existence remains a contingency that relies upon a singularity of Being that only *Dasein* reveals. *Dasein*, a way of Being that offers admittance only to humans, at least on this planet, permits existence to non-human others. So long as the non-human other’s existence can only be exposed by a human being, a theory cannot be said to evade anthropocentrism, and human privilege remains intact.

Put simply, Derrida and Nancy both reappropriate themselves to a logocentric tradition because the animal’s ability to respond is contingent upon human interaction. Human beings can respond to one another, and animals can, perhaps, respond to human beings, but animals can only react to one another. Making animal responsiveness contingent upon human communication places *Dasein* at the centre of the ecological structure, and reestablishes an inside-outside, human-nature divide. Derrida’s cat does not respond, *per se*, it responds because Derrida sees it in a particular way, and because its gaze provokes him in a particular way. In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, a cat can only respond to the

extent that it provokes a human response. Similarly, in “Being Singular Plural,” the “original singularity” of the animal is only exposed by *Dasein*; the animal is not a singularity *per se*.

Kelly Oliver offers a solution to such reappropriations, which she sees as the movements of Agamben’s anthropological machine. Oliver’s suggestion begins by problematizing the addition of the machine to the human-animal binary (“Stopping the Anthropological Machine: Agamben with Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty” 12). Referencing Merleau-Ponty’s *Nature*, Oliver directs the reader to consider that “the machine functions, the animal lives” (*ibid* 13; *Nature* 162). Investigating *Nature* further, one finds that Merleau-Ponty elaborates, “the function of the machine has a meaning, but that meaning is transcendent; it is in the mind of the constructor [. . .] There is no operating meaning within the machine, but only within the living thing” (162-163). Oliver contends that this undermines separation between humans and animals because, “by comparing both humans and animals to machines, Merleau-Ponty finds similarities issuing from the fact that, unlike machines, both man and animals have living bodies” (13).

Though Oliver’s addition of a third category to the discussion is valuable, that she opts to argue against the human-animal dichotomy by explicitly promoting a natural-mechanical replacement reflects the difficulty that Derrida and Nancy both faced, and does not resolve it. Oliver’s solution is vulnerable to another critique of Haraway’s, whose “Cyborg Manifesto” investigates the in-between of human and machine where, she says, “the cyborg appears” (“Cyborg Manifesto” 152). “The Cyborg Manifesto” contends that non-human lives are made ever more mechanical. The cyborg emerges as a hybrid figure occupying the in-between of human and animal. Rousseau’s *loup-garou* and Agamben’s ape-man find a new companion in the cyborg, and these characters are irresistibly attracted to one another by their exclusion from proper categories, like god and

beast. Unlike Derrida and Agamben, though, Haraway's analyses invariably engage with real bodies, rather than hypothetical hybrids. Those who are rejected from what is properly human, mechanical, and animal become the cyborg, for Haraway. The cyborg figure appears in dehumanised *homo sapiens*, mechanised labour (both human and animal), and even in the page on the screen, insofar as it contains a trace of the vegetal (paper) and the animal (hide).

The creation and exclusion of cyborg bodies is a *mondialisation*, an exclusionary community-building. In their exclusion, though, cyborg individuals can and do re-form community "by conscious appropriation of negation" (156). In the "Manifesto," Haraway gives the example of women of colour, a group that coheres because of a lack of whiteness, rather than any positive quality. Haraway says that "this identity marks out a self-consciously constructed space that cannot affirm the capacity to act on the basis of natural identification, but only on the basis of conscious coalition, of affinity, of political kinship" (Haraway 156).

In *When Species Meet*, Haraway expands this thinking to politicised animal, vegetable, and fungal bodies. Unlike Oliver, who sees the machine existing in opposition to human and animal, the machine category emerges in Haraway's work as a problematic milieu, wherein lives are valuable only insofar as they serve mechanical purposes. Individuals valued for their labour power are not politically excluded from the human realm that they uphold, but neither are they welcomed. Working animals, like working people, become expendable once their ability to perform their designated tasks expires. Traditions of mechanisation are gears that turn together — concepts of femininity, slavery, and selective breeding are examples of the intersecting histories that have produced, and

continue to produce, individuals whose beings are designed — genetically or socially — for specific cyborg roles. Being-cyborg is being zoo-political.

If we consider the in-between as Haraway does, the concerns of ecology become explicitly feminist, because the ecological community is revealed to be filled with all sorts of cyborg bodies, *homo sapiens* and otherwise. Ecological theory becomes an important part of queer theory once it acknowledges that human and animal lives alike are made mechanical by modern capitalist sovereignty. Haraway's cyborg is a "real world" application of the kind of analysis that Derrida performs in *The Beast and the Sovereign*. Haraway's careful use of Derrida allows her to begin, therefore, to "forge queer ecology through Derrida," Morton's ecological imperative ("Guest Column: Queer Ecology" 277). The particular beauty of the term "queering" within this deconstruction is that it evades the linguistic problem that has troubled our analyses to this point, since "queer," by its very definition, refuses to become "normal." Queering is an act of refusing norms, and so it is always ongoing, *a priori*. Just as Derrida insists on deconstructing eternally, even in the face of endless reappropriations, queering constantly displaces norms and expectations, and puts in their place irreducible differences. Queering is a radical *non-lieu-tenance*, a not-taking-place that can reveal that every individual was always already irreducibly different.

