

**Animal Writing:
Magical Realism and the Posthuman Other**

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Abstract

Magical realist fiction is marked by a striking abundance of animals. Analysing magical realist novels from Australia and Canada, as well as exploring the influence of two seminal Latin American magical realist narratives, this thesis focuses on representations of animals and animality. Examining human-animal relationships in the postcolonial context reveals that magical realism embodies and represents an idea of feral animality that critically engages with an inherently imperialist and Cartesian humanism, and that, moreover, accounts for magical realism's elusiveness within systems of genre categorisation and labelling. It is this embodiment and presence of animal agency that animates magical realism and injects it with life and vibrancy. The magical realist writers discussed in this dissertation make use of animal practices inextricably intertwined with imperialism, such as pastoral farming, natural historical collections, the circus, the rodeo, the Wild West show, and the zoo, as well as alternative animal practices inherently incompatible with European ideologies, such as the Aboriginal Dreaming, Native North American animist beliefs, and subsistence hunting, as different ways of positioning themselves in relation to the Cartesian human subject. The circus is a particular influence on the form and style of many magical realist texts, whereby oxymoronic structured circensian spaces form the basis of the narratives' realities, and hierarchical imperial structures and hegemonic discourses that are portrayed as natural through Cartesian science and Linnaean taxonomies are revealed as deceptive illusions that perpetuate the self-interests of the powerful.

To Kerstin and Ingrid Anna

Also, to Good Friends

*“In Pliny’s observations I discovered that man,
far from being central in this life, lived in a
parlous world beyond his knowledge, . . . a
world in which man is lost & less but lost & less
amidst the marvellous, the extraordinary, the
gorgeously inexplicable wonder of a universe
only limited by one’s own imagining of it.”*

— Richard Flanagan, *Gould’s Book of Fish*

Introduction

Literary animals, in magical realism and elsewhere, are conventionally regarded as cyphers, symbols or props, whose importance lies in the meaning they give to others, the values they represent, or the role they play as part of the setting or landscape. Through their transformation into figures of speech, nonhuman animals themselves, who form the basis of such symbolic representations, have been virtually erased from the consciousness of readers and literary critics alike. Yet, as Erica Fudge writes, “[a] symbolic animal is only a symbol . . . unless it is related to the real,” and “it is in *use*—in the material relation with the animal—that representations must be grounded” (“Left-Handed Blow” 7, original emphasis). By “use” she means “practical use,” such as “meat-eating, sport, work, or any other form,” ways in which we engage with and treat animals (Fudge, “Left-Handed Blow” 7). Examining such material uses of, and interactions with, animals may generate new and productive modes of reading, and shed light on some of the ways in which animal practices influence literary production and vice versa. Starting from this premise, this thesis explores the role of animality in the context of postcolonial magical realist fiction from Latin America, Australia and Canada. Taking local as well as globalised animal practices and human-animal relationships into account, I analyse the nature of a mode of writing characteristically marked by a striking abundance and prominence of animals. As magical realism typically blurs the boundaries between human and nonhuman animals, the exploration of what “animals” and “animality” mean is a concern throughout this thesis. This thesis is therefore situated at the intersection of postcolonial literary studies and animal studies, also known as human-animal studies.

Critical attention has thus far overlooked the significance of nonhuman animals in magical realist fiction. Surprisingly, critics have barely registered their presence. There are some cursory observations, such as Sophie Masson’s identification of “fabulous beasts” as

one of the “devices of magical realism” used in Mudrooroo’s *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* (qtd. in Shoemaker, *Mudrooroo* 80), but other than that, even critics who are clearly perceptive regarding the prominence of nonhuman animals in magical realism omit to comment on, let alone discuss in depth, the significance of animals “in and for themselves,” as John Simons puts it, rather than as symbols alone (6). Maria Takolander’s *Catching Butterflies: Bringing Magical Realism to Ground*, for instance, only mentions García Márquez’ “butterfly plagues” in passing, alongside “flying virgins,” as one of the images that have become inseparably associated with magical realism (20). She also counts “Colombian butterfly plagues” as one of several images that contribute to what she considers magical realism’s “air of an exotic artifact and promise of authentic fantasy” (Takolander 13). However, despite the title of her book, these are her only comments on butterflies. Similarly, Takolander lists several instances of human-animal metamorphoses as examples of “an ‘irrational’ non-Western conception of reality.” yet she never registers the specific roles animality may play in these examples, or its importance as a marker of the mode (72, see also 73-4). Thus, animals are dismissed as representing merely one of so many ornamental signs of the exotic.

Carolyn Pinet, in turn, in “Choosing Barrabás: Dog as Text and Text as Dog in Isabel Allende’s *La casa de los espíritus*,” considers the dog Barrabás not *as dog* but as a “cypher,” representative of “the marginal” made “central,” in order to “reinstate the ‘trivial’ (background) as foreground” (57). She observes that Barrabás stands for suppressed Chilean history and the experience of “the dispossessed in Chile,” particularly Chilean women living in a patriarchal society and under a dictatorship (Pinet 62-3). To Pinet, Barrabás symbolises the “voice” of these marginal groups, as well as “the power of the dialogic text” as a “place of many voices and many stories which are constantly being revised, restated, and restored” (63). Pointing out the parallel between Barrabás’ reappearance throughout the narrative and

the foregrounding of marginal elements is perceptive, but Pinet makes no connection to Barrabás “as dog” or “as animal.” She does not consider the possibility that Barrabás may have his own doggy ways, interests (such as his penchant for stealing food from the kitchen table), and role to play that have nothing to do with immediate human agendas. Moreover, she makes no suggestion as to how the marginal position of nonhuman animals and that of the subaltern groups she mentions may be linked.

These are concerns I discuss throughout this thesis. Reading beyond animal symbolism, or rather, back to actual animals, whose real existence provides the basis for imaginary beasts, and analysing the animal practices and human-animal relationships that give rise to postcolonial literary representations of animals (nonhuman or human), my aim is to gain a fuller understanding of the connections between inter-human relationships, ideologies and animal practices, and how these motivate, reinforce and perpetuate the process of colonisation. In treating fictional animals not as decorative, trivial, or purely symbolic, but as characters and “irreplaceable living being[s],” as Derrida describes his cat (378-9), this approach reveals one of the essential characteristics of magical realism itself: the ferality of the mode. Not only is magical realism’s inherent ferality reflected in an animal agency displayed by individual animals within particular narratives, but it also determines its mode of narration, the dynamics of storytelling, as a whole. Postcolonial magical realism embodies and represents an idea of feral animality that critically engages with an inherently imperialist and Cartesian humanism. It is through transcendence of the Cartesian subject that the embodiment and presence of animal agency can be acknowledged in the first instance, which, in turn, animates magical realism and injects it with life and vibrancy.

Moreover, the postcolonial magical realist writers discussed in this dissertation use animal practices inextricably intertwined with imperialism, such as pastoral farming, natural historical collections, the circus, the rodeo, the Wild West show, and the zoo, as well as

animal practices inherently incompatible with European ideologies, such as the Aboriginal Dreaming, Native North American animist beliefs, and subsistence hunting, as ways of engaging with, and positioning themselves in relation to the Cartesian human subject. The circus especially provides a framework for reading animal representations in magical realist fiction. Originally influenced by the works of Franz Kafka, magical realist narratives make extensive use of the circus as a thematic and structural concern. Thus, they create an oxymoronic structured “circensian space,” which forms the basis of the narratives’ realities. In this way, the hierarchical imperial structures and hegemonic discourses that are portrayed as natural through Cartesian science, Linnaean taxonomies and realism itself are revealed as deceptive illusions that perpetuate the self-interests of the powerful.

This resistance to Western categories and labelling systems becomes a metatextual concern, as magical realism’s feral animality also accounts for its elusiveness in terms of genre distinctions. This is revealed in profuse critical attempts—and this study is not entirely an exception—to define it by distinguishing between “magic,” “magical,” and “marvellous” realism, for example, by identifying it as a genre distinct from others such as postmodernism or surrealism, and by seeking more precise distinctions for related, similar or liminal modes, such as the “bordercases” Jeanne Delbaere-Garant identifies (250).¹ Accordingly, this thesis discusses variations such as “maban realism” in Chapter Three; trickster narratives, or “magical realism?,” which incorporate aspects of magical realism, in Chapter Four; “mythic realism” and “Christian Science realism” in Chapter Five; and “faux magical realism” in Chapter Six.² However, my use of these multiple sub-categories reflects my awareness that, despite numerous studies, literary critics have thus far not been able to fully capture the meaning of the label “magical realism”—and nor have I. I therefore disagree with Takolander, for instance, who proposes to “offer . . . an understanding [of magical realist fiction] that is contextual and precise” (16).

It is my contention that no “precise” definition of magical realism, or of a “magical realist literary genre,” as Takolander calls it (15-16), is possible and that, ironically, this is precisely the point. Rather, it is a mode of writing, a way of moving between, and utilising, different genres such as realism, fantasy, postmodernism, historical novel, romance, mythology and fable, for example, with, however, realism always as its starting and reference point.³ Rather than adhering to a fixed set of criteria, magical realist narratives are situated on a continuum. The extent to which certain tropes, motifs, images and structural themes are employed appears to determine whether particular narratives are perceived “more” or “less” like magical realism.⁴ Thereby, the texts more universally recognised as obviously magical realist, such as Gabriel García Márquez’ *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, foreground those animals who transgress boundaries, so-called pest animals, whilst those narratives that re-domesticate animals and reinforce pastoral ideals, such as Jack Hodgins’ *The Invention of the World* and Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi*, are more contentious in regard to that label. It makes sense to regard magical realism itself, in relation to other genres, as a kind of stray. Therefore, throughout the thesis, I speak of tendencies, rather than hard and fast rules.

I do agree with Takolander, however, that the term cannot be used to apply to just any work of fiction which happens to display contradictory elements or supernatural phenomena alongside the everyday (cf. Takolander 15). Fudge’s assessment of *Wind in the Willows* as “magic realism” is one notable faux pas in this direction (*Animal* 71). Just because a talking frog drives a car, and because cars exist and talking frogs do not, does not in itself mean the narrative is an example of magical realism. Rather, *Wind in the Willows* is an instance of anthropomorphic representation, conventional to children’s stories, fairy tales, allegories and fables, as Fudge herself observes. She writes that “the tale told is ultimately about ‘us’ [humans] and not ‘them’ [animals]” (Fudge, *Animal* 71). Steve Baker discusses such anthropomorphic representations in talking-animal stories in relation to Rupert Bear, for

example, who protests that he is “not that sort of bear,” that is, a real bear (128).

Notwithstanding any supplementary role animality may play in such stories (see Steve Baker 138-9), a notable difference between talking-animal stories, such as *Wind in the Willows*, and magical realism is the magical realist tendency to give animals a very material, “animal-like” rather than “human-like” presence.⁵ This magical realist animality is disruptive of conventional readings of animals within realism, which, Belsey writes, “is plausible not because it reflects the world, but because it is constructed out of what is (discursively) familiar” (47). Belsey identifies “classic realism” as the predominant, popular mode (125), and points out: “Speaking animals, elves or Martians are no impediment to intelligibility and credibility if they conform to patterns of speech and behaviour consistent with a ‘recognizable’ system” (51-2). Nonetheless, due to the feral spirit of the mode, discussions about specific cases, which parameters can be applied to the label, and where to draw the line, are inevitably contentious and ongoing.

The impulse to order and classify, the “meticulous examination of things,” is deeply ingrained in Western knowledge production since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, beginning with the ordering of nature and extending to other spheres of Western culture, according to Michel Foucault (*Order* 131). Thus, the continuing critical debate surrounding the term “magical realism” and its applicability or otherwise to various works of fiction mirrors the kinds of disputes that arose from questions about the proper scientific categorisations of particular animal species, such as the early explorers’ difficulties to class kangaroos and platypuses. As a postcolonial, posthumanist mode of writing, magical realism is to the idea of “genre” what the platypus is to the Linnaean system: both are hybrid paradoxes which undermine attempts to subordinate them to particular master narratives. Accordingly, it is not the purpose of this thesis to give the ultimate checklist of criteria that will define magical realism once and for all and determine which narratives exactly are

magical realist or not. Such an attempt is directly opposed to the spirit in which magical realism is produced, and the futility of that attempt is built into the mode, so to speak, which, after all, commonly makes fun of scientists, taxonomists, and list makers of all kinds. These include the mad natural historian Mr Lempriere in *Gould's Book of Fish*, the list-making Robinson Crusoe in *Green Grass, Running Water* (323-7), the crazy chicken breeder Miss Adamson (*Illywhacker* 280), Mr Brown, the agricultural technician in *The House of the Spirits* (134), or the type-setter Liebhaber, who has a very eccentric storage system for his letters (*What the Crow Said* 54-55). The joke, I suggest, is as much on literary critics.

In both its subversive critique of Western anthropocentrism, hierarchical orderings, material power structures and hegemonic discourse, and in its recognition of nonhuman subjectivity through indigenous belief systems and the carnivalesque, magical realism is essentially a posthumanist mode of writing. Modern Western understanding of what it means to be human is strongly influenced by the Cartesian distinction between humans and animals on the basis of reason (see Badmington 3-4); a difference that implies human superiority and power over animals, who, in contrast to an active human subject, are rendered passive objects without substance. As Derrida says, animals have become “a theorem, something seen and not seeing” within the Western philosophical tradition since the Enlightenment (383, emphasis omitted). This tradition seeks a complete logical reduction of “the Animal” to a fixed set of definitions, a process that in its extreme reduces animals to Cartesian machines, whose every action can be observed and explained on an empirical basis and through stimulus response theories. As Neil Badmington, however, points out, “Cartesian humanism” is always already undoing itself (4, see 9-10). Indeed, its understanding of the human (or “Man”) on the basis of difference from “the Animal” is continually called into question by the fact that animals are, as John Berger puts it, “both like and unlike” us (“Animals as Metaphor” 504). They are inherently feral, always wild to a degree, whether domesticated or

not, and thus irreducible to a fixed set of categories. Any individual animal is, to use Derrida's description of his feline companion, "an existence that refuses to be conceptualized" (379). In their "likeness" and "unlikeness" to us, and in their individuality, or "singularity," as Derrida says (378), we are unable to fully capture their being and experience. Their "wildness," a concept already included in the idea of ferality, lies, I suggest, not in an idealised notion of untouched nature, but in a very tangible element of unpredictability (since they are not machines), as well as in characteristics and behaviours that run counter to human interests and are thus seen to be in need of control, containment, domestication or training, for example. The characteristic proliferation of animals, evident in the magical realist fictions discussed here, is an expression of the inherent ferality of the mode, which animals always already represent. I suggest that they embody an "irreducible element," similar to the "'irreducible element' of magic" Wendy B. Faris regards as one of five essential characteristics of magical realism (*Ordinary Enchantments* 7).⁶

Embodied ferality thus causes the phenomenon Faris describes, whereby "objects may take on lives of their own and become magical that way" ("Scheherazade's Children" 170). Dead metaphors are resurrected, and objects, such as Liebhaber's letters in Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said*, figures of speech, and indeed occasionally whole narratives go feral, so to speak, as authorial control appears to be relinquished. The story spills over and out to cross the boundary of the page and draw the reader into the narrative, as in Richard Flanagan's *Gould's Book of Fish*, for example, which blurs distinctions between narrator, protagonist, reader and fish, or in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*, where the reader's unseen presence is built into the narrative, and Coyote's manipulation of the story leaves the reader in doubt as to whether a human narrator, Coyote, or perhaps a human Coyote is in control of the story-telling at any given point. This embodied ferality also accounts for the profusion of animals in magical realism, since they always already signify

the inherent ferality and elusiveness of the mode. Magical realist feral animals thus stand in opposition to the Cartesian “I (and only I) am.” In the egalitarian spirit of the carnivalesque and in dialogic engagement with the Cartesian subject, they insist: “We are (too).”⁷ Through embodiment, the weight of realism is thus used to subvert its own essential subject-object relationship, since the presence of a transgressive, acting body cannot be denied by an empirically observing human subject. Accordingly, the silenced “nonhuman” and feral subaltern speaks, as it were, through a disruptive and unsettling presence of the body, through the refusal to be invisible, and especially when “out of place.” By addressing structures of oppression based on the subject-object relationship fundamentally important to European culture’s treatment of the “nonhuman other,” magical realism gives nonhuman animals, alongside peoples animalised through racist discourse, a voice of sorts.

Analysing a mode so inherently subversive of Cartesian and colonising subject-object relationships, and transgressive of the boundary between text and reader, requires a critical approach that reflects the capacity of postcolonial magical realist fiction to compel readers to question their position and situate themselves. Donna J. Haraway’s notion of “situated knowledges” is helpful here, especially in relation to aspects of the novels discussed in this thesis that are outside of my own cultural sphere and depict animal practices and beliefs I am unfamiliar with from my own experience and upbringing. Haraway critiques the Myth of objective knowledge: the notion of a detached, disembodied and omniscient observer, whereby “[t]he eyes have been used to signify a perverse capacity . . . to distance the knowing subject from everybody and everything in the interests of unfettered power” (188).⁸ She counters the “god-trick of seeing everything from nowhere” with the argument that vision itself is necessarily embodied, rather than transcendent “of all limits and responsibility” (Haraway 189-90).

Haraway advocates partial, limited and locatable critical positioning in the sciences (188-196), a stance that is also necessary for literary analysis here, in order to avoid the danger of appearing to speak for and at cultures other than my own, let alone treating particularly indigenous narratives as “anthropological artifacts,” a particular pitfall Takolander cautions against (182). I therefore write primarily as a “white,” European, Western reader of magical realism.⁹ This is an appropriate approach, I suggest, to texts that are themselves emphatically partial and locatable, and that encourage the dialogic engagement of many voices. Particularly pertinent in relation to the representation of animals and human-animal relationships is also Haraway’s declaration that “[s]ituated knowledges require that the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor and agent, not a screen or a ground or a resource . . . “(198). Adopting a position of “situated knowledge” entails, as Haraway points out, that I am accountable for my contribution and for my use and choice of sources: “In this way we might become answerable for what we learn how to see” (Haraway 190).

Chapter One, then, discusses the ways in which the circensian spirit of Kafka’s works translates into the Latin American context by focussing on Gabriel García Márquez’ *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Isabel Allende’s *The House of the Spirits*. I explore the ways in which these seminal works set up the circus and feral animality as a thematic and structural model for subsequent magical realist writers in other national contexts. The circus especially epitomises imperial conquest and, as a form of animal entertainment, it is particularly well suited to engage with the realist novel as a form of leisure commodity and representational practice that has traditionally upheld the integrity of the human, especially white European, subject. The circus’ demonstration of colonial power over indigenous peoples and of human mastery over animals directly mirrors the imperial subject-object relationship between the European “Master” and the nonhuman natural world.

Asserting a Latin American identity to counter European and neo-colonial influences, García Márquez and Allende decentre and transcend the Cartesian human subject by subversively and ironically embracing animality, blurring human-animal boundaries, presenting animals (human and nonhuman) as transgressive subjects who undermine the foundations of Western tenets, and by acknowledging the agency and experience of “nonhuman others.” By positioning nonhuman animals as centrally important characters and agents, magical realism accords them a corporeality that they are often denied by conventional representations through their designation to the realm of the symbolic, functional and representational.

Steve Baker points out, in relation to more conventional depictions of animals: “The notion that talking-animal narratives are not really about animals—that the worthwhile ones, at least, must surely be about something more important than mere animals—is quite consistent with the far wider cultural trivialization and marginalization of the animal” (138). This cultural marginalisation and Western, industrialised animal practices mutually reinforce each other in transforming animal bodies into concepts or commodities; that is, ideas and products seemingly altogether detached from the individual animals themselves. Thus, cultural blindspots are created to a point where consumers are unaware that animals (actual or representational) are even involved in the product consumed, whether it be a marshmallow or a novel.

