Bodies and Becomings

Human and Animal Encounters in Early Modern English Literature

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Abstract

In this thesis I undertake a poststructuralist study of human and animal relations in early modern English literature. I argue that the “type” of human we understand ourselves to be is directly related to the “type” of animal we encounter. Specifically, “bounded” and “essentialist” conceptions of the human depend on notions of animals as “territorialised,” “passive” “objects.” Instead of reinforcing the idea of “human being,” I attend to the “affective” materiality and mobility of human and animal bodies to suggest kinds of “human becomings.” I pursue this aim by using the “affective” philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. I use three different “affective” approaches to bodies—“cartographic,” “meaty,” and “machinic”—to explore representations of human and animal bodies within the early modern contexts of bear-baiting, hunting, and music-making. In Chapter 1, I consider representations of bear-baiting by John Stow and Edmond Howes, William Shakespeare, Robert Laneham, and Thomas Nashe. In these representations bears move from “objects” of the spectators’ gaze, to “actants,” which like the Heideggerian “thing,” exert their efficacy and autonomy through non-cooperation. As “actants,” the animals in these examples emit affects which, potentially, draw spectators into an experience of “becoming-dog.” In Chapter 2, representations of the stag hunt by George Gascoigne, William Shakespeare, and Margaret Cavendish suggest somatic continuity between humans and animals. I argue that the shared carnality between humans and stags in these texts creates an affective “zone of proximity,” which Deleuze labels “meat.” “Meat” allows us to read moments of “deterritorialisation” in which “affects,” produced both voluntarily and involuntarily, disrupt categorical distinctions between humans and stags. The categories of “human” and “animal” emerge, in this chapter, as contingent rather than essential. In Chapter 3, I challenge ideas of animal, and indeed material, passivity through a “vital materialist” reading of acts of music-making in poems by Christopher Marlowe and Shakespeare. In this chapter, “affects” are machinic—that is,
connective—flows or vibrations of matter, which Deleuze and Guattari label “non-organic” or “non-localised” desire. Desire creates connections between not only humans and animals, but also organic and inorganic matter, suggesting an ontology of “human becomings.”
List of Abbreviations and Notes on Editions

1. Abbreviations

These works will be cited in full on their first appearance. After this, I will use the following abbreviations.

- **ABC** “L’abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze” or, “The ABC of Gilles Deleuze,” interview with Claire Parnet.
- **ATP** *A Thousand Plateaus*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari
- **AO** *Anti-Oedipus*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari
- **CC** *Essays Critical and Clinical*, Gilles Deleuze
- **FB** *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Gilles Deleuze
- **K** *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari
- **WP** *What is Philosophy?*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

In quoting from Spinoza’s *Ethics*, I will be following the conventional method, which uses Roman numerals to refer to the parts of the *Ethics*, and Arabic numerals for axioms, definitions, propositions, etc. Following the example of Edwin Curley’s edition of the text, I use abbreviations like: A = axiom, P = proposition, S = scholium, Post = Postulate, Pref = preface. So, for example, IIIP2Schol refers to the scholium of the second postulate in part two of the *Ethics*.

2. Notes on Editions

Details on the editions of early modern works are listed in the bibliography.

I have modernised early modern uses of “v” and “u.” For example, Thomas Nashe’s *Unfortunate Traveller* becomes *Unfortunate Traveller*. 
List of Figures

Fig. 1 Brun stuck in a tree, woodcut from *The Most Delectable History of Reynard the Fox* (London, 1656; n. pag.).

Fig. 2 Map of London in *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, published by G. Braun and F. Hogenberg (Cologne, 1572). Reprinted in Höfele, 5.

Fig. 3 Bear Baiting at the Paris Garden. Twenty-first century drawing by C. Walter Hodges, from *Shakespeare Out Loud* <http://www.shakespeareoutloud.ca/> . Web. 10 Jun. 2014.

Fig. 4 Francis Bacon, *Figure with Meat*, 1954. Art Institute of Chicago, United States.