An appreciation for the deep queerness of both human and natural histories has allowed recent theorists more success in their attempts to avoid reappropriation to existing hegemonies. Anna Tsing accomplishes what Derrida and Nancy could not in "Unruly Edges," an essay that demonstrates the effects of mushrooms on human development, and vice versa. Tsing notes that the historical and mythological assumptions of human mastery "fuel assumptions about human autonomy, and they direct questions to the human control of nature, on the one hand, or human impact on nature, on the other, rather than to species

interdependence” (144). Only when they exist inside of human bodies are other species truly considered to affect human lives, argues Tsing, when she says that,

as long as the relevant other species are found—at least sometimes—inside the human body, we can study them in relations of co-habitation and dependency. If the other species is outside the human body, that is, part of the ‘environment’ for humans, analysis suddenly switches to a discourse of human impact, management, and control. (144 n.11)

Tsing argues that, in reality, “exterior natures” cohabit with humans in the same way as species that reside within the body, and that to indulge in the concept of “human nature” is to appropriate oneself as human into the anthropocentric discourse of impact and control by seeing the limits of the human body as the boundary that divides human from nature.

Although Nancy’s nature is more conceptual than Tsing’s, he thinks of it in precisely the interior and exterior terms that she criticises. Nancy says that

critique absolutely needs to rest on some principle other than that of the ontology of the Other and the Same: it needs an ontology of being-with-one-another, and this ontology must support both the sphere of “nature” and sphere of “history,” as well as both the “human” and the “nonhuman”; it must be an ontology for the world, for everyone. (“Being Singular Plural” 53).

While Tsing would likely agree with Nancy’s assertion that critique requires an inclusive being-with, she would also be quick to point out the irony of arguing such a claim through an ontological investigation, given the logocentric history of ontology. To think beyond *Dasein* and beings-in-the-world in ontology is like attempting to think beyond “person” and “nonperson” under the law — reappropriation of the discussion into anthropocentric terms is inevitable. Tsing’s essay could, in fact, be read as a response to Nancy, a critique of his methods that, nonetheless, upholds several of his conclusions. Tsing sets out her interpretive axioms by asking, and then responding: “What if we imagined a human nature

that shifted historically together with varied webs of interspecies dependence? Human nature is an interspecies relationship” (Tsing 144). Tsing’s human nature is hardly human at all; rather, it names a deep history of relationships between species. Tsing’s human nature is Robert Sullivan, so affected by and engrossed in rat culture that he scurries away from a sanitation worker. Nancy will say that being human reveals and is revealed by nature. What he ought to say, according to Tsing, is that being human is what it is because of its infinite entanglement with other beings. Mushrooms do not merely reveal humanity; they created it.

When Species Meet makes reference to Tsing: “it is the human–dog entanglement that rules my thinking about contact zones and fertile unruly edges,” says Haraway (218). “Unruly edges” is a playful term that Tsing uses to describe the area of interaction between humans and fungi — it names, at once, the borderlands between field and forest where mushrooms like to grow, and the rough edges of the fungi themselves. Such edges are unruly because they resist the sense of finitude that an edge or border would usually imply; unruly edges are tangled finitudes which suggest fertile, changing contact zones between beings. Haraway directs her readers to the unruly edge between herself and her Australian Shepherd companion, Cayenne. Unlike Derrida, who is so confidently removed from his cat, and held by her gaze, Haraway is unsure how to separate herself from Cayenne: “Ms Cayenne Pepper continues to colonize all my cells — a sure case of what the biologist Lynn Margulis calls symbiogenesis. I bet if you were to check our DNA, you’d find some potent transfections between us” (15). Much of Haraway’s language in these sentences is technical, and difficult to understand outside of its evolutionary context. The collision of jargon from different fields — symbiogenesis as colonization — is especially unclear. Her next remarks offer insights into how to read her confused blending of dog and woman:

How would we sort things out? Canid, hominid; pet, professor; bitch, woman; animal, human; athlete, handler. One of us has a microchip injected under her neck skin for identification; the other has a photo ID California driver's license. One of us has a written record of her ancestors for twenty generations; one of us does not know her great grandparents' names. One of us, product of a vast genetic mixture, is called "purebred." One of us, equally a product of a vast mixture, is called "white." Each of these names designates a different racial discourse, and we both inherit their consequences in our flesh. (15)

Haraway's list of qualities performs a series of moves through which the lines that separate dog and handler are significantly challenged, as each appears to become the other. In this ironic doubling, Haraway subverts "the categorical separation implied by the distinction" (DiCaglio 459). Haraway doubles modes of identification that become increasingly difficult to distinguish, and by doing so she calls into question the originally assumed distinction between herself and Cayenne. By a deliberate blurring of categories, we are led to a concluding sentence wherein "purebred" appears as a distinctly racialised term, not entirely separate from "white," that implies a certain set of qualities, challenges, and privileges inherited by Cayenne and, by extension, Haraway. A second reading of this list reveals that almost any of the terms that define Cayenne have equally described human women: pet, bitch, animal. It is entirely indeterminate who — Haraway or Cayenne, dogs or people — has domesticated whom.