Allende especially illuminates the parallels between nonhuman animal suffering and the exploitation of animalised humans, both on a physical, bodily level and in terms of the structures and mechanisms of oppressive power which frame exploitative practices. Thus, *The House of the Spirits* illustrates the strong connection between colonisation and Western speciesism, addressed by Cary Wolfe, who argues: “[A]s long as this humanist and speciesist *structure* of subjectivization remains intact, . . . then the humanist discourse of species will

always be available for use by some humans against other humans as well” (8, original emphasis).

Representations of animality fulfil similar functions in *Gould's Book of Fish* and Peter Carey's *Illywhacker*, discussed in Chapter Two. However, whilst García Márquez' and Allende's magical realism is characterised by a rejection of Linnaean taxonomy through an identification with pre-Linnaean bestiaries, the Australian context is clearly conceptualised in post-Linnaean terms. Borrowing the circus model from Latin American magical realism, both Carey and Flanagan critique the Linnaean system, representative of British imperial worldviews and colonising practices, by illuminating its inherently carceral qualities. In contrast to scientific classifications, they set up an identification with animality that creates a national identity in flux, which mocks and subverts the imposed material and conceptual structures of imperialism from within.

Applying Foucault's analysis of the significant cultural impact of Linnaeus' taxonomies in *The Order of Things*, this chapter further develops the idea of the circus towards the concept of “circensian spaces.” Fundamentally contradictory and polyphonic, the animal circus belongs to the group of spaces which Foucault calls “heterotopias,” other spaces, in which “all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality” (“Of Other Spaces” 24). Extending the term “circensian” from its original meaning, which refers exclusively to the circus of ancient Rome, I use the term “circensian spaces” to include also the modern circus tradition in all its aspects and variations: from its origins in the travelling menageries at country fairs and in the commercialized spectacles of natural history displays, to the colonial exotic animal performances in the big top and the contemporary animal acts that we are familiar with today. This term can be applied to fictional as well as actual sites of

animal entertainment, whereby the circensian space is a conceptual construct, an imaginary reality produced by the staging and enactment of inherently contradictory discourses.

Originally an imperial showcase, the circus enacts the oppressive structures and discourses at play in the process of colonisation, and yet at the same time, by means of the carnivalesque, it portrays the illusion of a subversive and egalitarian space where human-animal boundaries are blurred, natural laws and human limitations can be transcended, and where magic is possible.¹⁰ Thus, setting, performance and language, which are simultaneously at odds with and reinforcing the material realities of the circus environment, create an inherently oxymoronic and dialogic heterotopia. Magical realism reverses this relationship between imaginary and material reality. The circensian space thus becomes the narrative's reality, whilst the material realities of colonisation and its aftermath are exposed as resulting from staged illusions, discourses and circumstances created by the powerful. In this regard, Carey, who considers writing "an act of empathy" (qtd. in Koval 672), connects the exploitation and victimisation of animals with the mechanisms that marginalise and silence the (historical) experience of "other" groups of Australian society.

The process of historical writing, the invisibility of "other" histories, and the inextricable connections between human and nonhuman animal exploitation are also major themes in both Mudrooroo's *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* and Sam Watson's *The Kadaitcha Sung*, discussed in Chapter Three. The correlation between realism, empirical science, and colonisation, as structures founded on the Cartesian subject's central position in relation to the nonhuman world, is most explicitly addressed by Mudrooroo's character Fada, a priest, a scientist and an author/authority, in *Master of the Ghost Dreaming*. The novel is based on Mudrooroo's theory of maban realism, a fusion of Aboriginal Dreaming with European realism, and a mode Mudrooroo explicitly associates with magical realism. Maban realism represents what Mudrooroo calls "maban reality," which he defines as being directly

opposed to “natural scientific reality.”¹¹ The latter, he argues, produces “the dominant language,” and the resulting Master narratives—such as realism and linear history—create, in turn, the “dominant reality” and cement a European “ideological position of dominance” (Mudrooroo, *Indigenous Literature* 91, 100).

This power and authority of the European, Cartesian human subject is threatened by the ferality inherent in maban realism, magical realism and its convergent mode, the North American trickster narrative. Mudrooroo’s perceptive comparison of maban realism with a living, unknowable beast is suggestive of this ferality that, like the “pest” animals of García Márquez and Allende, for example, disrupts European scientific and philosophical systems of order.¹² Watson’s novel exemplifies Mudrooroo’s concept of maban realism as animality and humanity are blurred very tangibly on the level of flesh and the body. Even the text itself is transformed into a body of text, so to speak. Magical realism’s characteristic focus on physical sensations, such as smell (epitomised in Patrick Süskind’s *Das Parfüm: Die Geschichte eines Mörders* [*Perfume*]), taste (elevated in Laura Esquivel’s *Like Water for Chocolate* and Joanne Harris’ *Chocolat*) and touch (suggested, for instance, in the illusion of wet or bleeding book pages in *Gould’s Book of Fish* and Tomson Highway’s *Kiss of the Fur Queen* respectively), which serve to dismantle the Cartesian focus on vision and the separation of reason and body, is thus taken to a new level of “embodiment” altogether. Through the embodied connection between humans and animals, Watson provides a very material link between the pastoral exploitation of animals and the exploitation of people animalised under a colonial ideology and within an economy based on livestock production and processing.

In the North American context, John Sandlos points out Coyote’s role in undermining European pastoral poetry, and argues that the trickster’s approach constitutes a rejection of the terms by which pastoral/settler societies try to order and control “their” world. He relates

this to the manner in which actual coyotes, considered pest animals, undermine pastoral farming (see Sandlos 107). Chapter Four, with a focus on Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*, and Tomson Highway's *The Kiss of the Fur Queen*, discusses the role of trickster animals such as Coyote, who subvert directly the material and ideological bases of settlement, that is, the idea that nonhuman nature (and all who are seen as part of it) is a resource to be domesticated and rendered useful by an ordering and civilising European subject. This chapter will look at the role of feral trickster animals in undermining any kind of domestication by creating disorder within taxonomic divisions not only between humans and animals, but also between genres and narrative conventions. Inevitably, these tricksters thus also raise the question whether these Native Canadian novels can be considered magical realism at all.

The difficulty of applying magical realism as a label to particular works continues to be a concern in the remaining chapters. Kroetsch's and Hodgins' novels, discussed in Chapter Five, and Martel's *Life of Pi*, which is the subject of Chapter Six, diverge from the other works discussed here: whilst the project of postcolonial magical realism is generally the unmaking of mastery,¹³ the questioning of imperial power and the unsettling of settlement, these three Canadian authors assert their Canadian or, in Martel's case, supposedly global, multicultural identity by re-affirming pastoral practices, such as the perceived pragmatic need for nonhuman animals to be useful and controllable by humans. Through this, they also re-affirm settlement and the dominant position of the European human subject. Kroetsch, Hodgins and Martel make use of magical realism as a mode widely recognised as a particular expression of local and postcolonial identities, and, in Kroetsch's and Hodgins' case, of realities other than that perceived through the empirical eyes of a European human subject. Yet, in order use the mode to affirm—rather than unsettle—settlement, realism gone feral, so to speak, needs to be re-domesticated. This does not, however, result in a simple reversal of

the subject-object relationship of realism, but in versions of, or deviations from, magical realism that acknowledge nonhuman agency in various forms and to various degrees, whilst asserting human ascendancy over nature regardless.

Thus, Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said* explicitly deals with the question of narrative domestication, so to speak, and authorial control versus the ferality of the—nonhuman—landscape (of which nonhuman animals are an inextricable part), and Kroetsch manages to situate his narrative in a liminal position between humanism and posthumanism by calling the permanence of the human subject, always threatened by an active landscape, into doubt. Hodgins' narratives *The Invention of the World* and *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*, both based on Christian Science tenets, recognise the omnipresent “nonhuman” agency of a Christian God, an approach entirely consistent with Descartes' concept of the rational human subject. Correspondingly, Hodgins also maintains the Cartesian separation of humanity and animality. Animals, moreover, along with the rest of nature, serve as mere abstractions to represent allegorical meanings and divine concepts. Ultimately, both Kroetsch's and Hodgins' works constitute a reassertion of human control over nature and a legitimization of contemporary, if not historical, settlement. This is achieved by framing nonhuman animals as necessarily useful within the context of the rodeo, for example, a re-enactment of the North American frontier myth and a domesticated form of the carnivalesque.

Life of Pi, in turn, acknowledges the powerful forces of nature that Pi, the protagonist, however masters by farming the sea, as it were (Armstrong, *What Animals Mean* 178), with his “sea cow” solar stills (*Life of Pi* 187-8), and by capturing, dominating, controlling and intimidating nonhuman animals through zoo and circus practices. Martel borrows the common magical realist circus motif and uses it in a clichéd and commodified fashion that is markedly different from the circensian model used elsewhere. *Life of Pi*'s depiction of circus acts and the closely related zoo entertainment reinforces and naturalises exoticist discourse.

In contrast, King and Highway, for instance, make use of the Wild West show, a practice derived from the circus, in order to address and undermine racial stereotypes that have rendered “the Indian” an exotic construct and commodity, and a metaphorical screen for the projection of Western fears and desires. Thus, following Kafka’s influence, all of the novels considered here, with the exception of *Master of the Ghost Dreaming*, utilise circensian animal entertainment, although *The Kadaitcha Sung* only contains the slightest trace of the rodeo, which is employed, in contrast to Kroetsch’s and Hodgins’ use, as a critique of settlement. This thesis explores the processes of “mastery in the unmaking”—a reversal of *Life of Pi*’s protagonist’s description of his lifeboat circus as “mastery in the making” (211)—and the extent to which these narratives may indicate a shift beyond conventional notions of what it means to be human.

Chapter One

Animal Acts: Visibility, Ferality and the Circus in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The House of the Spirits*

The first directly spoken words in Gabriel García Márquez' *One Hundred Years of Solitude* are as programmatic as they are prophetic in relation to representations of animals in magical realist fiction. A travelling exhibitor of scientific and miraculous spectacles, Melquíades the “gypsy” announces: “Things have a life of their own It's simply a matter of waking up their souls” (*Solitude* 7). His proclamation not only anticipates the rousing of literary animals from a Cartesian object status in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, but it also highlights a model of nonhuman subjectivity that bears upon magical realist fauna outside of Latin America, subsequent to the immense success of García Márquez' magical realist novel.

Edward W. Said explains that magical realist “works and their authors and readers are specific to, and articulated in, local circumstances” (308). Whilst magical realism is a global mode of writing, it is normally, and especially in the postcolonial context, locally specific. Accordingly, focussing on Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits* as well as *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, this chapter will take both global and local influences into account, discuss the impact of explorer narratives on the construction of Latin America as an “animal space,” (a concept borrowed from Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert [6-7]), and examine the ways in which these two novels resist or embrace this imposed animality in the formation of uniquely Latin American identities. Following the influence of Franz Kafka, García Márquez and Allende represent an idea of feral animality that critically engages with an inherently imperialist and Cartesian humanism. Their use of the circus, a globalised and traditionally colonial form of entertainment, provides a framework for subsequent magical realist writers to mock and subvert European-derived scientific, racist and exoticist discourse, and to

undermine hegemonic power structures. Allende in particular highlights the marginalisation of animalised people and the interconnectedness of human and animal suffering. Focussing on *The House of the Spirits* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, this chapter introduces key approaches to reading animals and animality in magical realist fiction.

One Hundred Years of Solitude focuses on the lives of several generations of the Buendía family, who live in the remote town of Macondo, founded by José Arcadio Buendía and his wife Úrsula Iguarán. The fate of the family and of the town is chronicled by Melquíades, whose travelling troupe provides the near-inaccessible town with curiosities and scientific discoveries from the outside world. Macondo grows from a village to a prosperous town of commerce, marred, however, by wars, a massacre of striking banana company workers, an epidemic of memory loss, and floods of rain. The town finally falls into decay, and the last descendant of the Buendía family is eaten by ants. *The House of the Spirits*, in turn, traces the history of three generations of the Trueba family. The focus is particularly on the women Clara, Blanca, and the narrator, Alba, and Esteban Trueba, the patriarch of the family and Alba's grandfather. Allende fictionalises Chilean history up until the military coup in 1973 and the ensuing brutal dictatorship.

Invisible Animals

The “phenomenal popular success” of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, published in 1967, has rendered García Márquez' novel one of the most influential texts for magical realist literature worldwide (Janes 9). Geoff Hancock writes, “[m]agic realism flourished during the movement known as ‘The Boom’ in the 1960s. This period introduced many of the most prominent Latin American writers to the rest of the world, and culminated in Gabriel García Márquez' winning the Nobel Prize for his masterpiece *One Hundred Years of Solitude*” (“Magic or Realism” 45). Allende acknowledges the influence of García Márquez on her

work and of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* on *The House of the Spirits* specifically (see Gazarian-Gautier 15). Translations of both novels have been immensely successful outside of Latin America,¹⁴ and Regina Janes, referring to *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, points out that “the wider reading public consumed the novel as if it were Ursula’s little candy animals” (13).¹⁵

Her comparison of the appeal of García Márquez’ novel with the voracious consumption of animal-shaped food is not only indicative of the significant role nonhuman animals play as a marker of the mode, but it also evokes the interconnection between the way literary animals are read and the way actual (mass-produced) animals are consumed in other ways. Paradoxically, whilst nonhuman animals contribute significantly to the commercial appeal of magical realist fiction (an issue discussed in Chapter Six), they are also subject to the same cultural blind spots that render actual animals “invisible” in the West, as the critical response to them, or rather the lack of it, suggests.¹⁶ As Jennifer Wolch and Jody Emel write, “the thoroughly modern instrumental rationality that characterizes contemporary human-animal dependency,” which is “artfully hidden behind factory-farm gates or research-lab doors, obscured by disembodiment and endless processing, and normalized by institutional routines and procedures, . . . has rendered animals morally and spatially invisible” (22). Adrian Franklin, who observes a split between charismatic animals and farmed animals in the wake of Fordism, writes that “[w]ith the city finally cleansed of all its pre-modern relations with animals, it became very nearly devoid of animals altogether, with the exception of pets and a subset of tolerated species” (*Animals and Modern Cultures* 38). This division became more pronounced as “[t]he rationalization and concentration of the slaughtering, butchery and meat packing industries” removed the lives and suffering of animals from visibility and the human conscience (*Animals and Modern Cultures* 39).

Yet despite the concomitant increased interest in, and the greater commercial and media appeal of, charismatic (wild) animals or pets (see Franklin, *Animals and Modern Cultures* 39),¹⁷ even those supposedly privileged animals have not received much focussed attention from critics of magical realist fiction, although reviewers and critics frequently comment on *One Hundred Years of Solitude*'s butterflies as one of the most striking images of the novel, to the point where they are considered, not without some justification, one of "the most overwrought clichés of magical realism" (Gruesz 75).¹⁸ Stephanie Jones observes a similar phenomenon in relation to Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, and comments that Sala Suleri's, Pierre François' and Sadik Jalal Al-Azm's 'short' readings of Rushdie's butterflies focus exclusively on symbolic meanings: "Such decisively dismissive readings seem at odds with the lush orderings the author devotes to the butterflies. Abstracting the butterflies to a single static metaphor, these critical approaches ignore their very real, powdery, physical presence in the village and amongst the pilgrims, as well as their magical attachments and select detachments" (264). She cautions, however, that, "within the lineaments of a tragic-comic narrative infused with a sense of sympathy and yearning, it is difficult to accept the butterflies' odd physical presence and behaviour as in itself their point" (Jones 264). Referring to Faris' contention that magical realist images tend to be psychologically, socially, emotionally and politically motivated, Jones proposes that "[i]n the abundance of Rushdie's writing, the butterflies appear to bear meanings on all these planes" (264).¹⁹

Fictional animals, in magical realism and elsewhere, certainly tend to convey multiple meanings, influenced just as much by cultural understanding of animals and literary techniques such as the employment of metaphor as by material human-animal relationships, and indeed the lives of animals themselves, whether they directly interrelate with humans or not. A comment by Allende certainly supports a way of reading animals that pays attention

to their “very real,” “physical presence” and the human-animal relationships that influence their representation. She says: “I have maybe four papers on Barrabás, the dog in *The House of the Spirits* . . . what the dog symbolizes . . . It was just a dog who lived in my house and his name was Barrabás, that’s all! But how can I explain to a student who has been working on a thesis on Barrabás for a year that he’s just a dog? I’d feel awful!” (qtd. in Mujica 42, original ellipses). Elsewhere, Allende explains that “[s]ome critics, however, say the dog symbolizes Pinochet, while others maintain that he represents Clara’s innocence,” and that Barrabás’ murder “in a pool of blood” is viewed “as symbolic of the sexual act” (qtd. in Gazarian-Gautier 12). She concedes that “there are things that writers are not aware of having put in their books, and it is the task of you people to discover them” (Gazarian-Gautier 12). Yet here, too, her ultimate response to questions about “the meaning of the dog” is “that he symbolizes nothing” (Gazarian-Gautier 12).

John Simons makes an attempt to draw some attention to “the ways in which animals appear in texts, are represented and figured, in and for themselves and not as displaced metaphors for the human” (6). Steve Baker, in turn, also observes the obscurity of “‘real’ animals” in readings of cultural representations: “Culture does not allow unmediated access to animals themselves. Our attitudes, our prejudices and indeed our sympathies are all filtered through or clogged up in this thick but transparent mesh (or mess) of history, culture, public opinion, received ideas. Animals themselves, living animals, ‘real’ animals: where are they in all this?”(10). Ironically, this invisibility is strangely at odds with the sheer profusion of animals in magical realist fiction, who are more than ornamental parts of the scenery. Baker, citing Roland Barthes, provides an explanation for the apparent disappearance of animals from our conscious perception:

Calling the workings of everyday culture “myth”, he writes: “Myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession:

it is an inflexion”. What it distorts and inflects is the historical and the cultural, so that they appear entirely natural. But what is most useful here is the idea that *nothing is actually hidden*: it’s just that the culture typically deflects our attention from these things, and makes them seem unworthy of analysis. (Steve Baker 8)

One of the reasons for this apparent unworthiness is a phenomenon Mary Midgley calls “relative dismissal.” She explains the common belief that “animals, since they are conscious, are entitled to *some* consideration, but must come at the end of the queue, after all human needs have been met” (Midgley 13, original emphasis). In consequence, animals are considered “a very low priority” and are thus dismissed as unimportant (Midgley 13). “Relative dismissal” is thus mirrored in conventional literary criticism. As Philip Armstrong argues,

The lack of culturally and politically-engaged readings of human-animal relationships in literature (prior to the last few years) may reflect the prejudice—as common in literary studies as it is elsewhere—that research into the meaning and function of the animal in the human world involves a kind of self-indulgent taste for the trivial. (“Moby-Dick and Compassion” 20).²⁰

This perception of animals as trivial rests to a large extent in the object status assigned to them by Cartesian humanist epistemology and the resulting “human-animal divide,” as Glen Elder, Wolch and Emel term the conceptual and ideological separation of humans and animals. They point out that “while humans and animals manifestly differ, the interspecific divide is not solely a behavioral or biologically determined distinction. Rather, like many other categorizations (e.g., race, ethnicity), it is a place-specific, social construction, subject to change over time” (Elder, Wolch and Emel 192). René Descartes was most prominent in establishing the idea of the human as subject and the animal as object, reasoning that animals

“have no reason at all” and are therefore “just as a clock, which is only composed of wheels and weights” (qtd. in Regan and Singer 62). A multitude of philosophers, such as Saint Thomas Aquinas in the Christian tradition, or Immanuel Kant, have shared the view that animals are of instrumental value only (see Regan and Singer 56, 58-9, 122). Yet, as Keith Thomas points out, it was Descartes who “created an absolute break between man and the rest of nature, thus clearing the way very satisfactorily for the uninhibited exercise of human rule. The Cartesian view of animal souls generated a vast learned literature, and it is no exaggeration to describe it as a central preoccupation of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European intellectuals” (35). He argues that “Descartes had only pushed the European emphasis on the gulf between man and beast to its logical conclusion. A transcendent God, outside his creation, symbolized the separation between spirit and nature. Man stood to animal as did heaven to earth, soul to body, culture to nature. There was a total qualitative difference between man and brute” (35).