Fig. 5 Francis Bacon, *Three Studies for a crucifixion*, 1962. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

Fig. 6 Francis Bacon, *Painting*, 1946. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Fig. 7 “On the place where and how an assembly should be made, in the presence of a Prince, or some honourable person,” woodcut from George Gascoigne *The Noble Arte of Venerie* (London, 1575; 91).

Fig. 8 “How a huntsman may seeke in the highe woods” woodcut from George Gascoigne *The Noble Arte of Venerie* (London, 1575; 89).

Fig. 9 “The judgement and knowledge by the Slot of an Hart,” woodcut from George Gascoigne *The Noble Arte of Venerie* (London, 1575; 63).

Fig. 10 Hunter’s ski covered with moose skin, drawing by Mads Salicath in Rane Willerslev’s “Not Animal, Not Not-Animal” (2004; 640).

Fig. 11 Bee Madrigal Singing, from Charles Butler’s *Feminine Monarchie*, 2nd ed (London, 1623; n.pag.).

Fig. 12 Bee Madrigal Swarming, from Charles Butler’s *Feminine Monarchie*, 2nd ed (London, 1623; n.pag.).

Fig. 13 Apple advancing (var. “Northern Spy”) from Sixteen Studies from *Vegetable Locomotion*, Hollis Frampton and Marion Faller, 1975. Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.
# Contents

*Declaration* ................................................................................................................................................. 2  
*Acknowledgements* ................................................................................................................................... 3  
*Abstract* ......................................................................................................................................................... 5  
*List of Abbreviations and Notes on Editions* ................................................................................................. 7  
*List of Figures* ................................................................................................................................................. 8  
*Contents* .......................................................................................................................................................... 9  

**Introduction** ...................................................................................................................................................... 11  
1 “Human Becomings” and “Affective Animals” ................................................................................................. 11  
2 Stalking the Boundaries: Anthropocentrism and Animal Studies ............................................................... 17  
3 “Spungs”: Subjects and Bodies in Early and Post Modernity ......................................................................... 23  
4 Map and Keys ....................................................................................................................................................... 29  
5 “Lines of Flight” and “Alter Tales” ................................................................................................................... 39  

**Chapter 1: “An Unbearable Sight”: Early Modern Bear-Baiting and Becoming-Animal** ..................................... 41  
Introduction ...................................................................................................................................................... 41  
1.1 The Material and Affective Gaze .................................................................................................................. 46  
1.2 Oedipal, State, and Affective Animal Gazes: Deleuzian “Types” and Becoming-Animal ........................... 50  
1.3 Theatrical Gaze: Actants and Packs ........................................................................................................... 56  
Figures ............................................................................................................................................................... 68  

**Chapter 2: “Subversive Somatology”: Deleuzian “Meat” and Human and Animal Bodies of the Early-Modern Hunt** .................................................................................................................................................. 69  
Introduction ...................................................................................................................................................... 69  
2.1 Reading: Symbols and Affects ..................................................................................................................... 74  
2.2 Bodies: Territorialised and Performative .................................................................................................... 89  
2.3 Suffering: Essentialism and Contingency ................................................................................................... 98  
Figures ............................................................................................................................................................... 103  

**Chapter 3: “Hydraulics and Hums”: Vital Materialism, Non-Localised Desire and Becoming-Animal-Machine** .................................................................................................................................................. 106  
Introduction ...................................................................................................................................................... 106  
3.1 Natural of Artificial? Hero and the Sparrows ............................................................................................... 109  
3.2 Navigating the Paradox: Vital Materialism and Hydraulic Desire ............................................................ 114  
3.3 Musical Flows and Vital Hums .................................................................................................................... 119  
3.4 Musical B(e)e-comings: Words, Songs, Hums ........................................................................................... 123
3.5 B-Flat: Reterritorialisation ................................................................. 134
Figures .................................................................................................... 138

Conclusion .............................................................................................. 139
Figure ....................................................................................................... 149

Bibliography .......................................................................................... 150