This border crossing makes it possible to see the more complex parallels that Haraway highlights around identification, registration, and breeding. Haraway's words echo previous philosophical assertions. For example, in "Rules for the Human Zoo," Sloterdijk says that,

Nietzsche [. . .] suggested that the defanging of men was the premeditated project of a group of pastoral *breeders* [. . .] That would certainly be a hybrid thought,

because for one thing he imagined a potential breeding project being carried out in much too short a period [. . .]. ("Rules for the Human Zoo" 22)

Though Haraway's words reiterate a certain hybrid Nietzschean sentiment, her breeding program contains an element which Nietzsche's does not: symbiogenesis. By directing the reader to consider herself and Cayenne as co-colonized and co-domesticated, Haraway institutes a doubled irony that Nietzsche and Derrida both lack in their crossing of the human-animal border. The particular power of the doubled irony, as we have already discovered, allows Haraway to linger in between human and dog, and to show how the categories produce one another. This operates on both individual and collective levels: Haraway carefully intertwines her words to show that her symbiogenesis with Cayenne is not merely a result of transfections between the two of them, but also a product of the entangled histories of Australian Shepherds and women. Haraway ironically upholds both human and dog, while simultaneously calling into question their division in the first place.

This doubly ironic interpretation of Haraway is reinforced by her language.

Symbiogenesis refers to the co-development of interacting cells, most commonly the integration of prokaryotic cells into one another, or into a eukaryote, to the mutual benefit of the organisms involved. Symbiotic relationships between organisms over time integrates them to the extent that entirely new species are defined by the relationship between their generative organelles. Mitochondria in eukaryotic cells are thought to be the result of symbiogenesis, for example. For Haraway to say that her cells are colonized by symbiogenesis, therefore, carries multiple valences. On the one hand, one cannot miss the negative, hegemonic connotations that surround the word "colonization." On the other hand, evolution is decidedly amoral; species evolve to their own advantage, and eukaryotic cells have a number of advantages over their less complex counterparts. Such a colonization

might be immoral, but it is also irreversible and, at least to some extent, amoral. Haraway acknowledges her complicity in a tradition of breeding that produces both “purebreds” and their buyers. As a white, educated, wealthy dog-purchaser, she also recognises her inseparability from this thought of biological purity. These multiple senses are redoubled when one considers that Haraway is talking not only about the history of humans and dogs, but also about a specific human and dog coupling. Haraway becomes her dog in multiple senses, and Cayenne, likewise, becomes Haraway.

Such a reading recalls to mind the doubled irony of *Rats*, which displaces the concepts of “nature” and “human” by mimicking the text of *Walden*, re-creating *Walden* inside of a New York City alley. Haraway’s doubled irony is, perhaps, even more complex. She begins with what appears to be a clear distinction — canid, hominid — and then slowly, ironically pushes the categories together. By doing so, she highlights the stark similarities that inhabit human-animal discourses and histories. “Stark” is a word that usually precedes “differences,” rather than “similarities” — in this case, I use it to indicate that Haraway’s blurring of the lines between human and dog makes similarities apparent, but also makes those very likenesses into differences. In the same way that *Rats* reveals Nature in New York City and, by doing so, demonstrates the futility of the very concept in New York and *Walden* alike, Haraway reveals the animal in the human, and vice-versa, in a novel way, and in doing so shows the human-animal divide to be completely facile. By listing differences, Haraway reveals similarities; by revealing similarities, Haraway shows that beings must be encountered as individuals existing in relation to one another, as a meeting-place of bodies, histories, and heritages. But beyond even this, in the symbiogenesis of their-selves or their-cells, companions become Derridean supplements to one another. That is, companion species become in-divisible in their union, and what was seen before as a whole individual is

complemented by the companion. As divisibility breaks down, so does in-divisibility. No inside-outside distinction can be maintained as edges become unruly: woman and dog are displaced and dispersed, both as concepts, and as individuals experiencing life with one another.

With an irony similar to *Rats*, but within the bounds of a narrative fiction, André Alexis's *Fifteen Dogs* demonstrates the sort of imagining that Haraway advocates.

Towards the end of the book, Prince, a mutt and a poet, realises that he is approaching his death. Afraid that his poetry will die with him, Prince places his hope in the old woman with whom he cohabitates:

Whenever he could feel her presence or hear her voice, he would begin reciting.

— *Grrr-ee arrr err oh uh ai*

Gr-ee yurr ih aw yen grih yoo ayairrr . . .

No surprise: the woman took the sounds Prince made for the grumblings of an old and frail dog. (Alexis 165-166)

Eventually, the woman realises that Prince is trying to communicate, but she never understands his words. In fact, she never even learns his name; she calls him "Elvis."

The premise of André Alexis's *Fifteen Dogs* is that Hermes and Apollo make a bet to determine if an animal bestowed with human intelligence could die happy. They give human intelligence to fifteen dogs at a nearby veterinary clinic. Consequently, the dogs struggle to determine their identities; some learn to speak English, and build friendships and homes with Toronto residents. Although speaking English allows them to explore a deeper set of relationships, there is always a risk that, by shaping their thinking and communication around their human companions without receiving equal recognition in return, these dogs will ultimately objectify themselves. The dog named Benjy, in particular, appears as a house pet who understands an endless variety of commands beyond the usual "sit," "come," and

stay. Benjy, can, for example, recite the first page of *Vanity Fair* for his master's amusement. A meaningful life is spent performing parlour tricks; Benjy never manages to develop a relationship that acknowledges anything beyond unilateral connectedness. Benjy objectifies his human cohabitants, and they do the same to him.