Such views were not uncontested. Thomas comments on the ambivalence of the “Judeo-Christian inheritance” and points out that “[s]ide by side with the emphasis on man’s right to exploit the inferior species went a distinctive doctrine of human stewardship and responsibility for God’s creatures” (24). Accordingly, “there was a marked lack of agreement as to just where man’s unique superiority lay” in the Western philosophical tradition, though ultimately, as Thomas explains, “what all such definitions have in common is that they assume a polarity between the categories ‘man’ and ‘animal’ and that they invariably regard the animal as inferior” (31). In view of such general consensus, “the assumptions and ramifications which render the human strictly separable from the animal may appear at first sight entirely ‘reasonable,’” as Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert put it. However, as they point out, “on closer inspection it transpires that they flow from a particular

set of discourses which began to gain currency in Europe from the sixteenth and seventeenth century onwards” (15).

The break between humans and nature and the subject-object relationship most influentially propounded by Descartes thus shaped the understanding of what it means to be human within what Neil Badmington calls “Cartesian humanism” (3-4), and were perpetuated, in practice, by empiricist scientific observation. As Catherine Belsey’s explanation of what she terms “the theory of expressive realism” shows, these assumptions also affected the practice of reading and writing literature. The status of “one (especially gifted) individual,” whose perception of “the reality of experience” is reflected in literature, thus results from “a humanism based on an empiricist-idealist interpretation of the world,” whereby “[o]ur concepts and our knowledge are held to be the product of experience (empiricism), and this experience is preceded and interpreted by the mind, reason or thought, the property of a transcendent human nature whose essence is the attribute of each individual (idealism)” (Belsey 7, italics omitted). These relationships are assumed to be based on “common sense,” as Belsey argues (7.). Correspondingly, the position of the Cartesian humanist subject as a central observer separate from nature came to be considered as unbiased and universally valid from the Enlightenment onwards, when in fact it is specific to Western culture.²¹ In practice, this means that nonhuman animals have “usually . . . been the relatively powerless and marginalised ‘other’ partner in human-animal relations” (Philo and Wilbert 4).

Magical realist fauna, however, challenges the cultural blind spots created by Myth, relative dismissal and the human-animal divide in a mode that is inherently anti-Cartesian. Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza comments in regard to García Márquez that “[h]e and Descartes would never have been friends (Rabelais yes, Descartes never). . . . He sees it [Cartesian thinking] as a mould in which there is only room for one side of reality” (94). García

Márquez himself remarks: “I’m much closer to Rabelais’ craziness than to Descartes’ discipline” (qtd. in Mendoza 78). As a result of this anti-Cartesian impulse, animals resist object status, marginalisation, and the kind of obliterative consumption invoked by Janes. Thus, Stephen Slemon’s observation in relation to Canadian magical realism, that “marginalized presences press in toward the center” (420), is pertinent to and characteristic of animals in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The House of the Spirits*, who push their way into the reader’s line of vision, so to speak, and undermine realism’s “humanist assumption that [human] subjectivity, the individual mind or inner being, is the source of meaning and of action” (Belsey 3). Accordingly, Janes acknowledges the important role of the ants in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and makes some concessions to the “antness” of the ants (30, original emphasis). She comments on the failure of “most readers and critics” to notice the significance of the scene in which the last Aureliano is devoured by ants and writes: “All the reader regards about the scene or remembers about that baby is his transformation into text, into the epigraph that finally permits the reading of the manuscripts of Melquíades Like Aureliano, we scarcely see the little body in our headlong pursuit of the pleasures of the text” (23-4). If readers and critics barely notice the baby, one can only speculate on how much thought is given to the role the physical presence of insects may play (rather than a purely symbolic one). Easily overlooked, the ants are more important than they seem, as insects—real insects—have historically played a significant part in the conception of Latin America as an “animal space,” and have shaped the explorers’ day-to-day experience of reality in the “New World.” García Márquez’ ants reflect this experience and ground the novel in historical as much as ecological realities.

Animal Space

Indeed, animals featured prominently in the representation of South America ever since Europeans first began to imagine it. Eric C. Brown, for example, examines the “crosspollination . . . of insect materiality with fictive models” in early modern explorer narratives of the New World (22-3).²² According to Brown, these narratives traditionally use representations of insects to portray and define space. He explains that “the construction of Old and New World differences along entomological fault lines was a recurrent device in the conquest and travel narratives of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (20). Insects, Brown argues, provided “a template for the process of colonization itself,” as “bees, ants and other social insects have been the poetic models for ideal, organized communities, clockwork colonies of perfect governance and efficiency” since, he supposes, the time of Virgil’s *Georgics* (21-2). Thus, Brown observes, representations of insect colonies in utopian narratives, fabulous travel tales and early natural historical accounts created an image of the New World as a pastoral utopia for early modern explorers. As he points out, “[t]he word ‘colony’ itself derives from the Latin ‘colere,’ meaning ‘to cultivate’; hence a Roman ‘colonus’ was as likely to be a farmer, bringing physical order to the land, as a settler reordering the population” (25). However, this paradisaical and benevolent view of the Americas came to be demythified “partially from [the] refusal of the natural world to cohere with fabulous expectations,” and disillusion set in as explorers were confronted by the reality of the unknown continent (25).

Thus, Brown relates how Cortes, once triumphant conqueror of the Aztec empire and later on a “failed expedition south of the Yucatan,” is “so overpowered by nature that it alone proscribed his conquest and delimits discovery” (30). Cortes laments “pass[ing] the night in a great downpour of rain and amid the greatest pest of mosquitoes imaginable” (qtd. in Brown 30). Brown suggests that

[t]he imagined pliability of the New World often proved an overestimation of nature's passivity as the conquistadors hit upon repeated failures.

Idealizations of the New World made independently of the land in question fell apart as a new natural reality surfaced, even as the displacement of ideal insect colonies by minatory insect infestations became the hallmark for many of these failures. (30)

Faced with an active nature as opponent, its refusal to conform to ideals shaped in Europe was integrated into what Beatriz Pastor Bodmer calls the “discourse of failure” (Brown 23). In this context, success and material rewards not only had to be earned through hardships and adventure, but the unexpected disorder of nature provided legitimation for the imposition of colonial order (see Brown 23-4). Brown regards *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as a continuation of this discourse, as, he argues, “novelists like Garcia Marquez capped the discourse of failure by creating a magical reality where an unyielding nature is always perforating the walls of modernity” (Brown 32). However, Macondo's “disordered” nature is not beckoning to be colonised and ordered. It serves to locate the novel within the history of colonial narratives, at the same time as it constitutes a critique of colonising practices and imposed “order.”

García Márquez certainly acknowledges the influence of explorer narratives, such as those of Christopher Columbus, Antonio Pigafetta and “the other chroniclers of the Indies” (qtd. in Mendoza 32), and observes that these contained “the seeds of our present-day novels” (“The Solitude of Latin America” 87). He refers to Pigafetta's “strictly accurate account that nonetheless resembles a venture into fantasy,” in which he recorded

that he had seen hogs with navels on their haunches, clawless birds whose hens laid eggs on the backs of their mates, and others still, resembling tongueless pelicans, with beaks like spoons. He wrote of having seen a

misbegotten creature with the head and ears of a mule, a camel's body, the legs of a deer and the whinny of a horse. ("The Solitude of Latin America" 87)

Pigafetta is only one of many to use such descriptions of apparently fantastic animals. Accordingly, Tzvetan Todorov points out that Columbus "is not alone" in believing in "Cyclopes and mermaids, in Amazons and men with tails, and his belief . . . therefore permits him to find them" (15).

Thus, the European imagination transformed the New World into an "animal space." Todorov comments that "Columbus's writings, and most particularly the journal of the first voyage, reveal a constant attention to all natural phenomena. Fish and birds, plants and animals are *the main characters* of the adventures he recounts" (17-8, my emphasis). These accounts provided the foundation of the historical construction of Latin America. However, rather than the result of purported discovery, these reports were already predetermined, both by preconceived ideas about the New World, and the need to meet expectations at home. Accordingly, as Beatriz Pastor Bodmer argues, "rather than discovering, [Columbus] confirms and identifies," and his "method of inquiry, informed by his need to identify the newly discovered lands with preexisting sources and models, was a mixture of invention, misrepresentation, and concealment" (10). She points out that many of these "preexisting sources and models" were, in fact, medieval bestiaries and natural historical works, such as "the *Historia Naturalis* [by Pliny the Elder], an indispensable reference for anything connected with geography, botany, or zoology" (Pastor Bodmer 16). Columbus used such "scholarly sources . . . to make his plans" and returned to them "constantly . . . to compare his subsequent experiences as a discoverer and colonizer" (Pastor Bodmer 16).

The indigenous populations of the New World were also subject to those predetermined models, and the consequences were often fatal. Todorov points out

Columbus' preoccupation with nature, and writes: "Columbus speaks about the men he sees only because they too, after all, constitute a part of the landscape. His allusions to the inhabitants of the islands always occur amid his notations concerning nature, somewhere between birds and trees" (34). This spatial placing in the narrative "somewhere between birds and trees" reflects the fact that the natives were commonly regarded as animals, or close to being animals. Pastor Bodmer describes the transformation whereby "human beings in the New World will first be metamorphosed into *beasts* in Columbus's discourse, and, subsequently, into *things*" (42, original emphases). This animalisation and objectification of the native population, moreover, was reinforced and motivated by commodification, as "the perception and characterization of people in America as dehumanized merchandise" is a logical consequence of "the perception and characterization of America as a warehouse of goods to be absorbed by the European market" (Pastor Bodmer 45-6).

Animal Acts

Yet far from displaying the "almost jaded resignation" that Brown sees in the final scene of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (32), the influence of explorer narratives on García Márquez' and Allende's novels is reflected in their animal imagery and appropriated in empowering ways. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The House of the Spirits* follow the tradition of representing Latin America as an "animal space," but at the same time they subvert the ideological assumptions that underpin this way of looking at the New World, and the imperialist power structures it legitimates, by transforming supposed things—nonhuman animals and animalised people—back into subjects. Instead of simply redrawing the human-animal boundary line, these authors question its basis, and make use of animal subjectivity in order to disrupt the systems and structures that underpin colonial discourse and make exploitation on the grounds of animalisation possible.

Thus, Barrabás, the dog who arrives “among [Clara’s] uncle’s *things*” and “was treated as part of the baggage,” transcends his initial status as object, and becomes a subject and distinctive character when he is found and named by Clara (*House of the Spirits* 30-1, my emphasis).²³ He is a significant actor and central figure, who connects the beginning and the end of Allende’s circular narrative, and Clara, the narrator’s grandmother and one of the main characters, records his arrival as an “important matter” (11). Barrabás clearly possesses his own idiosyncrasies and personality traits, such as a liking for “ham and every known type of marmalade” (33). He is “captivating,” “frolicsome,” and mischievously “steal[s] into the dining room and slink[s] around the table, removing with the greatest delicacy all his favourite dishes” (33.). The intentionality, which leaves the guests to look on powerlessly as Barrabás makes off with their food, runs counter to Cartesian scientific ideas that the actions of animals are only reactions to stimulus responses, and it would be hard to argue that Barrabás’ preference for marmalade is governed by survival instincts.²⁴ Moreover, Barrabás is credited with “emotion,” such as surprise and disappointment (97). This does not contradict but is rather presented as part of his dogness. This is shown, for instance, by the fact that he cannot control his tail, which “grew to be as long as a golf club and developed a life all its own that led to lamps and china being swept from tabletops” (31-2), and by his “penchant for leaping at [Nana the housekeeper] whenever she went by with the breakfast tray” (39).

Barrabás displays a distinctive animal agency, a concept described by Philo and Wilbert and taken up by Armstrong as a framework for critical readings of literary animal representations. Armstrong suggests that “a reconceptualization of agency . . . might facilitate a mode of analysis that does not reduce the animal to a blank screen for the projection of human meaning, and might offer productive new ways of accounting for the

material influence of the non-human animal upon humans, and *vice versa*” (*What Animals Mean* 3). As Philo and Wilbert themselves put it:

If we concentrate solely on how animals are represented, the impression is that animals are merely passive surfaces on to which human groups inscribe imaginings and orderings of all kinds. In our view, it is also vital to give credence to the practices that are folded into the making of representations, and—at the core of the matter—to ask how animals themselves may figure in these practices. This question duly raises broader concerns about non-human agency, about the agency of animals, and the extent to which we can say that animals destabilise, transgress or even resist our human orderings, including spatial ones. (5)

Barrabás constantly destabilises, transgresses and resists attempts at human orderings within the text, spatially as well as conceptually. Thus, from a human perspective, he is constantly out of place, “running everywhere” in the house, where Severo, Clara’s father, does not want him in the first place, as well as outside the house, where he manages to cause “a riot” (*House of the Spirits* 31-2).

However, he resists labels such as “pest” or “vermin” as much as the notion of “pet,” and the owner-property relationship this implies. Clara and Barrabás’ relationship is a companionship of an almost supernatural nature:

Barrabas accompanied the little girl day and night He was always hovering around her like a gigantic shadow as silent as the little girl herself. . . . He became so attached to his mistress that when she sleep-walked through the house the dog followed imitating her posture. Whenever there was a full moon, they could be seen gliding down the corridors like two ghosts floating through the pale light. (*House of the Spirits* 97)

Barrabás and Clara are kindred spirits, so to speak, who challenge the boundary between humans and animals. Thus, Clara “adopt[s] him” and “becom[es] the creature’s mother” (31), and at the same time as Barrabás is presented on what are conventionally human terms, Clara is animalised when she finds Barrabás “by instinct” (30). Moreover, it is Clara who is described as “Nana’s pet” (17).

Barrabás’ boundary blurring, moreover, transgresses scientific systems designed to define nature. Mary Louise Pratt stresses the crucial role of Linnaean taxonomy in establishing not only human dominion over the natural world, but also European supremacy over colonised peoples. She discusses the impact of “the construction of global-scale meaning through the descriptive apparatuses of natural history,” especially through Linnaeus’ *Systema Naturae*; a project that became popular from the eighteenth century onwards (Pratt 15). The Linnaean system, she writes, “was perceived, even by his critics, as making order out of chaos” (Pratt 25), whereby “[t]he (lettered, male, European) eye that held the system could familiarize (‘naturalize’) new sites/sights immediately upon contact, by incorporating them into the language of the system” (Pratt 31). Naming and defining indigenous people, plants, and animals was a way of gaining mastery over distant places and their human and non-human inhabitants, while maintaining a spatial, social, and conceptual distance between the observing subject and the object of study at the same time. As Pratt points out, “[t]he European observer himself,” a centrally positioned subject, “has no place in the description” (32). Philo and Wilbert argue that “the result of such classifications, systems and tables is to fix animals in a series of abstract spaces, ‘animal spaces’, which are cleaved apart from the messy time-space contexts, or concrete places, in which these animals actually live out their lives as beings in the world” (6-7).

Indeed, as Armstrong points out, “the animal has tended to disrupt the smooth unfolding of Enlightenment ideology” (“Postcolonial Animal” 415), and Barrabás does just

that by his appearance and obscure origin. Thus, he combines attributes of various real and imagined animals. He is “black and silent as a panther” with “crocodile claws,” like a “kitten,” and first “the size of a sheep,” then “as big as a colt,” for instance, making it impossible to assign him to any particular breed of dog, even causing a desperate family “to question whether he . . . really was a dog” (*House of the Spirits* 32-3). When Barrabás defies scientific classification, people resort to bestiaries, legend, folklore and hearsay in an attempt to place him, imagining him as a hybrid monstrosity: “Popular imagination and ignorance with respect to his past lent Barrabás the most mythological characteristics. . . . Some people believed him to be a cross between a dog and a mare, and expected him to sprout wings and horns and acquire the sulfuric breath of a dragon,” and rumours circulate “of how he turned into a wolf when there was a full moon” (33). Those pre-conceived ideas have nothing to do with his actual character and existence. As Allende writes, “despite his docility, Barrabás inspired terror” (32).

When his species cannot be determined, and Barrabás’ place cannot be fixed, as it were, the conclusion is drawn that Barrabás is definitely out of place, “exotic” and “wild”: “They suggested that he might be some exotic animal their uncle had caught in some remote corner of the world and that perhaps in his natural habitat he was wild” (32). His existence—to most people around him so bewildering, undefined and ‘out of place’—is, it appears, too much of a challenge for society in the end, and he is murdered by an unknown killer with a “butcher’s knife” (112). Once dead, “transform[ing]” Barrabás “into a rug,” then, can be regarded as the final attempt to put him in his place and illustrates different ways in which humans classify, treat and feel about animals (119). For Esteban Trueba, Clara’s husband, it is, as the owner of a large farm and a hunter, normal practice to make use of a dead animal’s skin. Turning Barrabás into a rug reduces him to an object again. In contrast, Clara regards this as a violation of her companion and friend.

However, even beyond death, Barrabás manages to subvert the attempt to transform him literally into a dead, “passive surface,” to use Philo and Wilbert’s term, and undermines Esteban Trueba’s final judgement that “this is where he always should have been” (*House of the Spirits* 479). Of course, “where he should have been” is precisely where, for most of the time, he has not been, nor does he remain on the bedroom floor as a lifeless rug. Within the narrative, Barrabás takes on a life of his own, refuses to stay out of the story after his death, and keeps appearing in unexpected places until he is, in fact, properly resurrected, as it were, when he connects end and beginning of the story (see 234, 260, 309, 337, 376, 491). Thus, his life, and the narrative itself, begin again in a circular fashion. Pinet makes a similar argument, yet offers a different perspective of Barrabás both as dog and as rug. She considers his transformation into a rug as a form of restoration rather than an objectification and sees this, as well as his relocation from the basement to higher levels of the house, as a sign that he is “indestructible and immortal” (Pinet 62). He functions, in her view, as a symbol for what she calls the “background noise” of history, the alternative stories that have been marginalised by the foregrounding of a ‘master narrative (Pinet 56). Thus, she argues, Barrabás is “the cypher that survives as ‘noise’ and, having been assigned for years to the background, he is restored to the foreground” (Pinet 62).

However, his stray appearances within the narrative structure can also be viewed as another mark of Barrabás’ dogness, and as much as he operates as a symbol for marginalised “others” more generally, it is also his dogness which is foregrounded. Allende creates a character who strolls in and out of the narrative like an actual dog who might wander into the room, sniff around here and there, and then lollop back out into the garden. Barrabás thus mirrors a tendency of animals described by Philo and Wilbert, who write:

It is animals themselves who inject what might be termed their own agency into the scene, thereby transgressing, perhaps even resisting, the human

placements of them. It might be said that in so doing the animals begin to forge their own “other spaces”, countering the proper places stipulated for them by humans, thus creating their own beastly places reflective of their own “beastly” ways, ends, joys and sufferings. (14)

Barrabás’ reappearances and his material presence, like those of magical realist animals generally, illustrate the phenomenon Faris describes as one of the ways in which magical realism is distinctive from realism. She writes: “[O]bjects may take on lives of their own and become magical that way. . . . This materiality extends to word-objects as metaphors, and they too take on a special sort of textual life, reappearing over and over again until the weight of their verbal reality more than equals that of their referential function” (“Scheherazade” 170-1). Through “the weight” of his “verbal reality,” Barrabás embodies a marginalised being who refuses to be invisible. Ironically, realism is subverted through its own stylistic means, as this verbal reality is achieved through the “detailed and concrete variety” in which “the material world is present,” as Faris describes the common trait between magical realism and realism (170). The details give him “weight,” that is, an embodied presence, but it is particularly Barrabás’ animalness, his wildness or ferality, that animates and highlights his textual life and ensure his presence cannot be easily ignored.

Stray Circus

The term “ferality” is derived from the Latin *fera*, “wild beast,” and “feral,” which denotes wild and uncultivated, as well a state of having once been cultivated, domesticated or civilised, but now reverted to some degree of wildness. In between both concepts of “feral” is a gap filled by the idea of a domesticated animal who fits seamlessly into human orderings, but, as Philo and Wilbert’s description of animal agency suggests, even the most domesticated and cultivated creature retains the *fera* in essence. From this point of view,

there is no gap between both definitions of “feral”; there is only a continuum of ferality, a feral spirit, so to speak, expressed to a greater or lesser extent, or perhaps even one that is either dormant or completely suppressed, but present nonetheless. Armstrong uses “the notion of ‘ferity’ (that is, the state or quality of being feral) to indicate those forms of wildness that represent a reaction against modernity’s attempts at civilization, domestication, captivity or manipulation” (*What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* 227n9), and it is indeed this version of ferality that magical realism uses, often as an unsettling or empowering concept, in order to subvert conventional realism and its associated ideologies.²⁵

Magical realist ferality, as that displayed by Allende’s and García Márquez’ animals, derives at least in part from Franz Kafka’s works. Angel Flores tracks Kafka’s influence on Latin American magical realism back to Jorge Luis Borges. In his influential essay, “Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction” (1954), Flores traces Kafka’s influence on Borges:

For the sake of convenience I shall use the year 1935 as the point of departure of this new phase of Latin American literature, of magical realism. It was in 1935 that Jorge Luis Borges’ collection *Historia universal de la infamia* made its appearance in Buenos Aires, at least two years after he had completed a masterly translation into Spanish of Franz Kafka’s shorter fiction. Not that we intend to limit his extremely complex genius to one influence; he [is] the most literate writer in the whole of America, whose works reflect so many and so divergent personalities . . . , but Kafka’s impact on him has been the most profound and revealing. (113, parenthesis omitted)

This notion has been emphatically rejected by Luis Leal, for example, yet both Allende and García Márquez, as well as Peter Carey and Richard Flanagan (as will be discussed in Chapter Two), acknowledge Kafka’s influence.²⁶ Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* (*Die Verwandlung*) is singled out in particular by García Márquez, who says: “When I read

Metamorphosis, at seventeen, I realized I could be a writer” (qtd. in Mendoza 31). At the heart of magical realist animals and, as will become progressively more apparent throughout this thesis, at the heart of the mode itself is thus the quintessential feral animality of characters like Gregor Samsa, the “*ungeheures Ungeziefer*” (Kafka, “Die Verwandlung” 1: 69), part human, part pest animal, who is both monstrous and uncanny, scandalously inappropriate, and incomprehensible to grasp in its enormity, and who is part of a group of so-called pest animals (“*Ungeziefer*”) that is commonly understood as a coherent category but which is, at the same time, neither scientific nor specific.²⁷

Moreover, Kafka’s feral creatures and Latin American magical realist fauna are intricately connected through the circus, a genre that traditionally translates colonial narratives into performance through the use of animals. Kafka’s fascination for the circus pervaded his work, as Walter Bauer-Wabnegg demonstrates. It is therefore no coincidence that in Kafka’s fiction—as in the circus ring—“the unreal happens as part of reality” (Flores 115), and animals are the main characters in narratives such as *Metamorphosis*, in which Gregor Samsa wakes up one morning to find he has turned into a monstrous beetle; or “Ein Bericht für eine Akademie” (“A Report to an Academy”), the account of Red Peter, an ape captured for Carl Hagenbeck’s famous circus. Accordingly, allusions to the circus in magic realist fiction are not coincidental, beginning with the narrative spaces in both *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The House of the Spirits*, for instance, which are each delineated by a circular narrative structure: their respective endings reconnect with the beginning, thus forming a circle and resembling the space defined by the circus arena, where animals are traditionally the central attraction. Nonhuman animals such as Barrabás or the “moth-eaten parrot” of Clara’s Uncle Marcos are at the center of spectacles in *The House of the Spirits*, for example (22-3). They occupy starring roles, so to speak, within the circular narrative space, resembling the animals who characterize the performance space of the circus ring.

While the carnivalesque has been identified as an important feature of magical realist texts by critics such as Amaryll Chanady (see 136), David K. Danow, and Faris, who observes that “a carnivalesque spirit is common in this group of novels” (“Scheherazade’s Children” 184), the influence of the circus in particular, as a specific form of the carnivalesque, has so far been neglected in relation to a mode of writing that tends to display a significant presence and abundance of non-human animality. Mikhail M. Bakhtin, who has described the significant influence of the carnival tradition on literature, identifies the circus as one of “many ancient forms of carnival [that] have been preserved and continue to live and renew themselves” (107).

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, explicit references include a circus parade observed by Colonel Aureliano Buendía (see 244, 248); the signing of a ceasefire in “a patched circus tent” (167); Amaranta Úrsula’s husband who wears “acrobat’s tights,” is led “with the leash around his neck” by his wife and rides “his circus bicycle” (350); and the gypsy fairs in Macondo with their animal attractions (see 20-1), “purveyors of amusement” such as “acrobats and jugglers” (34), “circus things” (36), and fabulous “new inventions” (7). The commercial success of Macondo turns the town into an economic circus, as “men and women were seen who had adopted everyday and normal customs and manners but who really looked like people out of a circus. In a town that had chafed under the tricks of the gypsies there was no future for those ambulatory acrobats of commerce” (210).

In *The House of the Spirits*, the narrator Alba paints a circus train, “a train full of animals,” on her bedroom wall during her childhood (310), while the family’s house itself is referred to as “that immense covered wagon of a house . . . with its population of eccentrics” (307). As Alba’s grandfather Esteban Trueba comments on the military parades of the dictatorship that “[b]read, circuses, and something to worship is all they need,” she remarks

that “Marxism did not stand a chance in Latin America because it did not allow for the magical side of things” (435).

Furthermore, as well as with animal characters, both novels are teeming with exotic hybrids, who challenge the human-animal divide. One aspect the carnival shares with the circus is the blurring of human-animal boundaries, as it is quite common for people to dress up during the traditional pre-Lent revelries and thus embody animal figures. The word “embody” is used advisedly here, as dressing up for carnival is not simply a matter of wearing funny clothes, but it is what Bakhtin calls the “carnivalistic life” (101). This means, as he says, that “its participants *live* in it, they live according to its laws, as long as those laws are in force” (Bakhtin 100-1; original emphasis). It can indeed be said that the experience of carnival is like living within a different reality altogether.²⁸ This reality is characterized by the combination of paradoxes. As Bakhtin describes it,

[a]ll the things that were closed off, isolated, and separated from one another by the non-carnivalistic hierarchical attitude enter into carnivalistic contacts and combinations. Carnival brings together, unites, weds and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the lowly, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid, etc. (101)

Likewise, in the circus, elephantine ballet dancers, clever horses, and dogs with hats and tutus, for example, blend together human and animal characteristics. Humans, too, behave like animals, as contortionists manage to twist and tie themselves into knots like reptiles; trapeze artists fly through the air like birds, weightlifters demonstrate strength like elephants; and tightrope walkers confidently and gracefully walk on, hang from, and jump on ropes like spiders moving along thin threads or insects balancing precariously on the edges of leaves.

Correspondingly, both *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The House of the Spirits* feature “elephantine” women, such as Esteban’s mother (*House of the Spirits* 107), a

prostitute Alba's uncles Jaime and Nicolás visit (*House of the Spirits* 153), or Camila Sagastume, "a totemic female known all through the land by the good name of 'The Elephant'" (*Solitude* 237). Other hybrids in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* include Aureliano Babilonia, who seems to be "not a human child" (271); "a bear dressed like a Dutch girl" in the circus parade, "keeping time to the music with a soup spoon and a pan" (248); "parrots painted all colours reciting Italian arias" (21); "a trained monkey who read minds" (21); "soft-skinned cetaceans that had the head an torso of a woman, causing the ruination of sailors with the charm of their extraordinary breasts" (15); Úrsula, whose name translates as "female bear"; a "snake-man" in a cage (35-7); and the pig-tailed last Aureliano, "the mythological animal that was to bring the line to an end" (15). In *The House of the Spirits*, notable hybrids are Clara's daughter Blanca, the "armadillo" (124, 207), or the green-haired Rosa, Clara's sister, who has "something of the fish to her (if she had had a scaly tail, she would have been a mermaid), but her two legs placed her squarely on the tenuous line between a human being and a creature of myth" (15).

Emerging from these examples is the idea that the category "animal" is not separate at all from the idea of being human in the context of magical realism. The term "animal" is deeply ambiguous and, like Allende's apparent mermaid, tends to suggest both the human and the non-human animal, as the hybrid characters of Allende and García Márquez are caught up between, or negotiate, conflicting systems of order. Stoddart argues that "the circus promotes a public fantasy of itself as a space of exceptionalism, escape and danger in which the rules which seem to govern the world outside have no currency" (7). The laws of physics and nature are seemingly suspended in the ring, a phenomenon also reflected in magical realism. The defiance of the laws of gravity in the form of flying and levitation is a frequent motif in magical realist fiction, for instance, which is often combined with bird-human hybridity (such as angels) or in allusion to birds. Flying, after all and in whichever

form, represents humanity's unattainable desire to be like birds, as it were, and acquire this avian ability that can only be imitated relatively poorly, with the aid of machines and contraptions.

Thus, Clara's Uncle Marcos builds an aeroplane described as "a bird of prehistoric dimensions, with the face of a furious eagle, wings that moved, and a propeller on its back," which lifts off "[a]gainst all logic . . . and with a certain elegance, accompanied by the creaking of its skeleton and the roar of its motor" in a public spectacle that can appropriately be called a 'circus' (*House of the Spirits* 23-5). Such clumsy attempts ("elegance" is delimited here), reinforce the biological distance between humans and birds, while angels—such as the protagonist of García Márquez' short story "The Very Old Man with Enormous Wings," Allende's Rosa (see *House of the Spirits* 15, 35), Clara (93, 102, 122, 171, 188), babies who "might be born with wings" (123) and the two winged young women on the front cover of the Black Swan paperback edition of *The House of the Spirits*—blur it.²⁹ In turn, Remedios the Beauty's graceful ascent to heaven with "flapping sheets," thought to be a result of "her irrevocable fate of a queen bee" (*Solitude* 221), places her, like Rosa, on the tenuous line between humanity and animality.

Uncle Marcos' flight, moreover, takes place in the context of exploration and scientific innovation. His character illustrates the link between explorer narratives, natural history collections and animal entertainment, as he is also an explorer, who "had various travel journals in which he recorded his excursions and impressions, as well as a collection of maps and books of stories and fairy tales that he kept in the trunks he stored in the junk room at the far end of the third courtyard" (*House of the Spirits* 29). Clara, who listens to her uncle's stories, "recalled Lope de Aguirre's search for El Dorado, or the unpronounceable names of the flora and fauna her extraordinary uncle had seen" (29). Like early explorers and natural historians, he brings home "animals in jars of formaldehyde . . . and all sort of

unfamiliar animals . . . that had traveled from remote lands only to meet their death beneath Nana's irate broom in the farthest corners of the house. Uncle Marcos's manners were those of a cannibal, as Severo put it" (21).

As Uncle Marcos's strange collections, stories and circus-like public spectacles highlight, the circus as we know it today has emerged from what was initially a display of curiosities from newly 'discovered' lands. Later, it became an animated performance of colonial travel accounts and adventure stories. As Todorov reports, Columbus was already interested in the collection of exotic species, in which he unproblematically included natives of the New World: "in his naturalist's enthusiasm, he always wanted to take specimens of all kinds back to Spain: trees, birds, animals, and Indians; the notion of asking their opinion is foreign to him" (48). While, as William Johnson points out, "explorers began to return from distant lands with animal curiosities which were set on display in the fairs" from the Middle Ages onwards, the mass capture of wild animals only became possible with advancing colonisation. Only then could the modern circus as we know it today begin to evolve (Johnson, ch.1 pt. 3).

Expanding colonisation also increased the demand for such displays. García Márquez's "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" illustrates the popularity of menagerie displays of "exotics," be they people, animals, apparently supernatural beings or hybrids. Thus, when Pelayo and Elisenda walk out in the morning after an old man with wings has landed in their yard, they find "the whole neighborhood in front of the chicken coop having fun with the angel, without the slightest reverence, tossing him things to eat through the openings in the wire as if he weren't a supernatural creature but a circus animal" (García Márquez, "Very Old Man" 106). The display becomes immensely popular and profitable, as people flock to see the old man: ". . . Pelayo and Elisenda were happy with fatigue, for in less

than a week they had crammed their rooms with money and the line of pilgrims waiting their turn to enter still reached beyond the horizon” (García Márquez, “Very Old Man” 108).

The domination of animals in particular became a significant demonstration of superiority and power, not only over animals and nature, but also in an inter-human social context. Both Pratt and James R. Ryan point out the popularity of explorer narratives during the nineteenth century and their importance in legitimating the colonial project to the population at home. As Ryan states, an “interest in pursuing zoological ‘specimens’ for private and national collections was fostered by both the dramatic upsurge in the popularity of natural history and the proliferation of popular literature and images of hunting in Britain, which frequently pictured the hunter as a manly adventurer and hero of Empire” (“Hunting with the Camera” 204). Pratt points out that “journalism and narrative travel accounts . . . were essential mediators between the scientific network and a larger European public. They were central agents in legitimating scientific authority and its global project alongside Europe’s other ways of knowing the world, and being in it” (29).

Franklin identifies several themes in “the colonial big game hunter stories,” which were “ostensibly for children and teenagers” (43). These were “the naturalization and dominance of Europeans in places such as Africa and India; the aggressiveness and danger of wild animals; the heroism of the hunter” (Franklin 43). This is illustrated by Uncle Marcos’ photograph, which depicts him in a conventional pose “that showed him dressed as an explorer leaning on an old-fashioned double-barreled rifle with his right foot on the neck of a Malaysian tiger, the same triumphant position in which she had seen the Virgin standing between plaster clouds and pallid angels at the main altar, one foot on the vanquished devil” (*House of the Spirits*, 20-1). Franklin describes the implications of such colonial imagery for the zoo, which not only shares its roots with the circus, but also has much in common with it in terms of the demonstration of particular human-animal relations. He writes:

“Contemporary zoos housed these animals as dangerous captives (cages emphasized prison bars); like prisoners of war, they were put on public display for the entertainment of the victorious” (43).

The circus thus mirrored and celebrated imperial power by providing conventional and recognisable imagery for its nineteenth century audiences. Animal acts fulfilled a triple function in this regard: firstly, they symbolised political control of the colonies, secondly, they embodied human mastery over nature, and thirdly, they allegorised social and evolutionary superiority of white Europeans over indigenous colonised peoples. “A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings” is a reminder that carnival sideshows and menageries, both representing earlier forms of the circus, were in fact the final destination not only for many New World animals but also for its people.³⁰ By portraying the dominion over nature, exotic animals and the colonies not only as a natural relationship, but also as innocent fun, the circus legitimated colonial power structures and politics. Moreover, circus acts took up and perpetuated the imagery of colonial travel narratives more vividly. The “manly adventurers and heroes of Empire” depicted in travellers’ tales came alive in the circus arena.

Circus enterprises benefited enormously from the growing popularity of natural history, and with its capacity to combine completely contradictory elements within its shows, the circus ensured that, for example, the “diverse tastes of America’s very first mass audience” would be catered for,” as Cook points out (qtd. by Whalen in Barnum XXXII). P.T. Barnum’s famous exhibition of the Fejee Mermaid, a fake hybrid made from a fish and a monkey, for example, served on the one hand to satisfy the desire to see scientific evidence of the existence of marvellous, exotic, fairytale creatures. On the other hand, it showed a resistance to known science at the time—not to mention subsequent evolutionary theory—as exhibits such as the Fejee Mermaid were not easily classifiable. Harriet Ritvo observes a similar phenomenon in Britain. She writes: “Exhibited mermaids ... concretely challenged

the established order of nature, which offered them no place” (*Platypus* 178). Ritvo reports that “the intransigent classificatory problems posed by puzzling creatures also produced or mirrored taxonomic issues within their audience. Not everybody felt compelled to eliminate the impossible. Indeed many—including entrepreneurs, their eager audiences, and the opportunistic press—reveled in it, resisting efforts to deprive the world of its magic” (*Platypus* 175-6).³¹

Like magical realism, which is characterised by “the amalgamation of realism and fantasy” (Flores 112), the circus fuses illusion, “magic” and material reality. The circus arena, notorious for spectacular and ambivalent displays of natural history, thus provides a suitable model to represent the hybrid creatures of magical realism. Allende portrays this unclassifiableness in Rosa’s embroidery, featuring “creatures that were half bird and half mammal, covered with iridescent feathers and endowed with horns and hooves, and so fat and with such stubby wings that they defied the laws of biology and aerodynamics” (*House of the Spirits* 15). At the same time, these fantastical creatures appear against the everyday backdrop of a simple, mundane tablecloth. In the same fashion, and unlike the carnival, which is, as Bakhtin says, “the world upside down” within its delimited timeframe (110), the circus is both the world *and* the world upside down; it is both the everyday *and* the extraordinary. The circus not only acknowledges the laws of everyday life—the world outside the big top—but it also incorporates those rules, and presents them in concurrence with magical illusions and subversive, carnivalesque imagery. As a result, the circus assimilates and combines completely contradictory discourses. In this way, the apparently unbridgeable gap between humans and animals, perpetuated by Western scientific, philosophical and theological discourses, is blurred in the circus arena, at the same time as that gap is reinforced by the spatial separation between the visitors to the circus menagerie and the animals kept in trailers and cages, for example. Likewise, circuses promote the idea

of equal human-animal partnerships, and present this image in an environmentalist context, for instance, while simultaneously reinforcing human dominance over animals.³²

There is thus a dialogic relationship between multiple discourses in the circus, and the same phenomenon occurs in magical realism. Slemon argues, with reference to Bakhtin, that the equal, non-hierarchical balance between “two separate narrative modes” is “the characteristic maneuver of magic realist fiction” (410). He suggests, referring to Bakhtin and Foucault, that a “battle” for “power knowledge” takes place between “two opposing discursive systems” which makes it impossible to “naturaliz[e] the text to an established system of representation” (Slemon 410). Correspondingly, in *The House of the Spirits* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the established systems of representation, implicitly and especially Linnaean taxonomy, are both upheld and resisted by the circensian spirit pervading these novels.

The Linnaean system of taxonomy in particular became, as Michel Foucault argues in *The Order of Things*, the universal blueprint for the way Europeans order the world around them; a foundational narrative of European epistemology. Foucault describes the fundamental epistemological shift that these two kinds of animal spaces, the circus and the taxonomic order, signify and argues that botanical gardens and zoos, for example, were not the result of “a new curiosity about exotic plants and animals,” but that the space in which they were represented and perceived had changed (see *Order* 131). He writes:

To the Renaissance, the strangeness of animals was a spectacle: it was featured in fairs, in tournaments, in fictitious or real combats, in reconstitutions of legends in which the bestiary displayed its ageless fables. The natural history room and the garden, as created in the Classical period, replace the circular procession of the “show” with the arrangement of things in a “table.” (Foucault, *Order* 131)

The circus, however, which developed its current form in the nineteenth century, and originated from travelling menageries as well as natural history museums, retained the pre-Linnaean circular spectacle and “the strangeness of animals,” at the same time as it incorporated the popular interest in natural history.³³ Accordingly, as a fundamentally contradictory and polyphonic space, the circus belongs to the group of spaces which Foucault calls “heterotopias,” “counter-sites,” in which “all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality” (“Of Other Spaces” 24). Foucault names these counter-sites “heterotopias” because, as he says, “these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about” (“Of Other Spaces” 24).