Other members of the pack, feeling that their dog-ness has been stolen away, attempt to live along the waterfront as dogs "naturally" do, but this group is never able to escape the knowledge that everything a normal dog does instinctively, they merely ape. These dogs become objects of their own making, attempting to refuse their own individuality at every turn in order to return to the norm that they feel they have lost.

In the middle of this spectrum, which ranges from dog-as-human to human-as-dog, the reader finds two exceptions in Prince, the mutt inventor of dog language, and Majnoun, a poodle who is the first to comprehend English. Prince speaks his own language of growls and barks, and composes poetry. Rather than trying to learn English, Prince tries to teach his language to his human companion. He does not succeed; nonetheless, he is the only one among the fifteen who dies happy, the gods determine. Prince represents, as such, the only individual in the pack who comes to terms with himself. At the same time, Prince is also the lone success story of Alexis, the author, coming to terms with imagining life as a dog. Alexis knows that he cannot imagine life as a dog qua dog, but this does not stop him from imaginatively exploring the caninity of his characters.

Alexis does not stop this imaginative exercise with Prince. Rather, he turns his lens back onto the human by exploring the relationship of equals that develops between Majnoun and his human companion, Nira. After Nira's death, Majnoun spends most of his time waiting and thinking. When thinking,

two questions occupied most of [Majnoun's] time. [. . .] The first was about humanity. What, he wondered, did it mean to be human? The question was, ultimately, impossible for him to answer. [. . .] it was impossible to know a state (to know the human) by subtracting things in oneself, as if 'human' were what is left once the best of dog has been taken away [. . .] (141)

Majnoun's conclusion, here, represents a meeting point between Alexis's impossible task — to imagine being dog — and Majnoun's — to imagine being human.

Majnoun goes on: "The second question was about himself and what it meant — if it meant anything at all — to be a dog. [. . .] speculating about the canine brought him closer to Nira as well" (141-142). Here, we might also read Alexis's conclusion about his own endeavour to imagine the dog by speculating on humanity. It appears as though, despite the unhappy death of Majnoun, there is a great deal to be gained by imagining the other as other, and the self as other. Critically, though, Alexis does this from both sides of the equation: he imagines dog as dog, human as human, human as dog, and dog as human, each from the position of a human and from the position of a dog. Doing so reveals irreducible differences between Nira and Majnoun, and each emerges to the other as a true individual, as Alexis suggests when he says that "his presence became so precious to [Nira] that the fact Majnoun was a dog ceased to signify" (127). As individuals, they are able to confront categorical differences without reducing each other to mere human or dog. Alexis alludes to the never ending back-and-forth that results from this relationship when Nira, who loves autumn, asks Majnoun his favourite season. She is surprised when he cannot even make sense of the question. Majnoun says, "I am never sure when the seasons begin and I like in between the seasons, too, and in between in between and in between in between in between" (135). Equally, this phrase could describe the continuous displacement of human

and dog that Nira and Majnoun enact: they live in-between, and in between in between and in between in between in between.

In the end, Nira unsuccessfully attempts to learn Majnoun's language. Prince also fails to teach his human companion to understand his words. In combination with the unhappy expirations of their thirteen peers, Majnoun and Prince's stories make *Fifteen Dogs* a compelling critique of our relationships with non-human companions. As much as their companions are the characters they live with, the author and the reader are Prince and Majnoun's partners. Imagining a dog in his dog-ness and a human from the canine point of view are two of the objectives of *Fifteen Dogs*. Alexis does not insist that a human can truly imagine what it is like to be a dog, but he does show that creative and engaged forms of listening can lead to impactful, intimate relationships, wherein speculating about the human can bring us closer to non-human companions. Doing so, *Fifteen Dogs* suggests, leads to richer lives and happier deaths for dogs and humans alike.

The implications of thinking about human-other relationships as Haraway, Tsing, and Alexis direct are far-reaching, and insist on a different approach to ethical relationship-building. The constantly displacing effect of irony makes it difficult to locate a starting point for this endeavour, however. Moreover, while many readers might be willing to admit the possibility of ethical relations between human and dog, fewer are likely to imagine fungi, with Tsing, or other "lesser" beings as able to exist in such relationships. I will argue in the following pages that Nancy and Derrida, despite the previously discussed anthropocentric reappropriation, present an approach to community which makes possible a broader notion of interspecies ethics, insofar as "community" itself names a particular kind of being-with that implies ethical relationships between beings.

Nancy's community is built upon death as much as life. This reflects Nancy's conviction that "to isolate death from life—not leaving each one intimately woven into the other, with each one intruding upon the other's core [coeur]—this is what one must never do" ("L'Intrus" 6). Community is only realised by the living because of death; Nancy calls community the carrying out of a "triple mourning" that one experiences in the death of the other, one's own death, and one's own birth (*The Inoperative Community* 30). The birth and death of the self are important because they display life's finitudes. The death of the other is crucial, because it is what reveals all three mournings to the individual. Thus, Nancy can say that "community is revealed in the death of others [. . .] because death itself is the true community of I's" (*The Inoperative Community* 15). It would seem that anyone who can die can also, therefore, be a crucial part of community, even if only by dying. Likewise, anyone who can see death, and in seeing it recognise their own mortality, can be a member of a community. At the same time, to see the other die requires that community already be in place, that the I have another whose death can reveal to her the limitations of her own life and of her community. In this way, "death is indissociable from community, for it is through death that the community reveals itself — and reciprocally" (*The Inoperative Community* 15).