Corresponding to this idea is Faris’ suggestion that “[p]art of [magic realism’s] attraction for postmodern writers may be its willfully oxymoronic nature, its exposing of the unrepresentable, its activation of differences” (“Scheherazade’s Children” 185). This idea of the unrepresentable oxymoron is best illustrated by Borges’ “Chinese Encyclopaedia,” a conundrum that inspired Foucault’s *The Order of Things*:

[A]nimals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies. (qtd. in Foucault, *Order* xv)

In a conceptual twist which Foucault calls a “vanishing trick” (*Order* xvii), Borges creates categories that appear to be separate, but which are ultimately blurred and inconsistent with any rational system of order: the list contains itself within its entirety, as well as every animal outside of it. Foucault points out that in Borges’ list, “we shall never succeed in defining a

stable relation of contained to container between each of these categories and that which includes them all” (*Order xvii*). Thus, the space created becomes “impossible to think” (*Order xv*).³⁴

It is a heterotopia, brought into being within what Foucault calls the “non-place of language” (*Order xvii*). Accordingly, its structure is determined less by the paradox, the “incongruous, the linking together of things that are inappropriate,” as Foucault puts it, but rather, as suggested by Faris above, by the oxymoron, best described, borrowing Foucault’s words, as “a worse kind of disorder . . . the disorder in which fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry, of the heteroclitite” (*Order xvii*, emphases omitted). Foucault contrasts those heterotopias that order dead, controllable and passive objects, such as libraries or museums, with the heteroclitic space of the fairground, “these marvelous empty sites on the outskirts of cities that teem once or twice a year with stands, displays, heteroclitite objects, wrestlers, snakewomen, fortune-tellers, and so forth” (“Of Other Spaces” 26). However, rather than being mutually exclusive, both heterotopias, those of extreme order and those of vibrant incongruity, can simultaneously be contained within the circensian space of the magical realist novel.³⁵

Both the carnival square and the circus are heterotopias, and yet the circus is qualitatively different from the carnival. Bakhtin stresses that “[c]arnival is a pageant without a stage and without a division into performers and spectators. In the carnival everyone is an active participant, everyone communes in the carnival act” (100-1). The circus, in contrast, features a marked separation between active performers and a largely passive audience. Moreover, the spectators are usually restricted to those who can afford to pay for the show. In other words, unlike the carnival spectacle with its human animals, which is free and characterized by the active participation of everyone, the circus showcases animals for profit. Indeed, the heterotopia of the fairground, such as the gypsy fairs in

Macondo, is another such commercialized animal space, where the display of animals and animal acts is common.

I call such animal heterotopias “circensian spaces.” Extending the term “circensian” from its original meaning, which refers exclusively to the circus of ancient Rome, I use the term “circensian spaces” to include also the modern circus tradition in all its aspects and variations: from its origins in the travelling menageries at country fairs and in the commercialized spectacles of natural history displays, to the colonial exotic animal performances in the big top and the contemporary animal acts that we are familiar with today. This term can be applied to conceptual as well as actual sites of animal entertainment. In regard to magical realist fiction, the idea of ‘circensian spaces’ can apply to various levels of the text. They can occur within the narrative itself, where the performance, display and commercialization of animals is a thematic concern, or on the level of narrative structure, whereby the narrative space with its display of “performing,” or acting, animals is the spectacle and the reader is the spectator and consumer. The concept could, furthermore, apply to a subset of the mode itself, with a group of “circensian” magical realist novels (such as those discussed in this dissertation) constituting a literary animal spectacle, so to speak, that is marketable to very diverse kinds of audiences.

It is this same capacity of the circus to showcase incongruities, to allow paradoxes and ambiguities to exist, which makes it appealing and stimulating to its audiences. With its colourful parades of hybrids, “freaks,” mocking clowns and exotic animals, the circus can be regarded as magical realism in action, as setting, performance and language, which are simultaneously at odds with and reinforcing the material realities of the circus environment, create an inherently oxymoronic and dialogic heterotopia. However, magical realism reverses this relationship between imaginary and material reality. The circensian space thus becomes the narrative’s reality, whilst the material realities of colonisation and its aftermath

are exposed as resulting from staged illusions, colonial discourse, Myths and circumstances created by the powerful. Magical realist, circensian animals thus constitute a further development in the cultural history of the circus. With origins in pre-Enlightenment Europe and its bestiaries, they travelled, so to speak, to South America via explorer narratives, back to Europe via the circus, and back again to South America via Kafka's fiction. In the process, they have been transformed from monsters at the margins of maps and beyond the limits of known reality to the protagonists of 'their own "other spaces"' who break the boundaries of Cartesian dualities, a stretch of the imagination made possible by the dynamics of circensian spaces.

Monstrous Vermin, Part I: Ants, Cockroaches and "Others"

Through subjectivity, agency and ferality, by transgressing spatial and conceptual boundaries, and by creating "their own 'other spaces,'" García Márquez and Allende's animals resist employment as disembodied, utopian metaphors for European fantasies and serve to dislocate the human subject of Western epistemologies. Indeed, Brown argues that "[t]he destabilizing of the New World [through nature's resistance] forced Europe at times to see itself as other even while struggling to make the New World in its image" (29). By embracing the European explorers' idea of an animal space—albeit on their own terms—García Márquez and Allende use this kind of othering as a manoeuvre in keeping with Faris' comment on "patterns of reversal" in magical realism, which "implicitly figure a lack of human control over events: What you thought you controlled controls you" ("Scheherazade" 178). This loss of control is expressed, for example, in the fact that feral animals, so-called pests and vermin such as rats, mice, moths, scorpions, leeches, spiders, ants, cockroaches, termites, stray cats and dogs, unwanted kittens, mosquitoes, lizards, lice and worms all feature abundantly in both *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The House of the Spirits*. García Márquez in

particular makes the struggle against pests, such as the “age-old war between man and ant” (*Solitude* 377), or the unwinnable battle against cockroaches (*Solitude* 357), a central theme. Accordingly, as Janes suggests, “within the novel, the ants embody the natural forces that must be pushed back, struggled against, extirpated, if human order is to prevail” (26).

Ants, after all, are not “a trivial antagonist,” as Janes shows: “30 percent of all living creatures in the tropics—and the most abundant and damaging predators—are ants or termites. . . . Servants of decomposition, nature’s essential deconstructors, they are the dominant species” (26). Janes views the ants as an embodiment of nature as such, and she describes the force with which the ants claim their territory and their place within the narrative as “the power of a nonhuman other” (27). There is a “civilization versus nature” dichotomy, which, as Janes writes, is a traditional and “common theme” in Latin American literature (Janes 26-7). She sees “[t]he conflict between man and nature as man tries to establish civilization over nature’s dead body” as “central to the continuing struggles of the Buendías against ants and laxity” (Janes 129).

Nonetheless, animals are by far the most prominent nonhuman others in magical realist fiction generally. It is evident in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* that insects and other supposed pests control at least some spaces, some of the time, as Colonel Aureliano Buendía notices, who “would sit in the street door *as long as the mosquitoes would allow him to*” (*Solitude* 188, my emphasis). Furthermore, attempts to drive them away from spaces they already occupy are ultimately futile, as Santa Sofía de la Piedad’s efforts show: “She first tried to kill them with a broom, then with insecticides, and finally with lye, but the next day they were back in the same place, still passing by, tenacious and invincible” (*Solitude* 331). In the end, “she realize[s] that she [is] defeated” (*Solitude* 231). The text suggests that humans will ultimately lose the battle with animals, as “other species of future animals

would steal from the insects the paradise of misery that the insects were finally stealing from man” (*Solitude* 378).

Accordingly, human order does not prevail, as animals subvert orderings of space according to “imaginative geographies,” a term evoked by Edward Said and employed by Philo and Wilbert, who write:

[M]any human discourses contain within them a definite imaginative geography serving to position “them” (animals) relative to “us” (humans) in a fashion that links a conceptual “othering” (setting them apart from us in terms of character traits) to a geographical “othering” (fixing them in worldly places and spaces different from those that we humans tend to occupy). (10-11)

However, boundaries that appear to be fixed, immovable and defined by humans are fluid in practice, advancing and regressing, as humans and animals continually encroach on each others’ territory. Thus, the Buendías, “[s]urrounded by the voracity of nature,” try to mark ‘their’ territory and erect barriers around it, “defend[ing] their world with demarcations of quicklime” (*Solitude* 377). However, although Amaranta Úrsula manages to “[scatter] the red ants, who had already taken possession of the porch” (*Solitude* 347), for example, Santa Sofía de la Piedad, “[w]ith neither the time or the resources to halt the challenge of nature, spen[ds] the day in the bedrooms driving out the lizards who would return at night. One morning she saw that the red ants had left the undermined foundations, crossed the garden, climbed up the railing, where the begonias had taken on an earthen colour, and had penetrated into the heart of the house” (*Solitude* 331).

Constantly under threat, therefore, is what Philo and Wilbert call the “strong human sense of the proper places which animals should occupy physically,” an idea related to “the conceptual placing of animals” (10). Accordingly, the bedrooms and the garden are not proper places for red ants. After all, pests, by their very definition, are animals ”out of

place.” The ants’ physical transgression here confirms, on the one hand, their conceptual placing as “pests”; on the other hand, however, they also attack “the heart of the house,” a metaphor that represents the epitome of human space and connotes ideas such as “home,” “belonging,” and “identity.” They penetrate to the core of humanity itself and mock the idea that it is a human prerogative to order, control and define space, as they “undermin[e] the foundations of the house” (*Solitude* 308-9). Indeed, García Márquez’ ants undermine the foundations Western epistemologies, and infuse the central position of the Cartesian subject with nonhuman otherness, at the same time as this scene is an expression of the particular, material relationship between humans and animals called “pest control.”

Monstrous Vermin, Part II: Controlling Pests

In *The House of the Spirits*, ants continue to create “other spaces” and illuminate the clash between local knowledges and practices and those imported, or imposed. Thus, old Pedro García, one of the peasants on Esteban Trueba’s estate, deals with a particularly overwhelming ant plague effectively by acknowledging the ants, to borrow Simons’ words, as “subjects of their own experience” (Simons 21). He talks to a small number of individual ants and tells them: “I’m going to show you the way out, ants, so you get out of here and take the rest of them with you” (*House of the Spirits* 134). His success infuriates Mr. Brown, a US American “agricultural technician specializing in insecticides,” who has spent considerable time “identifying the species, its life-style, the location of its burrows, its habits, and even its most secret desires” by observing them through a microscope, and devising an elaborate, deadly poisonous and undoubtedly costly plan to eradicate the species (133). His way of looking at animals and subsequent approach is natural scientific, contrasted with and ridiculed by the simplicity of Pedro García’s actions: “The expert was furious. ‘You have to

show me how to do that!’ he shouted. ‘By talking to them, mister. Tell them to go, that they are a nuisance here. They understand,’ explained old Pedro García” (134-5).

Allende thus sets up a split between the scientific, Western (or, in Mr Brown’s case, specifically US American) expert’s approach on the one hand, and the local knowledges and practices of the people Mr Brown calls “these poor savages” on the other (*House of the Spirits* 134). Through Mr Brown’s natural scientific method, Allende illustrates that, although “the systematizing of nature” (Pratt 29) was regarded as “not transformative” (Pratt 33) and as establishing “non-exploitative relations to nature” (Pratt 29), “natural history as a way of thinking interrupted existing networks of historical and material relations among people, plants, and animals, where-ever it applied itself” (Pratt 32). Imposition of Western thought on non-Western societies through colonising processes and systems disrupted existing relationships between people and nature, and inevitably affected cultural practices, social relations, economies, and politics within colonised societies. As Pratt explains, “natural history extracted specimens not only from their organic or ecological relations with each other, but also from their places in other peoples’ economies, histories, social and symbolic systems” (31).

The ants’ response to old Pedro García’s “advice and recommendations, prayers and wisdom and enchanted formulas” (*House of the Spirits* 134) thus constitutes a resistance to what Philo and Wilbert call “[t]he domination of certain knowledges over others,” which, they write

also points to related divisions which have been constructed between experts, elites and what we might term lay, amateur or even popular knowledges, all of which have consequences for which understandings of animals, and of what is an animal, become sanctioned as “proper”. All sorts of boundary-work are involved in social struggles over which group has authority, and hence over

which form of knowing is taken as legitimate, and the participants in these struggles obviously all portray themselves—and seek to persuade others to portray them—as the relevant “experts” in the field. (9)

Important here is that neither García Márquez nor Allende launch a wholesale attack against the sciences as such. Although Mr Brown is portrayed as “a madman” (*House of the Spirits* 134), Allende does not suggest that Western science is always “mad” or “bad” in contrast with local, alternative knowledge systems. Thus, she creates a reverse scenario in which there is one “realm” in which old Pedro García’s “knowledge [is] so vast that the doctor from the nuns’ hospital used to come and ask his advice” and another in which “all his knowledge [is] powerless” and effectively kills his daughter Pancha, fallen ill with “chicken fever,” who could have been saved by modern hospital care (166-7).

Correspondingly, García Márquez comments that “few things in daily life are not scientific miracles” (“For a Country within Reach of the Children” 36). In his outline of Colombia’s cultural development from the “first Spaniards who came to the New World” onwards, he mentions the pre-colonial, “ancient systems of science and education” as much as the hopes pinned on Enlightenment ideals such as “the legal and ethical theories of Bentham, the education of Lancaster, the study of languages, the popularization of arts and sciences—in order to eradicate the vices of a Spain more Catholic than the Pope” (“For a Country within Reach of the Children” 33, 36). However, he considers the failure of the “generation that won Independence,” that is, the “groups of young romantics inspired by the enlightenment of the French Revolution,” to “eradicate” the “deplorable legacy” of colonisation, because, as he says, “[e]ven they were not free of [colonialism’s] evil influence” (“For a Country within Reach of the Children” 34).

Accordingly, the issue García Márquez and Allende’s magical realist novels address is not a critique of Western scientific methods or knowledge per se, offered and applied

where they can assist, but science's laying claim to a universal truth and turning it into colonising ideologies that are put into practice without consultation of local knowledges or regard for local conditions, and that implement and maintain the interests of the powerful.³⁶ Such a situation is outlined by Arturo Escobar's analysis of "development discourse," the imposition of Western expert knowledge and practices in the form of Western development aid and strategies. Escobar explains that one of the "basic premises of development . . . formulated in the 1940s and 1950s" is the "[f]undamental . . . belief in modernization as the only force capable of destroying archaic superstitions and relations. Industrialization and urbanization were seen as the inevitable and necessarily progressive routes to modernization" ("Invention" 383). Essential to achieving this goal is not only "capital investment" and "economic growth and development," but also a "[d]issecting" of the Third World, whereby—like ants under Mr Brown's microscope—"[e]verything was subjected to the eye of the new experts" (Escobar, "Invention" 383).³⁷

As indigenous populations are categorised as both technologically and culturally backward, the values to be achieved through modernisation are thus "those embodied in the ideal of the cultivated European" (Escobar, "Invention" 384). However, Escobar argues that "[b]ehind the humanitarian concern and the positive outlook of the new strategy, new forms of power and control, more subtle and refined, were put in operation" ("Invention" 382). Development discourse establishes expert authority and determines "who can speak" (Escobar, "Invention" 383). Moreover, as Escobar proposes, it is linked to a particular "type of rationality," governed by a view of "people and cultures as abstract concepts, statistical figures to be moved up and down in the charts of 'progress'" and an approach of "categoriz[ing] and further specify[ing]" new problems ("Invention" 384). As Escobar's reference to dissection already suggests, this way of looking, mirrored by Mr Brown, is inherently Cartesian. This view of the so-called Third World and its inhabitants is,

correspondingly, characterised by “the separation between reformers and those to be reformed by keeping alive the premise of the third world as different and inferior, as having a limited humanity in relation to the accomplished Europeans” (Escobar, “Invention” 386). Regarding the inhabitants of Third World countries—former colonies—in the context of a Cartesian subject-object division and taking a patronising approach thus leads to a situation whereby “[a]pproaches that could have had positive effects in terms of easing material constraints became . . . instruments of power and control” (Escobar, “Invention” 384).

In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech in 1982, García Márquez addresses the disabling consequences of such a perspective. He asks: “Why is the originality so readily granted us in literature so mistrustfully denied us in our difficult attempts at social change? Why think that the social justice sought by progressive Europeans for their own countries cannot also be a goal for Latin America, with different methods for dissimilar conditions?” (“The Solitude of Latin America” 90). He argues that “[t]he interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary” (García Márquez, “The Solitude of Latin America” 89). Such patterns include knowledge systems, both historical and contemporary, as much as political and economic structures or ideologies. Political and economic systems, Garcia Marquez argues, cannot be imposed from outside successfully without adjusting to local conditions (see Mendoza 97-101). He suggests that beyond capitalism and socialism “there are many alternatives—perhaps even as many alternatives as there are countries in our Americas, including the United States. I am convinced that we have to find our own solutions” (qtd. in Mendoza 101).

The key to finding these alternatives, he suggests, lies in looking at Latin American reality differently. He describes “this outsized reality” as one marked by brutal dictatorships, such as Pinochet’s regime, disappearances, and hunger, causing “twenty million Latin American children [to die] before the age of one—more than have been born in Europe since

1970” (García Márquez, “The Solitude of Latin America” 88-9) Elizabeth A. Spiller raises the question of complicity in creating this reality through the way it is viewed by Europeans. She writes: “. . . for García Márquez, art—how Europeans imagined America—becomes responsible for political reality” (383). Certainly, García Márquez suggests that the failure of “the rational talents” of Europe and the Western world lies in “measuring us with the yardstick that they use for themselves,” which leaves them “without a valid means to interpret us” (“The Solitude of Latin America” 89). Thus, the perspective of “Europeans of good will—and sometimes those of bad, as well” has a decisive part to play in the creation of Latin American reality (“The Solitude of Latin America” 88).

Whilst he does not address these issues overtly, García Márquez’ references to Nicaragua, Chile, Guatemala and El Salvador in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech imply that such realities, apart from being “the result of age-old inequities,” are also the consequence of concrete political and economic interference by the West (“The Solitude of Latin America” 90). He speaks to an audience aware of the context of rising Third World debt to Western nations as well as a history of US American interventions in Latin American internal politics.³⁸ As Faris points out, “North American hegemony in their hemisphere” is also a particular concern for “Latin American writers of magical realism” (“Scheherazade’s Children” 179-80). Allende’s critique of “the barbarity of Pinochet’s Chilean regime” (Faris, “Scheherazade 180) thus includes the support of “gringos sent by their intelligence service to map a strategy for bringing down the new government” (*House of the Spirits* 390). The goals touted by the Pinochet regime, Allende observes, were to establish “savage capitalism” and “Western Christian values” (*My Invented Country* 158, 162), and she recounts how, in an unintelligible attempt at intellectualism, a senior member of the military junta described the foundation and aims of “a country like ours” as “Cartesian” (José Toribio Merino qtd. in Allende, *My Invented Country* 162-3). US American and neocolonial influences on Latin

America are further illustrated by Allende's use of the US American pest control expert Mr Brown, or García Márquez' depiction of the banana company in Macondo, an allusion to the United Fruit Company, the same corporation "in whose interests the United States destroyed Guatemalan democracy in 1954" (Janes 79).

Accordingly, local conditions in Latin America are inextricably linked not only to historical and contemporary representations of the continent and the resulting practices—development and modernisation financed through international debt, or dictatorships aided by foreign agencies—but also to global acts as simple as buying bananas in a supermarket. And yet, for people in industrialised Western nations, it is as easy to dissociate ourselves from those realities as it is to switch off the television or turn the pages of the newspaper. This reality is thus completely outside the experience of most Westerners, and yet its interpretation through "invalid means," as García Márquez and Allende illustrate, is a matter of life and death. The ants' magical reaction to Pedro García's pest control method is therefore more than an "ironic literalism" designed to "encourage a symbolic or metaphorical reading of the fabulous" and "expose the delusory capacities of realism and deceptive constructions of reality," as Takolander argues in relation to the characteristics of magical realism in general (215, 19). Whilst an allegorical reading is possible, an inherently anti-Cartesian approach is necessary to expose the oppressive structures at work. Magical realist narratives preclude the separation and disconnection of one realm of experience from another, as animals act as go-betweens between "magical" and "real" spaces, blur such boundaries and establish validity of "other spaces" through their embodied presence. In other words, the ants' and other animals' realities matter in a material sense, and not, or not only, as "ironic" constructs; as the following chapters of this thesis will further illustrate. García Márquez asks for "those clear-sighted Europeans who struggle . . . for a more just and humane homeland" to reconsider "their way of seeing us" ("The Solitude of Latin America," 89-90). What is needed, he says,

are “concrete acts of legitimate support for all the peoples that assume the illusion of having a life of their own in the distribution of the world” (“The Solitude of Latin America” 90). This, as García Márquez’ and Allende’s fictions show, involves more than simply redrawing the human-animal boundary line, in order to include more people deemed worthy of being in charge of their own lives. It requires an openness towards other realities.