The recognition of finitudes — birth and death — opens up an in-between that allows individuals to appear to one another in a multivalent compearance. To compear means "to co-appear," but also cum-peer, "cum" meaning "together with," and peer meaning another who is equal to the self. It also means 'to compare' (to differ), and *com-parait*; "to appear before a judge" (*ibid.* 28). "We cannot not compear," says Nancy (*ibid.* 35). Compearance attempts to name, in a word, the complex relationships of differences and similarities that exist between individuals who are "distributed and placed,

or rather *spaced*, by the sharing that makes them *others*" (*ibid.* 25). Compearance is that which "does not set itself up, it does not establish itself, it does not emerge among already given subjects (objects). It consists in the appearance of the *between* as such: you *and* I (between us)" (*ibid.* 29, emphasis Nancy's). The between as such is that which brings together by dividing, because separation is what allows togetherness. "What is exposed in compearance is the following, and we must learn to read it in all its possible combinations: "you (are/and/is)(entirely other than) I" ("*toi [e(s)t] [tout autre que] moi*"). Or again, more simply: *you shares me* ("*toi partage moi*")" (*ibid.*, emphasizes Nancy's). Compearance bears a clear resemblance to the doubled irony of colonizing symbiogenesis; two become one while remaining entirely distinct from one another. Such a concept of community and compearance must constantly bear this multiplicity of meanings inside of itself. To be in community means all of them at once, and no less; to grasp onto one meaning, to reject differences in favour of similarities, or vice versa, means to cease the spacing and displacing actions that are constantly constituting the community as an in-between. To be a member of Nancy's community, therefore, requires simply a being, and being able to die. At a glance, every living thing seems to qualify as a member of community, in its grandest sense.

But this is not so. Death, in Nancy's community, is given meaning because it reveals a lack of immanence to those it leaves behind. Death is meaningful because it reveals itself to be meaningless; community is experienced in this revelation and it is in this that death is reciprocally revealed. Those whose deaths never had any meaning to begin with, therefore, cannot reveal death and community in the reciprocal revelation of finitudes. They cannot die, in any meaningful sense of the word. There are numerous examples, human and otherwise, of those whose deaths do not matter. At the beginning of her essay "Torture and the ethics of photography," Judith Butler suggests, "let us think of the human as a value and

a morphology that is allocated and retracted, aggrandized, personified, degraded and disavowed, elevated and affirmed” (954). Butler argues that some people are not, and were never thought of, as being human: of the captives of the Abu Ghraib prison, she writes, “their status as less than human is not only presupposed by the torture, but reinstated by the torture” (*ibid.* 964). The prisoners Butler discusses were so *hors-la-loi* that they were not extended protections that many animals receive. To say this is not to dispute Butler’s logic, but to reinforce it; the animal category qualifies certain members — pets, work animals, etc. — for particular protections, and excludes others. Curiously, rhetorics around the treatment of enemies of the state and of unwanted animals share a concept of humaneness. “Humaneness” carries in itself an obvious irony for two reasons. First, as Butler makes clear, we only treat humanely those people who we already see as sufficiently human, and those animals we see as sufficiently civilised. As such, humaneness is always already given or taken away. Rather than being a right of all individuals, being treated humanely is a consequence of one’s inclusion within the human-animal dichotomy, a membership all-too-easily revoked. Second, as Haraway shows, to treat a dog or cat humanely is to disregard their particular ways of being; Haraway’s relationship with Cayenne, for example, is as much canine as it is humane.

One could also display the irony of the humane by the very grammar of animal pronouns. Haraway notes that

animals are not allowed personal pronouns such as who, but must be designated by which, that, or it [. . . However,] if a particular animal has a name and sex, the animal can be an honorary person designated by personal pronouns; in that case, the animal is a kind of lesser human by courtesy of sexualization and naming. (206)

The irony of the humane doubles when one considers that people who describe their relationship with an animal as “humane” almost always do so to defend their treatment of

that animal as ethically permissible, especially when speaking about euthanization. Those animals who are “lesser humans,” who are afforded personal pronouns, are most frequently the domestic animals whose treatment exceeds the minimum — humaneness — and achieves something that resembles a being-with, or a communitarian relationship with their handlers. In sum, then, “humane” names which humans deserve not to be killed, and which animal deaths are of consequence. In both cases it draws the line that identifies whose deaths are significant, and whose are not. In doing so, it serves as a litmus test that identifies who can be in a human-animal community, and who can not. This same test reveals the sovereign law at work, dividing specific “whos” from cyborgian beasts whose beings and deaths blur together.

Sarah Kay identifies the historical use of sacrifice and slaughter to answer the question, “who should not be killed?” Medieval bestiaries, she notes, often display significant semantic and aesthetic differences between animals that are sacrificed, and those that are exterminated. Sacrificed or self-sacrificing animals are often presented in ways that are allegorical to the crucifixion, and the animal-hide pages upon which they are printed are often pierced or cut in ways that add significance to the wounds that these animals bear. Other significant animals are made exceptional by their bare skin; the flesh of the page is painted except where their bodies emerge, revealing the skin of the page, and often a bloody wound that implicates the reader in the death that produced the material conditions of the illustration. Finally, there are the animals whose deaths are of no consequence at all. Often, the depiction of these animals not only shows their deaths, but also reinforces their kill-ability by showing their exclusion from human-ness, and, consequently, humaneness. Kay says that

these examples illustrate compellingly how the threat of other animals' similarity to humans is exploited in order forcibly to assert human dominance over them. The Ape apes humans, and attacking or killing it has the de facto effect of falsifying its claim to resemblance. These images, in other words, can be seen as rendering not the sacrifice of the Ape but a sovereign decision on the part of a human to stigmatize the life of a fellow creature as a bare life which cannot be sacrificed but should be extinguished with impunity. (Kay 97-98)

The question "who should not be killed?" is, therefore, critical to ask when determining who can be part of a community, and who can be "extinguished with impunity." The question applies equally to human beings and to animals, to genocide and to exterminism. The question is subject, though, to a grammar that returns us to a problem we have already encountered: "I would not want to see the 'who' restricted to the grammar of what we call Western language, nor even limited by what we believe to be the very humanity of language," says Derrida, when he is asked "who comes after the subject?" ("Eating Well" 111). So long as an anthropocentric grammar or language holds this question, the imperative "thou shalt not kill" only applies to persons. Those who do not count as "whos" are subject to no such ethical imperatives. It is for this reason that Haraway suggests that we let go of the commandment not to kill. She says that this commandment leads to "figuring out to whom such a command applies so that 'other' killing can go on as usual and reach unprecedented historical proportions" (80).

Haraway offers a replacement to "thou shalt not kill": thou shalt not make killable. Haraway hopes that such a reformulation will help ethical beings to confront the issue of killing, and so to "learn to live responsibly within the multiplicitous necessity and labor of killing, so as to be in the open, in quest of the capacity to respond in relentless historical, nonteleological, multispecies contingency" (*ibid.*). When a being is made killable, it is

because it is not seen as truly deserving to live — many, such as factory farm animals, live only to die. When a being is made killable in this manner, it can no longer exist in a community, at least not by Nancy's estimation of the term. Its inclusion in the cyborgian in-between is all too clear: "factory-farm animal" can equally be read as "factory farm-animal." The factory animal's life's purpose is to produce labour or goods, or to die. Making mechanical or making killable means refusing the possibility of community to a species or a being.

Haraway's commandment emerges as a reaction to her reading of Derrida. "Outside Eden," she says, "eating means also killing, directly or indirectly, and killing well is an obligation akin to eating well" (296). "Eating well" is a reference to Derrida's imperative *il faut bien manger* — one must eat well. Derrida, discussing the commandment "Thou shalt not kill," argues that "consequences follow upon one another, and must do so continuously: thou shalt not make him suffer, which is sometimes worse than death, thou shalt not do him harm, thou shalt not eat him, not even a little bit, etc" ("Eating Well" 112-113). These consequences have always been thought as applicable to subjects, says Derrida, and as such, the other whom you cannot kill has always been "the other man: man as other, the other as man" ("Eating Well" 113). To think beyond this, though, is to realise the full weight of the responsibility not to kill — an impossible task since even vegans and vegetarians are indirectly implicated in historical land use and labour systems that have cost animals and people alike their lives. But Derrida sees this as exactly the nature of a responsibility: "Responsibility is excessive or it is not a responsibility" (*ibid.* 118). That is, responsibility must exceed all other demands on you and, at the same time, it must be beyond your ability to achieve. The excess of responsibility is such that, at once, the responsible person says, "I must" and "I cannot possibly." This is precisely why the responsibility not to kill cannot

always be carried out: it is excessive, too much to ask. At the same time, in its excess, it remains an imperative that overwhelms all others. Historically, says Derrida, we have ignored the consequences of this commandment by applying it only to subjects, that is, the other man. By stripping subjectivity from those we wish to kill, we dodge the guilty consequences of our responsibility not to kill. He and Haraway both choose to reformulate this commandment to make its breadth and weight more clear. Haraway says, “thou shalt not make killable,” Derrida says *il faut bien manger*: one must eat well.

By examining a long and complex paragraph, we can demonstrate Derrida’s move from killing to eating, and in turn, can recognise again the doubled irony that we have already identified in *Rats* and in Haraway. Derrida performs this by playing on a doubled ambiguity, making both “eating” (*manger*) and “the good” (*bien*) play multiple, contradictory roles. The following paragraph will first be presented in full, and then analysed sentence by sentence:

Vegetarians, too, partake of animals, even of men. They practice a different mode of denegation. The moral question is thus not, nor has it ever been: should one eat or not eat, eat this and not that, the living or the nonliving, man or animal, but since *one must* eat in any case and since it is and tastes good to eat, and since there’s no other definition of the good (*du bien*), *how* for goodness sake should one *eat well* (*bien manger*)? And what does this imply? What is eating? How is this metonymy of introjection to be regulated? And in what respect does the formulation of these questions in language give us still more food for thought? In what respect is the question, if you will, carnivorous? The infinitely metonymical question on the subject of “one must eat well” must be nourishing not only for me, for a ‘self,’ which, given its limits, would thus eat badly, it must be *shared*, as you might put it, and not only in language. “One must eat well” does not mean above all taking in and grasping in itself, but *learning* and *giving* to eat, learning-to-give-the-other-to eat. One never

eats entirely on one's own: this constitutes the rule underlying the statement, "One must eat well." It is a rule offering infinite hospitality. ("Eating Well" 114-115)