As García Márquez explains, “I was able to write *One Hundred Years of Solitude* simply by looking at reality, our reality, without the limitations which rationalists and Stalinists through the ages have tried to impose on it to make it easier for them to understand” (qtd. in Mendoza 60). Likewise, Allende is not ironic when she comments that “[i]t’s strange that my work has been classified as magic realism because I see my novels as just being realistic literature” and suggests that “. . . if Kafka had been born in Mexico, he would have been a realistic writer. So much depends on where you were born” (“Questions and Answers”). Magical realist fiction, like Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, asks its readers to allow, at the very least, the possibility of other realities and other experiences of reality to exist, especially when these are so profoundly affected by the way we see them.³⁹ Reading magical realism, such as *The House of the Spirits* or *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, requires readers to grant others the validity of their own experience, even if these experiences are as completely “other” or so seemingly insignificant as the lives of *Ungeziefer*, of ants, butterflies or birds, whose own other spaces lie “in the opposite direction from reality” (*Solitude* 128), that is, the opposite of a reality determined by positivist, Cartesian mindsets.

Stray Culture

Thus, the circensian spaces of Allende’s and García Márquez’ novels integrate multiple cultural perspectives through dialogic engagement against a background which Chanady describes as “the colonized subject’s rebellion against imposed models, the resistance of the

newly independent Latin American countries to neocolonial domination and the European philosophical delegitimation of metaphysical and epistemological paradigms” (136). Faris explains that magical realist texts “implicitly correspond textually in a new way to a critique of totalitarian discourses of all kinds” by being open to “more than one point of view, to realistic *and* magical ways of seeing” (“Scheherazade” 180, original italics). In relation to *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, these magical ways originate in the cultural mix of Colombian society. Apart from the strong Spanish influence, which, according to García Márquez, “is an undeniably important part of our cultural make-up,” it is the “contributions from many different races” in the Caribbean which, he explains, “taught me to look at reality in a different way, to accept the supernatural as part of our everyday life” (qtd. in Mendoza 51-2). He elaborates: “The history of the Caribbean is full of magic—a magic brought by black slaves from Africa but also by Swedish, Dutch and English pirates who thought nothing of setting up an Opera House in New Orleans or filling women’s teeth with diamonds. Nowhere in the world do you find the racial mixture and the contrasts which you find in the Caribbean” (García Márquez qtd. in Mendoza 52).

García Márquez’ magical realism is therefore not simply a reaction to European constructions of the New World, but an active influence from a variety of cultures. This is a confident assertion of cultural hybridity and identity, at the same time as it is a statement against European egocentrism, which, in the words of Todorov, is “the identification of our own values with values in general, of our *I* with the universe—in the conviction that the world is one” (42-3, original emphasis). As García Márquez says, it was “the exuberant imagination of African slaves, mixed with that of the pre-Columbian natives and added to the Andalusian taste for fantasy and the Galician cult of the supernatural” which “had produced an ability to see reality in a certain magical way. This is common to both the Caribbean and Brazil” (qtd. in Mendoza 51). The diverse commingling of cultures is a positive, active force

rather than a reactive one. This is reflected in García Márquez' *Love in the Time of Cholera*, where the female protagonist, Fermina Daza keeps a cosmopolitan house full of multicultural animals, so to speak, such as "Dalmatians," "Abyssinian cats," "Siamese," "palace Persians," an "Amazonian monkey," "Guatemalan birds in cages," "six perfumed crows" from the "smugglers' ships from Curaçao" and a "German mastiff" (22). Her position "in the midst of so many abominable creatures" is described as that of "not only the most beautiful woman in the Caribbean but also the happiest" (García Márquez, *Love* 22). The presence of "multicultural animals"—hybrid or otherwise, and human or nonhuman—is thus a positive marker of identity.

Indeed, Allende describes Chilean society in terms of its dogs. Dogs mark the social division between rich and poor in Santiago, where "the worker's districts" are inhabited by "mutts of indefinite color" who "wander among the garbage cans," whilst the middle-class areas are characterised by mastiffs behind "impenetrable walls," who are "let out only at night to guard the property" (*My Invented Country* 12). However, she likens the "typical Chilean stray," the result of an intermingling of "all existing breeds of dogs," to the typical Chilean person (Allende, *My Invented Country* 16). She intimately links animals and especially dogs, moreover, to the Chilean home:

In our house, as in every Chilean home, there were animals. Dogs are acquired in different ways: inherited, received as a gift, picked up after they've been run over but not killed, or because they followed a child home from school, after which there's not a chance of throwing them out. This has always been the case and I hope it never changes. I don't know a single Chilean who ever bought a dog; the only people who do that are the fanatics from the Kennel Club, but no one takes them seriously. (Allende, *My Invented Country* 16)

Like Barrabás, such dogs show independence and are owned by no-one. Her notion of the typical Chilean stray, who moves between demarcated spaces both geographically and in terms of the idea of pure breeds, undermines the oppressive social boundaries of a society Allende describes as marked by both latent and overt racism, and an “upper class” that is “relatively white, and the farther one descends the steep social ladder the more Indian the characteristics become” (*My Invented Country* 34). She likens the Chilean practice of “situating,” the “process of automatic classification” in a society divided by “a thousand layers, each person in his place, each in her class, every person marked by birth,” to the behaviour of “dogs . . . when they sniff each other’s hindquarters” (*My Invented Country* 46). This description constitutes carnivalesque ridicule of conventions that attempt to enforce social hierarchies and gloss over the realities of history and everyday existence, such as the genetic and cultural intermingling Allende depicts as typical of Chile regardless. Indeed, Allende portrays Chile itself as a circensian space with rigid, oppressive rules and simultaneous subversive forces, such as the Chilean stray she evokes.

Its grounding in Latin American history and culture has led to the fact that magical realism “has frequently been considered during the past three decades as the authentic literary expression of Latin America” (Chanady 126), a concept described as “*lo real maravilloso Americano*,” “the marvellous real,” “a uniquely American form of magical realism” (Zamora and Faris, “Introduction” 75). Chanady explains that Carpentier presents “the authentic marvelous . . . as one of the main characteristics of the Latin American continent: the novelty of its ‘discovery’ in 1492, the fictionalization of the New World by the Spaniards, the impressive dimensions of rain forests and rivers, the presence of heterogeneous racial groups” (137-8). And yet, she points out, “Carpentier also used the concept of the marvelous real as a marker of difference in a Latin American discourse of identity rejecting European influence” (Chanady 137).

Faris comments on the dominance of European realism in Latin American fiction until the middle of the twentieth century and observes that the tradition “remains strong in modern and contemporary fiction” (“Scheherazade” 164-5). She suggests that magical realism’s success in Latin America lies in its deconstruction of “the imported code of realism ‘proper,’” which “enabled a broader transculturation process to take place, a process within which postcolonial Latin American literature established its identity” (Faris, “Scheherazade” 165). Takolander analyses realism as a genre that puts forward, and is fundamentally determined by, a “positivist world view that privileges the ‘rational civilization’ of the Western world,” a view which “is also essential to colonialism” (64). She situates magical realism as succeeding the “Latin American literary production in the first half of the twentieth century” which emulated the positivist perspective of European realism (Takolander 64).

This tradition, she explains, created a split between “the rationality and civility of the European” on the one hand, and a “Latin American reality” regarded “as ‘savage’ and ‘wild’” on the other, which is characterised by “the untamed landscape and its native or even *mestizo* (or mixed race) inhabitants,” who “consistently inspire apprehension or reprehension rather than enthusiasm or pride and are typically portrayed as elements that need to be changed or eradicated rather than embraced and eulogized” (Takolander 68, 65). Thus, nature and its inhabitants represent a feral element in Latin American cultural history, so to speak. García Márquez and Allende align themselves with this element and turn it around from a state of being in need of civilisation, modernisation and development to a positive resistance against these processes and their associated discourses, merging it with the convergent influence of Kafka’s (human) animal protagonists. In consequence, they employ animal agency and *mestizo* culture as an enabling force and assertion of subjectivity and identity. Multicultural “magical”—or rather counter-realist and anti-Cartesian—ways of seeing are thus combined with multispecies, feral ways of being.

“No Man’s Land”: Subalternity and Animality

Zamora and Faris comment that “[m]agical realist texts are subversive: their in-betweenness, their all-at-onceness encourages resistance to monologic political and cultural structures, a feature that has made the mode particularly useful to writers in postcolonial cultures . . .” (“Introduction” 6). A significant figure who epitomises “in-betweenness,” and who acts as an embodiment of the dialogic space of the circus and its colonial history, is the parrot. Both Allende and García Márquez include parrots in their works. In keeping with the circensian influence, the parrot who inhabits the household of Fermina Daza and her husband Dr Urbino in *Love in the Time of Cholera* is provided with “a trapeze for acrobatics” (23), signifying the role of pet parrots as private and exotic little circus acts, who are made to perform parlour tricks. Through their ability of reproducing human speech, parrots blur the human-animal boundary line.⁴⁰ As pets, they mirror the role of New World captives exhibited in the circuses of P.T. Barnum and Carl Hagenbeck, for example. As Bruce Boehrer explains, they are traditionally closely associated with “inferior men,” a reference developed “out of the culture of early modern exploration” (173).

This association arises from the early explorers’ racist perception of colonised peoples as animals who are lacking human language, but who have the ability of learning the colonisers’ mother tongue. As Todorov suggests, others, as a “specific social group to which *we do not belong*” can be regarded as “outsiders whose language and customs I do not understand, so foreign that in extreme instances I am reluctant to admit they belong to the same species as my own” (3). Explorer narratives such as Columbus’ accounts, however, tended to deny the natives’ “authority as speakers of their own language” completely and “their message [which Columbus is not able to interpret correctly] . . . is erased altogether once their verbal competence is made to appear doubtful” (Pastor Bodmer 36). Pastor

Bodmer explains that “the step from questioning the natives’ ability to speak their own language to questioning the natives’ ability to speak at all is, for Columbus, amazingly short and easy. He says in his first journal that he intends to take some Indians back with him to Spain ‘that they may learn to talk’” (36).

However, the intention of “teaching them to talk” did not stem from a desire to actually hear what they had to say. Instead, from the beginning, “Columbus allowed himself to be convinced that what he heard and was told was precisely what he wanted to hear and be told” (Pastor Bodmer 34). Thus, the comparison with parrots is never far away. As Boehrer reports, this association has been used in 1536 by “Cardinal Garcia de Loaisa, president of the Spanish Council of the Indies and personal confessor to Charles V,” for example, who defended the enslavement of indigenous people with a statement saying that “the Indians were no more than parrots” (176). Boehrer comments: “Loaisa’s point is simple, perhaps even stupid, but nonetheless far-reaching; if there is no connection between speech and understanding in parrots, then they may be employed as models for the treatment of other articulate but subordinate creatures” (176-7). Correspondingly, as Boehrer observes, the parrots’ “growing popularity as pets” in eighteenth century Europe results in “their appropriation by writers to license various kinds of social and political subordination” (173).

Thus, the portrayal of parrots is intimately linked with the idea of the subaltern. For example, in *The House of the Spirits*, Uncle Marcos’s parrot, “whose native language was an Amazonian dialect” (although his native language should be Parrotese, of course), retains a “foreign accent” when speaking Spanish (21-2), while the black tongue of Dr. Urbino’s parrot in *Love in the Time of Cholera* may serve as a connection to the city’s history as “the largest African slave market in the Americas” (23, 17-8). Yet, both Dr Urbino’s and Uncle Marcos’ respective parrots ridicule imposed rules and expectations. Uncle Marcos’ parrot embarrasses the family through “its lusty glance, its fleas, and its harsh, tuneless hawking of

paper fortunes, sawdust balls, and powders for impotence,” and is “secretly poisoned” by Nana “with an overdose of cod-liver oil” as a result (*House of the Spirits* 23). Dr Urbino’s parrot, in turn, plays a very prominent and critical role. Mocking her husband’s authority over the household, Fermina Daza introduces the parrot against his order that “Nothing that does not speak will come into this house” (*Love in the Time of Cholera* 23). The parrot’s speech, “only the blasphemies of sailors,” is initially inappropriate (23), but soon he learns “to speak French like an academician” (20). However, even then he “did not speak when asked to but only when it was least expected” (20). The parrot embarrasses Dr Urbino in front of the president, refusing “for two desperate hours . . . to say a single syllable, ignoring the pleas and threats and public humiliation of Dr. Urbino” (21). The reader suspects an intentionality on the part of the parrot, which proves ultimately fatal to Dr Urbino. His attempt to catch the escaped bird is thwarted by the parrot’s apparently calculated manoeuvres to avoid the doctor’s walking stick, causing Dr Urbino to fall to his death (see 41-2). In this way, García Márquez and Allende restore subjectivity to a conventional symbol for the supposed inferiority of colonised peoples.

Thus, García Márquez’ and Allende’s human-animal hybrids, in-between beings, resist the “hyperseparat[ion]” of “nature from culture,” which, Wolch suggests,

encourages its colonization and domination. The nature/culture dualism also incorporates nature into culture, denying it subjectivity and giving it solely instrumental value. By homogenizing and disembodimenting nature, it becomes possible to ignore the consequences of human activity such as urbanization, industrial production, and agro-industrialization, on specific creatures and their terrains. (37)

Accordingly, alongside other colonial discourses, the human-animal divide gives the ideological basis for the colonisation of nature in general, and the appropriation of natural

resources from colonised societies in particular. As Elder, Wolch and Emel write, “[t]he dominant uses of human-animal distinctions during the colonial epoch relied upon representations of similarity to animals to dehumanize and thus racialize particular groups” (193). Correspondingly, whilst embracing animality as a positive concept, *The House of the Spirits* also reflects and emphasises the connection between the exploitation of people and their classification as animals.

Esteban Trueba, for instance, describes his farm and property Tres Marías as having been “a wasteland” prior to his arrival; “it was a ruin filled with rocks and vultures. A no-man’s-land” (*House of the Spirits* 83).⁴¹ This description completely omits the peasants who live there, whom Esteban Trueba frequently describes as, or compares to, animals (see 82-3). Esteban García, his son by a peasant woman he raped, feels that his father treats him as “simply one more in the pile of creatures who sang the national anthem in the schoolhouse” (221). Spatially, the peasants’ lives are intertwined with those of animals, reinforcing the perception of the peasants as animalised. Accordingly, Esteban Trueba goes to visit his tenants “in their wretched huts,” where “in the shadows of one of them he came upon a box filled with newspaper, in which a newborn baby and a puppy lay in a shared sleep” (76). Lack of infrastructure and poverty also connect the peasants with the lives of animals. Thus, the local midwife is “as good at delivering babies as she [is] at pulling calves from wall-eyed cows” (70) and, conversely, instead of seeing a doctor, the peasants are treated by the vet. Esteban Trueba thus reports:

Sometimes I would walk to town and return with a veterinarian who would check the cows and hens and, while he was at it, anybody who was sick. It’s not true that I assumed that if the vet knew how to treat animals his training was good enough for people, as my granddaughter says when she wants to get

me mad. The fact is, you couldn't get a doctor in a godforsaken place like that. (69-70)

Due to their animal-like status, the Tres Marías peasants are the recipients of Trueba's charity, linked with a kind of civilising mission. In defence of his position, Esteban Trueba lists the improvements in "his" peasants' lives since he arrived: "My people have it fine now, what more do they need? . . . If they complain, it's out of sheer ingratitude. They have brick houses, I blow their kids' noses and cure their parasites, give them vaccinations and teach them how to read. Is there any other hacienda for miles around that has its own school? No!" (*House of the Spirits* 82). However, he stresses what he perceives as their dependency on him and says: "I have to stay here, because if I were to leave for so much as a week, it would all collapse and these poor creatures would be starving to death again before you know it" (83). Esteban Trueba ensures that ongoing charity is the mechanism that regulates his relationship with the workers on his land. He declares: ". . . I don't see why the priest comes to talk to me about justice. . . . They don't know how to clean their asses and they want the right to vote!" (82). Thus, in return for charity, he deprives his workers of their voice, exploits their labour, rapes the women, and denies them social justice on the grounds that they are not civilised enough, or in other words, like animals.

By blurring the human-animal boundary, Allende illuminates the inextricable connections between animality and subalterity. Elder Wolch and Emel explain the processes that constitute dehumanisation. They write:

Being treated like an animal means being treated in a degrading and dehumanizing way. The specific treatments in mind here are not loving forms of human-animal interaction, but abusive violation (physical and/or emotional). The key aspect of such violent treatment that makes it dehumanizing, however, is not just the violation, it is the fact that victims are

objectified and used like animals (who are commonly objectified and used).

(194)

Allende thus connects the fate of chickens with that of peasants and workers throughout the narrative. The association is effective because the chickens' lives and deaths are represented not only in an allegorical fashion—most notably in Pedro García's "story of the hens who joined forces to confront a fox," later turned into a song (*House of the Spirits* 167, 182, 205), but also in very material ways. Significantly, Esteban García's role as brutal torturer under the dictatorship is anticipated by his childhood treatment of chickens, into whose eyes he drives nails. This cruelty threatens even then to progress towards sticking nails into the eyes of his grandfather Pedro García, who has only just died that moment (see 220-1). Esteban García's progression from tormenting nonhuman animals to torturing humans suggests that the mechanisms of oppression, the practices employed to demonstrate and maintain power, are the same or similar in essence regardless of whether the victims are human or nonhuman.⁴²

Correspondingly, Allende also illustrates the absence of compassion in a cycle of oppression and violence directed against nonhuman animals—chickens, in this case—and those people who are dehumanised and represented as animals: Esteban García himself whilst growing up; his mother Pancha, whose rape by Esteban Trueba is described as "the same animal fate" as her mother and her grandmother before her (*House of the Spirits* 75); and Alba, Clara's granddaughter and Esteban García's rape and torture victim. The chicken torture scene, especially in view of the associated graphic violence that follows (see 455-471), suggests that compassion for nonhuman animals matters, because when it does not—as in Esteban García's case, the legitimisation of violence and cruelty is only a question of degree, circumstances and the definition of the victim. García Márquez asserts that *One Hundred Years of Solitude's* "most outstanding quality—the author's immense compassion

for all his poor creatures” is one of the “crucial aspects” that “the critics . . . have overlooked” (Mendoza 77). Compassion, the ability to “suffer with the other,” to “feel their pain,” is the opposite of Cartesian detachment from “the other” and its resulting disavowal of animal suffering.