Derrida begins by linking killing and eating through the acknowledgement that vegetarianism is not non-violent, but a different "denegation." De-negation suggests a certain sense of denial, perhaps, or a restraint, but equally that vegetarianism is a different method of accounting for, and failing to live up to, the responsibility not to kill. All of us must eat, and to eat well means to balance the many types of good that might be associated with eating: the taste of the meal, pleasant company, ethical sourcing and cooking — these are all potential goods. Though vegetarianism and veganism might be approaches to ethical eating, vegetarians, vegans, and omnivores alike remain burdened by the question: "*How for goodness sake should one eat well (bien manger)?*" The particular phrasing of this question gives it multiple meanings: "how to eat well?" and "how to eat in a way that is good, for the sake of goodness?" Before Derrida even asks the implications of his own question, he has already begun the doubling effect by use of this peculiar pun.

"What is eating?" comes next, a question which suspends the "what" and makes it unclear whether Derrida is asking what it means to eat, or what is doing the eating. The following sentences make clear that he means both: "introjection" suggests that Derrida is not simply speaking about physical eating. Derrida's questions are "food for thought" that are, themselves, carnivorous. This makes it perfectly unclear what eats and what is eaten. What is clear, in any case, is that eating well, as a question, can never be done alone — it is about a being-with, but not simply in the sense that it is good to eat with company, or that the question gives us something to chew on, but also because the rule of hospitality reminds us that we are always eating a someone. The hospitality of the rule devours us — the rule of community, so closely linked to death by Nancy, reaches its atheistic communion in this

moment: to eat well is to share a meal with the other, either as a companion, as the one who devours the other, or as the one consumed. One must eat, and hospitality always invites us into good company to eat, no matter how the sentence is read.

Thus, eating becomes an act that exists somewhere between life and death, always both dead and alive, always acknowledging a death to come. In this mode, eating well is also the recognition of those who sustain the community by leaving it, those whose deaths inspire the revelation that institutes community *per se*. Community is suspended in the act of eating (with) one another, because one member leaves the community. Simultaneously, eating suspends those who survive, who live on (*sur-vivre*) their dead companion, within the community. Community is always doubly suspended by death, and so “it is death and not life that holds us within the horizon of the common” (Esposito 121). In the constant suspension of community, we can find an environmental ethic which respects life as much as death, which sees that dying has a place at the table that is just as essential as living. In this moment, the weight and necessity of death are felt — the responsibility not to kill is realised at the same time as the need to eat well, for the sake of the community. Eating well, understood in this contradictory, self-displacing fashion, always recognises, along with Haraway, that “eating means also killing, directly or indirectly, and killing well is an obligation akin to eating well” (296).

When considered alongside Haraway’s imperative, “thou shalt not make killable,” then, *il faut bien manger* becomes a principle with endless, contradictory insistences, all of which begin with the need to recognise and value life in myriad forms. To do this, though, one must kill. Only by valuing the death to come (*à venir*) as well as the death that one consumes does one achieve a being-with that allows life to be valued as a part of a community. Community emerges, therefore, as a spacing between life and death — a

mi-lieu, an in-between, a suspension of the place to-come. This conclusion remains consistent with Nancy's conception of community, despite being arguably more expansive. "Community is given to us — or we are given and abandoned to the community," says Nancy (*The Inoperative Community* 35). This claim is distinctly reminiscent of Derrida's explanation that "'one must eat well' does not mean above all taking in and grasping in itself, but *learning* and *giving* to eat, learning-to-give-the-other-to eat" ("Eating Well" 115). Community is given to us, and we are consumed by it. To be given and abandoned to the community is to be given-to-the-other-to eat, to suspend community through death, and above it.

Being in community, then, always implies a constant displacement, an unruly edge between life and death. "How do we understand this strange place of being between life and death, of speaking precisely from that vacillating boundary?" asks Butler, speaking about Antigone sealed alive in her tomb. "If she is dead in some sense and yet speaks, she is precisely the one with *no place who nevertheless seeks to claim one* within speech, the unintelligible as it emerges within the intelligible, *a position within kinship that is no position*" (*Antigone's Claim* 78, emphases mine). This phrase resonates with *non-lieu-tenance*; it insists that we take on responsibilities that we can never live up to, claiming a place that is no place. Ethical veganism is one example among many of an approach to taking a position that is no position; the ethical vegan takes a stand, but never lives up to her own responsibilities, since she, too, must kill to eat. This failure does not make her unethical, in fact, just the opposite: it makes her a member of a community whose responsibilities to one another are always excessive, whose *non-lieu-tenance* can never take place.

Returning this thought to Nancy, we can re-imagine words like “engulfed” and “sharing” within the context of consumption and commensality:

singular beings are themselves constituted by sharing, they are distributed and placed, or rather spaced, by the sharing that makes them *others*: other for one another, and other, infinitely other for the Subject of their fusion, which is engulfed in the sharing, in the ecstasy of the sharing: “communicating” by not “communicating.” These “places of communication” are no longer places of fusion, even though in them one passes from one to the other; they are defined and exposed by their dislocation. Thus, the communication of sharing would be this very dis-location. (*The Inoperative Community* 25, emphasis Nancy’s)

What we are left with is community as a suspension or an in-between place, a *mi-lieu*. And it is in this suspension “that the communionless communism of singular beings takes place” (*ibid.* 72). But this taking-place is itself without a place or space, clarifies Nancy. It is simply the taking-place of community (*ibid.*). Community, always taking place, leaves us with no-place; it is a carnivorous community, it is dis-placing. Community eats away at our sense of place, and it is only in this spacing or dis-placement that the other can be encountered in all of its irreducible differences, without any need for a common ground. We are always already tangled together in contact zones, on vacillating boundaries, or on unruly edges. We have always already been shaped by the other; we do not live in a place or on common ground, we each live on the other. Nancy suggests such a reading himself when he says that “the outside is inside; it is the spacing of the dis-position of the world; it is our disposition and our co-appearance. Its ‘negativity’ changes meaning; it is not converted into positivity, but instead the mode of being-together or being-*with*” (“Being Singular Plural” 13). This being-with is a spacing, whose lack of place is furnished by community (*The Inoperative Community* 19). The loss of place is never completed; the disposition is always ongoing; we are always being displaced by and into a community to come. We live *non-lieu-tenant*, in the

wake of a community *à venir*. Nancy muses, “perhaps everything happens between loss and appropriation: neither one nor the other, nor one and the other, nor one in the other, but much more strangely than that, much more simply” (“Being Singular Plural” 13).

What we are left with when community is opened to a multiplicity of beings is a constant struggle with the guilt of killing. Haraway says, “I don’t duck the decision to kill animals for the best reasons that persuade me or duck what it takes to formulate those best reasons” (92). The excess of responsibility insists that, on the one hand, killing must happen, and on the other, that it is never excusable. As such, a certain accountability must be felt, or else the responsibility is being dodged. “Maybe that’s all nonhumanism means,” says Haraway. “But in that little ‘all’ lies permanent refusal of innocence and selfsatisfaction with one’s reasons and the invitation to speculate, imagine, feel, build something better” (*ibid.*). Of the countless consequences of *il faut bien manger*, perhaps the one that is most crucial to the advancement of the ecological effort is not to cease killing, but instead to kill with a sense of accountability that requires a loss of innocence. The ecological community would name, then, an in-between where we recognise the excesses of the “thou shalt not kill” in their fullest. “This is about living responsively as mortal beings where dying and killing are not optional,” insists Haraway, “response has to go into trackless territory” (*ibid.* 74). The trackless response of the animal leaves us no trail to follow; it forces the realisation that *je ne suis pas l’animal qui ne fait aucune trace*. “There is no first place,” says Haraway, “and species, neither singular nor plural, demand another practice of reckoning” (*ibid.* 287). For the species, the singular plural, there is no originary moment, no *animal que donc je suis*. So, with a sense of community constantly reborn from never-met responsibilities, Haraway insists that we find a new path together with our companion species — those living beings

from whom we are irreducibly different, yet with whom we share bread (cum-panis). The best conclusion that we can hope for is not that we transcend innocence and guilt, rising to “sublime and final ends,” but that this dichotomy, like “The Great Divides of animal/human, nature/culture, organic/technical, and wild/domestic[, will] flatten into mundane differences—the kinds that have consequences and demand respect and response” (Haraway 15).

Becoming community is about the odd relationship between life and death, and the being-with that birth and death allow. By being-with others who are irreducibly and radically so, community becomes recognisable at life’s limits in all beings:

It is a birth: we never stop being born into community. It is death — but if one is permitted to say so, it is not a tragic death[. . .]: it is death as sharing and as exposure. It is not murder — it is not death as extermination[. . .]; rather, it is death as the unworking that unites us because it interrupts our communication and our communion. (*The Inoperative Community* 66-67)

Constantly interrupted, suspended, and devoured by the endless diversity of beings that surround us, being in community feels like being out of place, contrary to what one might expect. Although “to be out of place is often to be in danger,” it is also “to be free, in the open, not yet nailed by value and purpose” (Haraway 292). The consequences of living in such a *mi-lieu* are endless, but we have learned a few of them together with Nancy, Derrida, Tsing, and Haraway: one must not kill, nor make killable. One must eat well, and experience the loss of innocence that eating well implies. Finally, one must always do more to find the good-to-eat, because this act of caring for the other lies at the root of community — a root that consumes earth until it is ripe and ready to be eaten, in turn. This act of caring “means becoming subject to the unsettling obligation of curiosity, which requires knowing more at the end of the day than at the beginning” (Haraway 36). Perhaps, more than anything, this

consuming curiosity is the ethic that the dis-placed community must learn to live on, in order to survive. To live does not mean to be, or to follow the animal, in such an ethic.

Rather, *pour sur-vivre, il faut bien manger.*

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**Johnson Trust
Scholarship**.....December 2011

**McMaster University President’s
Scholarship**.....September 2011

**McMaster University Dean’s Honour
List**.....2012-2015

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Paper Presentation, March 25, 2017. “How Past and Future Present Themselves in Ugo Perone’s *The Possible Present*.” *New Italian Thought: Challenges and Responses*. King’s University College, London, Ontario.

"Communicating Nature's Meaning in Unnatural Writing; Strategies for Presenting Experiential Values to Scholarly Audiences" *Pathways: The Ontario Journal of Outdoor Education*. Winter 2016, 28(2). pp. 11-14. ISSN: 0840-8114.

RELEVANT SKILLS

Advanced French, oral and written
Intermediate Latin, written

END