Accordingly, Allende declares that she is “always fighting against pain and suffering” (qtd. in Gazarian-Gautier 9). Her strategy in this fight is to make pain and suffering visible. The chickens tormented by Esteban García, and unnoticed by Blanca who appears on the scene, are truly voiceless and thus mirror the absolute voicelessness of Alba, when her torturers throw her “into the doghouse,” an isolated dark cell, so that Esteban García can “forget that she existed” (*House of the Spirits* 469). Allende manages to “tell a secret story, that of the silent voices who cannot speak,” and that of those who are otherwise rendered invisible (qtd. in Gazarian-Gautier 16). Her intention in lending a voice by telling such stories is “to change the world, not just rewrite it” (Allende qtd. in Gazarian-Gautier 16). She considers having a gift for writing as an obligation “to benefit those who don’t have a voice. That’s why when I speak I always refer to the political and social aspects. How can one not talk about war, violence, poverty, and inequality when people who suffer from these afflictions don’t have a voice to speak?” (Allende qtd. in Gazarian-Gautier 23). By connecting the fate of chickens with the fate of oppressed people, Allende illuminates the suffering of both, intensifies their visibility through the association, and thus gives them a voice of sorts through this visible embodiment of suffering. It takes compassion and empathy, the ability to not dismiss one as merely symbolic for the other, or as less worthy of consideration, to fully appreciate the depths of the experiences Allende describes, the structural connections between them; in this case, the fact that both kinds of violence implicitly legitimate each other.

Indeed, compassion, the acknowledgement of “the other’s” suffering, is closely related to empathy and sympathy, abilities which both Carey and J.M. Coetzee regard as important to the art of writing. Similar to Allende, Carey considers it a question of “a writer’s responsibility to imagine what it is to be others. It’s an act of empathy, and it’s not only what we do, it’s a socially useful act to imagine oneself to be other than one is” (qtd. in Koval 672). Coetzee, in turn, remarks that “[w]riters are reputed to possess this faculty [sympathy] particularly strongly.” However, he comments on the difficulty of empathising with an animal, due to the differences in the “mode of consciousness of nonhuman species” from “human consciousness.” He says: “There is a strong argument to be made that it is impossible for a human being to inhabit the consciousness of an animal, whereas through the faculty of sympathy (fellow-feeling) it is possible for one human being to know quite vividly what it is like to be someone else.” He suggests that because of this difficulty, there is “a temptation” to anthropomorphise nonhuman animals; that is, “to project upon them feelings and thoughts that may belong only to our own human mind and heart.” In addition, he observes the related “temptation to seek in animals what is easiest for human beings to sympathize or empathize with, and consequently to favor those animal species which for one reason or another seem to us to be ‘almost human’ in their mental and emotional processes. So dogs (for example) are treated as ‘almost human’ whereas reptiles are treated as entirely alien” (Coetzee qtd. in Engström, “Animals, Humans, Cruelty and Literature”).

Thus, it is significant that amongst the multitude of animals who appear as subjects and agents in *The House of the Spirits* and in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, there are also those least likely to be anthropomorphised or to inspire sympathy in readers, such as ants and cockroaches. García Marquez and Allende highlight the fact that on the basis of being wholly other—pest animals—they are met with relentless violence, whether in the form of fire, pesticides, quicklime, cod-liver oil poisoning or, as in Barrabás’ case, a “butcher’s

cruelty” (*House of the Spirits* 33). However, their counter-Cartesian acknowledgment of suffering and foregrounding of compassion shifts the realist focus from a positivist view towards the experience of the body, shared by human and nonhuman animals alike.⁴³

Allende and García Márquez thus reflect the view of Enlightenment philosopher Jeremy Bentham, who observed a direct correlation between humans and animals on the grounds of sentience and thus argued that animals be spared torment on that basis: “the question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?” (Bentham qtd. in Regan and Singer 130, original emphasis). Thus, outside of the constraints of “Cartesian thinking” which García Márquez finds “as uncomfortable as a tight waistcoat” (Mendoza 94), are empathy and compassion which provide one way of viewing reality differently. Indeed, whilst circensian spaces put animals in the spotlight, it is the reader’s ability to empathise, to recognise other existences, that ultimately renders magical realist animals and their own lives visible.

Conclusion

Approaching animals through animal geographies, the concepts of animal agency and ferality, and finally through shared suffering, or the shared ability to suffer, reveals that García Márquez’ and Allende’s representations of magical realist fauna are interconnected through the cultural, colonial and literary history of the circus. They are, moreover, embedded in circensian spaces, which reflect multiple contradictory discourses that are combined with carnivalesque, anti-Cartesian and counter-realist strategies to an irresolvable oxymoron. The tensions and in-between spaces thus created between these contradictory elements illuminate the extraordinary lives of fictional animals who might otherwise blend into the background and disappear at the margins of everyday (un-)consciousness. However, in circensian spaces, as in the circus ring, everything happens in the center. Likewise,

everyone—humans, animals and human-animal hybrids—occupies the central narrative space of magical realist fiction, including the readers themselves, who are drawn into the place of the other, or the carnivalesque heterotopia of the text, where there is no stable Cartesian “I,” but only others. Indeed, in some places, as the next chapter will show, there are only fish.

Chapter Two

True Australians: Animals and Identity in *Gould's Book of Fish* and
Illywhacker

What happens when the Latin American magical realist menagerie travels to Australia? Stephen Slemon makes the case for “applying the concept of magic realism to texts written in English” (408), beyond Latin America, suggesting that it can indicate “continuities within literary cultures” and provide a point of comparison in analysing literatures from separate postcolonial contexts (409). Focussing on two Australian novels written by authors of European settler heritage, Peter Carey’s *Illywhacker* and Richard Flanagan’s *Gould's Book of Fish*, this chapter will explore these continuities as well as the incorporation of elements that create a distinctively local flavour. I will argue that magical realism is a travelling mode of writing, so to speak, which, like the circus, retains its essential circensian quality—characterised by “animal entertainment,” the carnivalesque and an oxymoronic heterotopia—but which, at the same time, and precisely because of its heterotopic nature, adapts to the culture, history, traditions and natural conditions of the new locality. *Illywhacker* and *Gould's Book of Fish* continue with magical realism’s anti-Cartesian project of destabilising the idea of a human-animal divide and transcending the Cartesian (human) subject through an empathic awareness or vision. In the process, however, they also engage with the significant role representations of animals and material animal practices have played and continue to play in shaping Australian settler identity, and question the matrix of representational systems and foundational narratives that make up the nation.

Accordingly, in both novels Australia is constructed as a circensian space, populated by human, nonhuman and hybrid animals who negotiate “their place” between, rather than within, the Linnaean ordering of nature, and its physical translation into the classifying

mechanisms of the penal system. In *Gould's Book of Fish*, the dominant and pervasive system that determines day to day life is shaped by natural history in general and Linnaean taxonomy in particular. The main narrative is set on the Vandemonian penal colony of Sarah Island, where the forger William Buelow Gould is assigned the task of painting native fish for the island's surgeon, Mr Lempriere, an ambitious collector of natural historical specimens. Lempriere's aspirations include not only the discovery and naming of hitherto unclassified species of nonhuman animals, but also the devising of new and rigid categories for humans. Throughout the narrative, such classifications affect the lives and deaths of everyone, human and non-human, as they are caught up in the framework of classifications. *Illywhacker* is equally concerned with "a consuming rage for order" (Huggan, *Peter Carey* 37), and whilst Carey's novel does not address Linnaean taxonomy directly, the system is, nevertheless, an important and equally pervasive point of reference for Herbert Badgery's narrative. The conceptual and metaphorical imprisonment of animals, human and non-human, within categories delineated by language becomes manifest, and culminates in the actual imprisonment of human and non-human pets in "The Best Pet Shop in the World" created by the narrator's grandson, Hissao. Amongst the assemblage of Australian icons in the pet shop is the narrator himself, imprisoned in a cage and exhibited as a curiosity. Thus, paradoxically, human-animal boundaries begin to blur when order is at its most extreme, with "specimens" imprisoned in a physical carceral structure.

This chapter discusses the ways in which the circensian spaces created in *Gould's Book of Fish* and *Illywhacker* simultaneously contain and undermine such carceral systems of representation, and how animals offer resistance and a means of escape through the continuous collapsing of these systems' internal categories. These Australian circensian spaces reflect Slemon's theory that whilst magical realism "suggests a binary opposition

between the representational code of realism and that, roughly, of fantasy,” its “two oppositional systems” are

each working toward the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other. Since the ground rules of these two worlds are incompatible, neither one can fully come into being, and each remains suspended, locked in a continuous dialect with the ‘other’, a situation which creates disjunction within each of the separate discursive systems, rending them with gaps, absences, and silences. (Slemon 409)

This, he argues, precludes the “possibility of interpretive closure” (Slemon 410). I propose that this impossibility of achieving interpretive closure in *Illywhacker* and *Gould’s Book of Fish* is a mark of the heterotopia, arising from the influence and intensity of contradictory forces within these texts. In the context of Australian nationhood, this heterotopic arrangement of narrative space, particularly in relation to categorisations of animals and thus in the form of circensian space, exposes foundational histories as selective stories that ignore, hide, or distort suffering, disempowerment and displacement resulting from colonisation. Thus, Carey and Flanagan address the complacent and expedient acceptance of Australian foundational Myths, at the same time as ‘hidden’ histories create an uneasiness in the everyday life of Australians of European descent.

The co-existence of contradictory narratives in the circensian spaces of *Illywhacker* and *Gould’s Book of Fish* complicates and destabilises ideas of belonging, home and settlement, and highlight the “gaps, absences, and silences” within Australia’s dominant histories. At the same time, animals provide a potential means of escape from oppressive colonial structures by calling definitions into questions, and, as in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, ‘undermining the foundations’ of those narratives that set out to define Australian reality. Both *Illywhacker* and *Gould’s Book of Fish* demonstrate that an understanding of

what it means to be Australian, for Australians of European origin, is intimately tied to an identification and engagement with animals, both indigenous and introduced.

“Advance Australian Fair”: Histories and Circuses

In Carey’s *Illywhacker*, the human pets inhabiting The Best Pet Shop in the World are described as going “about their business, their sand paintings, their circumcision ceremonies, their strikes, settlements, discussions about national anthems, arguments about ‘Waltzing Matilda’ and ‘Advance Australian Fair’” (635). Carey’s pun, which proposes the idea of the Australian nation as *a fair*, rather than as “fair,” that is, beautiful, hints at several important themes in the novel: the fair is essentially a circensian space, at once a place of entertainment, with magic tricks, animal acts, acrobatics and other, carnivalesque, forms of amusement, a place of trade and exhibition in general and, traditionally, of the trade and exhibition of animals in particular. A fair can be seen as a site where the mundane and the extraordinary meet. Flanagan uses a similar image of the nation, in this case the microcosm of Sarah Island, as a “bazaar.” William Buelow Gould, the narrator, tells the reader that “what started off as furtive trading along the southern stockade wall, administered but not controlled by the felons of a Saturday afternoon, grew into a market & the market into a bazaar & the bazaar into the idea of a nation” (*Gould’s Book* 175).⁴⁴ This “bazaar” becomes the site of the Commandant’s “exuberant & exotic” trading:

a score of barrels of whale oils for the decadent scent of a single overripe guava, shipwrights’ tools for iguana eggs, a whale boat for a large cargo of green bananas, much prized redcoat uniforms for silk turbans. In spite of what the Portuguese traders told their Brazilian sailors under their breath as they emptied their ship holds of Moluccan feathers, . . . not all his trade was complete madness. For the pine . . . he extracted the finest silk cloth from

India. For a horde of sulphur-crested cockatoos he had painted to resemble baby macaws trained to recite melancholic verse in the manner of Pope & several songs of passion in the earthier argot of their convict trainer, he gained fourteen Brazilian caravels & seven cannons, the subsequent sale of which financed his palace & the new wharf. (*Gould's Book* 173-4)

This passage conjures up imagery from the *Arabian Nights* and India, and strongly connects Sarah Island with South America. It represents an ironic reference to the imagery and origin of the most prominent and successful magical realist works—such as those of Rushdie and the South American magical realists—in general, and the status of Flanagan's novel as an exotic product of sorts, and the reader as the consumer of that product, in particular. The same kind of self-referential irony applies to the exotic pets in *Illywhacker*, and both Flanagan and Carey thus display, in their “deliberately exaggerated hawking of Oriental(ist) [and, more generally, exotic(ist)] wares,”⁴⁵ the phenomenon Graham Huggan calls “the postcolonial exotic,” a repoliticisation of exoticism that is “redeployed both to unsettle metropolitan expectations of cultural otherness and to effect a grounded critique of differential relations of power” (*Postcolonial Exotic* ix-x).

In regard to the Australian novels discussed here, an important function of the construction of the reader as consumer is the suggestion of complicity in the events that unfold.. Throughout both novels, readers are compelled to confront their role as consumers, and consider their position in regard to the representation of historical narratives and (animal) practices. Moreover, Carey's and Flanagan's 'fairs' address, in particular, the importance of animals and animal products in the practices and narratives that formed the Australian nation, a concern addressed later on in this chapter. Most immediately striking, however, is Carey's and Flanagan's borrowing of the circus, and of circensian spaces as their narrative framework. Thus, Sarah Island's bazaar, for example, is reminiscent of the gypsy fair and

“The Street of the Turks” in García Márquez’s Macondo, where Arabs “swap knick-knacks for macaws” (*Solitude* 306), and both are related to Foucault’s “fairground” heterotopia (described in Chapter One). Accordingly it is necessary to explore more fully the connections between *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Carey’s and Flanagan’s magical realist novels, along with the concept of the circensian space in relation to Australian history as represented in *Illywhacker* and *Gould’s Book of Fish*.

Both Carey and Flanagan acknowledge the influence of García Márquez on their work. Flanagan refers to a number of authors when asked by Jamie Kornegay whom he credits “for inspiring [his] literary vision” (Kornegay). Amongst them are several associated with magical realism, such as Cortazar, Borges, Gogol, and Grass, but also, notably, García Márquez (Kornegay), and he makes reference to *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in particular when discussing the importance of books (Flanagan, “Across a Newborn Baby’s Eyes”). Carey, in turn, comments that Borges and García Márquez have been “important” to him, and says: “After I had been writing stories I read *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and it had for me a huge liberating effect” (qtd. in Willbanks 45). In relation to magical realism more generally, Carey remarks: “I liked the term magic realism when I first heard it and I always thought that this was a lovely way to describe the sort of writing one finds in *Illywhacker*, even *Bliss*, but particularly *Illywhacker*,” and even though he says that he “became wary of being labeled a magic realist,” he maintains that he sees *Illywhacker* “in this sense” (qtd. in Willbanks 54-5).

Illywhacker and *Gould’s Book of Fish* certainly contain recognisable references to *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. For example, Flanagan describes a scene wherein the bodies of massacred Aborigines are “long since picked clean by animals & birds & insects,” and the children’s “[l]ittle skulls” are “toothless, translucent as parchment” (*Gould’s Book* 381). This scene is very reminiscent of García Márquez’ last Aureliano, whose body is eaten by ants.

Janes comments on this scene in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*: “In the dried skin of the baby, critics have noted the parchment’s resemblance to human skin” (29). *Illywhacker*, in turn, includes “a Spanish galleon in full sail across the top of the yellow Sydney sky” (600), a product of the imagination of Emma Badgery, wife of narrator Herbert Badgery’s son Charles. This image recalls the lost Spanish galleon found by José Arcadio Buendía and his fellow explorers as they search for the route to civilisation (see *Solitude* 17).

Phil McCluskey has examined the “structural affinity” of *Illywhacker* to “a Latin American model of magic realism,” and considers “how this structure operates within a similar, yet importantly different, context” (90). He proposes that, rather than by simply drawing on “obvious parallels” between Latin America and other nations on the basis of postcoloniality in order to justify the use of the term “magic realism” (McCluskey 90), a productive definition of the concept derives from a structural analysis based on the work of Amaryll Chanady, whereby the supernatural and the real are unproblematically juxtaposed, which is accepted both by the reader and the story’s characters (McCluskey 89). Bruce Woodcock, however, argues that, generally, Carey’s fiction can be associated with a variety of modes, such as science fiction, fantasy (9), surrealism (11), and “post-modernism” (10). He suggests that Carey is “something of a hybrid” not only in his personal and professional life, but also in his writing, as “[h]is work refuses to establish a smooth narrative effect in the ‘classic’ traditions of European narrative art,” as a result of which “he somehow escapes categorisation” (Woodcock 9). Nonetheless, Woodcock associates *Illywhacker* in particular closely with magical realism, as he comments on “the epic texture of the novel” which he sees as “a *One Hundred Years of Solitude* of the outback, with small-town lives and incidents woven together into a panoramic account of national history” (58).

However, most notably, Carey and Flanagan have adopted and adapted García Márquez’ circensian framework, themes and images. The circus theme in *Gould’s Book of*

Fish may not be immediately obvious, not least because fish are not normally associated with the circus. Yet, Flanagan manages to create an aquatic circus, a mixture of the traditional travelling circus and menagerie, the natural history museum, and an aquarium, in his story about a convict artist, assigned to paint fish for taxonomic classification. Flanagan draws on the circus' tradition as a showcase for colonial curiosities and conquests, presenting antipodean fish so strange in their appearance, and with such unusual, hybridized names—for example “Weedy Seadragon,” “Striped Cowfish,” “Porcupine Fish,” “Serpent Eel,” “Stargazer” or “Leatherjacket”—that it is hard to believe that these fish actually exist and are not products of the author's imagination.⁴⁶ The Stargazer, significantly, is described as having a “tapering circus strongman body” (185). Other attractions include Jorgensen's whistling dog Elsinore (see 166-7), and Gould's wet prison cave that is gruesomely decorated with the “elephantine form” of Jorgensen's “stinking balloon corpse” (336). Flanagan fuses the circus' traditional role of showcasing novelties from the colonies with Australian reality by means of a motto on a painting. Gould reports:

Undoubtedly the high point of my short Hobart Town career was my dramattick canvas for the Iron Duke depicting the depravity of circus life after that good publican's woman ran off with the Great Valerio, a Sicilian high-rope walker & seller of aphrodisiac powders. I did a terrifying mural of a soft naked woman being dragged into a Hell of flaming acrobats & tumblers by a rather nasty looking bald eagle, beneath which was inscribed the motto: Ex Australis semper aliquid novi (There is always something new out of Australia). (87)

Flanagan alludes to the phrase “Ex Africa semper aliquid novi” here, most often, but somewhat mistakenly, attributed to Pliny the Elder.⁴⁷ In this way, he parallels Australia's history as a colony with the fate of Africa: both places effectively became, in the process of

colonization, “warehouses” for European circuses and natural history museums, repositories for exotic animals to be exhibited for the entertainment of European audiences.⁴⁸ The circus novelty Flanagan presents is, to use the words of one of his characters, “a whole new Exotic World of Fish!” (146).

Illywhacker, in turn, features a number of performers who are, or could be, at home in a circus environment. These include Herbert’s lover Leah Goldstein, who used to perform as part of Mervyn Sullivan’s “sideshow” (234), does “the Emu Dance, the Fan Dance, the Snake Dance, the Dance of the Seven Veils” (240), and spills notes “about the feeding requirements of various cockatoos” which look like “a circus arranged on her behalf” (500). Phoebe, Herbert’s wife, speaks “like a ventriloquist” and is described as “the magician” (90). Charles performs with snakes even as a child, and later wears an outrageously colourful jacket suited to a circus clown or a ringmaster, “with bright blue and gold squares which had been refashioned from a man’s dressing gown . . . and a big white Texan hat bought by mail order from *Smith’s Weekly*” (410), and Lenny and Rosa Kaletsky, Leah’s mother- and father-in-law, “were both show people, travelling the tent shows in the country towns” (259). The guests at Rosa’s birthday party, “Rosa’s silly friends,” have “red mouths and huge hats. . . . There were dancers of every type, bit actors, second-rate cabaret performers, and short men with wide lapels who could tell jokes for three hours without repeating themselves,” and “they all walked along Bondi Beach and strolled along the sand in colourful defiance of reality” (273). Wysbraum, a friend of Leah’s father, looks like a clown with his beetroot-stained mouth, as his messy eating habits, resembling those of a non-human animal, become a spectacle for the Goldstein family (see 245-7). Mr Lo, illegal immigrant and pet shop inhabitant, is called a “human performing like a monkey in a cage” (530), whilst Nathan Schick, whose business schemes involve various forms of animal entertainment, is metaphorically described as “a juggler” (510). Herbert’s flying lessons with Jack are labelled

a “circus” (51), and Cocky Abbot—a wealthy farmer and potential investor in Herbert’s schemes—accuses Herbert of creating a spectacle: “I didn’t come here to see a circus with snakes” (141). Charles sums up his peculiar family in a conversation with Leah and remarks: “If *Time* magazine were coming to interview you, . . . you wouldn’t want them to see the circus on the top floor” (585).

Huggan, in his discussion of Peter Carey’s fiction, has remarked that they “parade a metamorphic world of exotic hybrids,” and has called Hissao’s pet shop “this ludicrous human circus” (*Carey* 8, 31). Woodcock describes *Illywhacker* thus:

Carey’s novel leads the reader in extravagant and fantastic circles as we follow the fortunes of the Badgeries. . . . In *Illywhacker*, despite his digressions, Herbert dominates the proceedings and is unquestionably the centre of his own story, so much so as to explode all the conventions of probability associated with traditional first-person narrative. . . . [T]he book is the narrator: its formal coherence derives from the centrality of Herbert, and from thematic shaping of the three books around the generational expansion of the Badgery family. (56).

The image of Herbert, locked in a cage as a human exhibit at the center of these “fantastic circles” captures the paradoxical spirit of the circus: Herbert is the ringmaster of the “three-book-circus,” as well as the captive, disempowered (human) animal on show. In *Gould’s Book of Fish*, too, the narrator is animalised and central to the narrative, and he is both captive and in command of the story at the same time. The circular narrative structures of the two novels simulate circus arenas enclosing stories that proliferate with representations of animals. Accordingly, like a ringmaster Herbert advises his readers to “relax and enjoy the show” (*Illywhacker* 3).

Like García Márquez's novel, both *Illywhacker* and *Gould's Book of Fish* have a circular structure. *Illywhacker* thus begins and ends in Herbert Badgery's cage, with people staring at him like visitors to a travelling menagerie. Moreover, the narrator is contained within his own narrative, whilst the reader is one of the people looking at him, so to speak, captured within the narrative whilst positioned on the outside (of the book), and sharing Herbert's space in the cage, as it is from his position that the story is told. The narrative structure becomes "impossible to think," to employ Foucault's idea again (*Order* xv), a heterotopia in which Carey, like Borges, "does away with the site, the mute ground upon which it is possible for entities to be juxtaposed" (Foucault, *Order* xvii, emphasis omitted). Flanagan performs a similar vanishing trick—resembling the phenomenon of impossible structure Foucault ascribes to Borges' "Chinese Encyclopaedia"—in *Gould's Book of Fish*, the structure of which can better be described as spiral. The ending is not a straightforward circular return to the start, because, although the narrative returns to the seadragon in Mr Hung's aquarium from the beginning of the story (*Gould's Book* 43), William Buelow Gould, Sid Hammet and the Weedy Seadragon are ultimately blurred into one, and even the reader is, arguably, drawn into the swirling eddy of "human fish," or "fishy humans."⁴⁹ Part of this whirlpool of language is also the afterword, which blends several other important characters of the story into the figure of William Buelow Gould (n.p.). Flanagan thus collapses the Cartesian "I," separate from "others" as observing subject, and instead offers alternative ways of being, ways that entail being part of a multitude of others.

The heterotopic quality of *Gould's Book of Fish* is emphasised further by Flanagan's use of the idea of a book that vanishes, or consumes itself, as the characters read, and are trapped within, their own story, which is also an important theme in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Thus, not only does 'The Book of Fish' turn into "a large brackish puddle" (*Gould's Book* 30) once Sid Hammet manages to finish the book that previously "never seemed to

really finish” (28), but, additionally, Gould bears a strong resemblance to Aureliano Babilonia, reading the manuscript that describes his own story, as he picks up one of the books taken from the Sarah Island Registry:

Billy Gould could not escape the growing suspicion that he had become entrapped in a book, a character whose future as much as his past was already written, determined, foretold, as unalterable as it was intolerable. What choice did he have but to destroy the book? . . . Trying desperately to avoid the conclusion that if this book of fish was a history of the settlement, it might also be its prophecy, I then realised that the book was not near ended, that it contained several more chapters, & with mounting terror I read on the succeeding page of how—I then realised that the book was not near ended, that it contained several more chapters, & with mounting terror I read on the succeeding page of how— (373-4)

Time collapses within itself, and is transformed from a linear chronology into a circular movement. Foucault calls phenomena such as these “heterochronies,” the simultaneous existence of different kinds of time, different histories or different movements of time. He points out that “[t]he heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time” (Foucault, “Of Other Spaces” 26). Such a collapsing of time, in conjunction with the collapse of the Cartesian subject into a multitude—or community—of others, again precludes readers from distancing themselves from historical events and actors represented in the narrative.

Faris suggests that, in magical realist fiction, “history is the weight that tethers the balloon of magic” (“Scheherazade” 170). However, James Bradley comments, in relation to Carey’s fiction, that Carey represents “realms where history and truth constantly reveal themselves as fabrications and tales of dubious veracity; ‘curious and strange’ like ‘the most

beautiful lies that constitute Australian history’” (657). Paradoxically, it is the circus that provides the “weight” in *Illywhacker*, as Carey uses historically accurate circus imagery to ground the imaginary narratives of history. Accordingly, the figure of Goon Tse Ying, Herbert’s adoptive father, explicitly refers to a kind of violent circus of sorts in Australian history: the riots at Lambing Flat, where miners of European descent attacked Chinese miners in 1861, sporting a flag bearing, in circus-style letters, the inscription “Roll up, Roll up. No Chinese” (Curthoys 112 and plate 6.2). Goon Tse Ying recounts this dark episode of Australian history:

Lambing Flat is near Young in New South Wales. It was a big rush. I was there. We were all there. Roll up, roll up, that is what the English miners called to each other. May you never hear it. May you never die having heard the English come in their horses and carts. They carried the English flag, an ugly thing. They had a band. They had pipes and drums and they came in their thousands. They did not like the Chinese, little Englishman, because we were clever. (*Illywhacker* 221)

Carey exposes the discrepancies in different histories of the event. Ann Curthoys calls the Lambing Flat riots the “most remembered today” (110). She reports that the tents and possessions of the Chinese miners were burnt and destroyed, as they were “rounded up, struck with bludgeons and whips, pulled up against the saddles of horses their pigtailed cut off. The procession then returned to Lambing Flat, now flying a Chinese silken sign appended to the corners of which were these cut-off pigtailed” (Curthoys 113). However, several websites have produced deviating accounts. For example, Ralph Zuljan of *OnWar.com* writes: “The settlement of Lambing Flat (Young) in New South Wales saw the worst of the riots against the Chinese, many of whom were attacked, robbed, beaten, or killed by white miners who wished to force them from the goldfields in the area.” *The Walkabout Australian Travel*

Guide website is more speculative about the consequences for the Chinese, describing the event thus:

3000 Europeans, armed with pick-handles, bludgeons and whips, assembled and, sporting British, Irish and American flags, they marched to the Chinese encampments to the sound of a brass band. Again, pigtailed were cut off, property smashed and huge bonfires consumed Chinese clothing, tents and furniture. At least one European man was killed and others were wounded. It seems unclear how many, if any, Chinese died, though there seem to have been no reported fatalities. (“Young”)

In comparison, the Australian National Maritime Museum, an Australian government agency, merely says on their site that “the Chinese were humiliated and forced from the goldfields. Those who were affected by the riots petitioned the Government for damages, but were unsuccessful.” This again contrasts with Herbert’s version, who maintains that “the anti-Chinese riots at Lambing Flat” were “where Goon Tse Ying’s father and uncle were killed and where he learned to stand in such a manner as to be invisible” (*Illywhacker* 193).

All of these variations, however, spring mainly from only four sources, as Curthoys points out (112). Carey suggests that fact and fiction have become so intermingled in the recounting of the event, that it becomes impossible to tell later which is the truth. Thus, Goon asserts: ““You will meet people who say that none of this happened. They will say they gave John Chinaman a fright, but they are liars. Roll up, roll up,’ he bellowed, ‘roll up. Kill John Chinaman’” (*Illywhacker* 222). This is further complicated by the fact that Goon later denies ever having been at Lambing Flat (see *Illywhacker* 387), leaving the reader to guess whether Herbert has made up the story about Goon’s family’s involvement, or whether Goon has reinvented his personal history in order to fit into Australian society and thus become “invisible” as a Chinese immigrant. The conflicting narratives cancel each other out within

an unresolved, paradoxical heterotopia instead of providing a linear, definitive account of history.

Carey shows that the circus is the site where fact and fiction mingle, and Goon Tse Ying provides the image of a ringmaster, as he re-enacts the terror of Lambing Flat in order to teach young Herbert how to make himself invisible, bearing an axe to inspire terror instead of the characteristic whip: “Goon Tse Ying, dressed in his formal three-piece suit, his watch chain flashing in the winter sun, came bounding towards me waving an axe handle. ‘Roll up,’ he screamed, ‘roll up.’ . . . The axe handle belted me across the shoulders and sent me sprawling” (*Illywhacker* 225). The circus plays, in this instance, one of the roles that Foucault assigns to heterotopias, which is “to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory” (“Of Other Spaces” 27). In regard to Lambing Flat, the inconsistencies in historical narratives, and omissions or distortions of dominant narratives, are exposed through the dialogic dynamics of the carnivalesque circensian space, which allows multiple voices to be heard equally.

Flanagan’s novel, too, is concerned with what he represents as the lies that have shaped the way the Australian nation is perceived. Gould comments on the creation of “what this country will become” (*Gould’s Book* 442). He says: “Ask me—after all, if you can’t trust a liar & a forger, a whore & an informer, a convicted murderer & a thief, you’ll never understand this country” (442). Thus, Flanagan portrays a violent piece of Australian history as a kind of circus, in which fact and fiction are blurred and where science, particularly Linnaean taxonomy and phrenology, clashes with animal agency. This idea is centered on the figure of Mr Lempriere, who sends the pickled heads of murdered Aborigines to Britain in the name of science. The heads are to be classified for phrenological studies, yet Mr Lempriere, in the middle of the circle of barrels, wields a stick at these heads—whom he “believe[s] to be jeering him & his work” (254)—just like a ringmaster cracks a whip at wild

animals. Mr Lempriere, his face always covered in “glistening white lead powder” (124), is the white-faced clown at the center of the arena, and he behaves as if the pickled heads were wild animals to be tamed. The “cacophony of noise” and the appearance of Castlereagh—not the prime minister, but the pig Mr Lempriere has named after the politician—evoke the comedy of the scene, as does the fact that Lempriere is “striving to bring the squealing Castlereagh into the conversation” (262), creating an actual animal act. However, the main animal act is Mr Lempriere himself, who represents a transgressive hybrid, a monstrous spectacle with a “grotesque unhuman visage” (124), whilst also representing, of course, the “porcupine fish” (156-8). This scene exemplifies the site of resistance offered by magical realism, which here, within a circensian space, undermines the authority of scientific representation through carnivalesque subversion and through the agency of animals, or those who are classed as animals or even objects. Mr Lempriere’s mad ravings in the center of the circle of barrels suggest that he considers the circus to be an inherently subversive force that is oppositional and dangerous to the authoritative claims of science. Thus, an exasperated Mr Lempriere exclaims: “I WILL HAVE SCIENCE, GOULD—NOT A RUDDY CIRCUS” (261).

Richard Broome provides some historical background to Mr Lempriere’s scientific practices, illustrating that, grotesque though this scene in the novel is, it is not purely an invention but was, in fact, reality: “At Toongabbie, west of Sydney, in [1797], Permulooy led Aboriginal fighters against the soldiers and settlers until he was eventually shot down. In ghastly fashion, his severed and pickled head was sent to Sir Joseph Banks in England” (33). The historical lie is created by the denial or distortion of such incidents or, as Lempriere demonstrates, in the explanations sought to justify such atrocities. In *Gould’s Book of Fish*, these justifications, especially the idea that mechanisms of oppression are part of a natural order, are exposed as illusory histories, through the combination of those heterotopias

Foucault contrasts as opposites: the heterotopia of the fairground on the one hand and the heterotopia of extreme order on the other. By representing extreme systems of order and classification within the context of a circensian space, Flanagan exposes the fact that the supposed authority, universal validity and objectivity of science—particularly in regard to Linnaean taxonomies and the human-animal divide—are parts of a discourse employed to justify unequal power relations and oppressive practices in Australia.

Thus, the authority of Mr Lempriere’s science relies on the fact that representatives of all species are controlled and defined through capture and killing, rendering previously active subjects into passive objects, both conceptually and literally. Gould describes these passive, dead objects as “more bones than a knacker’s vat—racks of marsupial skulls, rib cages, thigh bones & entire skeletons of various animals—as well as assortments of feathers, shells, dried flowers, rocks; framed collections of butterflies, moths & beetles; & trays of bird eggs” (*Gould’s Book* 137). Surrounding himself with the “innumerable oddities” of his natural history collections puts Mr Lempriere into a position of command (137). Furthermore, natural history’s conceptualising of animals and the resulting animal practices are extended to humans and play, as Mr Lempriere suggests, a significant role in shaping European society in the colony. He shows Gould “his most prized possession, the celebrated . . . tenth edition of Linnaeus’s *Systema Naturae* for animals,” and declares:

“TIME IS RAPIDLY COMING—PROPERLY CLASSIFY NOT JUST ANIMALS—ALL LIVING THINGS—*EN UN MOT?*—PEOPLE—YES? NO? YES. . . . FIRST SUCCESSFULLY CLASSIFY ALL CONVICTS IN A CLASS FROM 1 TO 26—THEN ON SUCH BASIS MAKE SOCIETY ANEW.” “Science?” asked I. “APPLIED,” confirmed he. (138-9)

On the surface it might seem paradoxical, then, that power here is based on the conceptual separation between humans and animals, when humans and animals are to be classed within

the same system. However, as the categories “from 1 to 26” suggest, the system is inherently hierarchical, and the number of classes assigned to convicts asserts that convicts are innately biologically different from other members of society and suggests that they are as varied as different classes of animals. Thus, authority and influence rest with those who have the power to define who is at the top of the “Linnaean ladder of creation” (144), and who is at the bottom of humanity, next to the “lower” animal species. Mr Lempriere asserts that authority by stressing the importance of the Linnaean system, not only in stamping out “vulgar folk names for plants based on old witches’ tales,” but, more generally and significantly, in separating humanity—that is, chiefly white Europeans—from nature: “No more thinking that the natural & human worlds are entwined, but a scientifick basis for separation of the two, & human advancement on the basis of that scientifick difference forever after” (138). In the figure of Mr Lempriere, Flanagan reflects the establishment of power via the authority of scientific experts and its imposition on local societies and knowledges, as described by Pratt and Escobar, and as discussed in my previous chapter.

It is on the basis of that separation of “nature” from “humanity” that natural historians claimed superior status of Europeans over non-Europeans. Pratt points out that Linnaeus’ classification of *Homo sapiens* was an “explicit attempt to ‘naturalize’ the myth of European superiority” (32). It is through this hierarchical ordering that Europeans thought themselves justified to treat indigenous people like scientific specimens, pickle their heads and send every body part imaginable back to European museums. Accordingly, Flanagan presents the celebrated Sir Joseph Banks as the quintessential natural historian, who, as Gould tells us, “was well pleased with the half-dozen barrels of bobbing heads when they were finally presented to him, feeling, said he, that they could only greatly enhance our understanding of such misbegotten issue of the human race” (*Gould’s Book* 48).

Another “scientific basis” of such outright racist thought and practice, Flanagan’s narrative reveals, was provided by phrenology.⁵⁰ As Mr Lempriere, talking to Gould and Castlereagh in his disjointed way, explains, the “STUDY OF SKULLS WILL REVEAL THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES” between the “RACES OF MAN” (262). To him, it is “STOUT COMMON SENSE” that Aboriginal people, “LIKE DOGS—FLEAS—ARE NOT DESCENDED FROM ADAM” (262-3). They are thus classed as animals and apart from “STURDY ENGLISHMEN,” although, as Mr Lempriere points out, the supposed science of phrenology still needs to be invented: “BUT WITHOUT SCIENTIFICK CLASSIFICATION & CATEGORISATION WE DO NOT KNOW IT AS SCIENCE—YET” (263). However, regardless of how many classifications and categorisations phrenologists have provided, the proof for their claims is, at that point and to this day, non-existent.

Broome points out that phrenologists treated Aborigines “as being all the same, and on the basis of assumptions now seen as ludicrous, but which were believed by many to be scientific ‘truths’ at the time” (94).⁵¹ This suggests that what is regarded as “scientific” and “true” depends very much on the society that constructs these terms. As Gould points out, “swindling requires not delivering lies but confirming preconceptions” (*Gould’s Book* 25), and Europeans were receptive to scientific arguments that were politically and economically expedient. Accordingly, Broome discusses the motives behind such “science.” He writes:

In the battle between Europeans and Aborigines for the land, a racist ideology provided support for the former and ground for further violence. Many Europeans regarded the Aborigines as “savages”. The eighteenth century notion of a Great Chain of Being which ranked all creatures in a hierarchy of ability and development gave some support for this idea. The Aborigines were slotted in at the bottom of the human section. An early “scientific” theory, phrenology, used arguments about head and brain size to “prove”

European superiority and thereby to justify the dispossession of the
Aborigines. (Broome 50-1)

In *Gould's Book of Fish*, this supposed proof is, of course, undermined by English natural historian Cosmo Wheeler's verdict on Lempriere's skull, which he believes to be Aboriginal: "Wheeler proves beyond doubt the Tasmanian negro is of an entirely separate species, one possibly even more barbarous than the new Hollander, approaching the mere animal" (339). Flanagan suggests that this is not merely a mistake, caused by the preconceptions of a defective and confused science, but a reality created by Gould through writing: "As the thirty-sixth skull of the Macquarie Harbour collection, it was according to Mr Lempriere's own method to be called MH-36. I lifted my quill and threw sand across the page. Beneath the speckling I watched as those four fluid letters dried into reality" (279). As Pobjoy keenly observes, "definitions belong to the definer, not the defined" (376), and in this the definers have the power to determine the lives and deaths of others. By turning the definitions back onto the definers, Gould takes back some of that power.

At the same time, the comic scene of Mr Lempriere's "ruddy circus" also raises the question, both for contemporary Australian and international readers, of how seriously Australia's violent history is taken when Aboriginal heads have become nothing more than curiosities in a historical circus, a spectacle to be enjoyed. Yet this scene not only thoroughly ridicules the scientist Mr Lempriere, it is also a comment on how practices such as pickling and exhibiting the body parts of colonised peoples are justified through the authority of science. Flanagan remarks:

I remember when I was a student at Oxford being routinely derided for coming from a country that was said to have no civilization, yet just round the corner in Oxford's celebrated Pitt Rivers Museum was the most comprehensive collection of stolen body parts assembled since antiquity, and

this barbarity was defended as knowledge and enlightenment. This was frankly puzzling. (qtd. in Kornegay).

The illusion exposed through the circensian clash of extreme order and animal agency in *Gould's Book of Fish* is that body parts exhibited in museums are somehow dead objects without human connection or personal histories. The context in which they are displayed—as scientific objects of study and as exotic curiosities—fails to take account of the personal and collective suffering of those whose body parts are displayed and those for whom the individuals in question were important. It also obscures the fact that these “objects” bear witness to crimes against humanity.⁵² Gould points out the discrepancy between the way the victims’ bodies, their deaths and their suffering, and those responsible for these deaths and suffering, are configured depending on the origin of the victim: “I don’t know, for example, why I am now to hang for two murders I never committed, yet why nobody is guilty of the firesite skulls. Nor do I know why murdering the Pudding [Mr Lempriere] or Jorgensen is deemed a crime, while murdering a people is at best a question & at worst a scientific imperative” (*Gould's Book* 396). Systems of order, such as the penal system and scientific taxonomies, thus appear entirely arbitrary in their moral and logical application, except as tools to uphold the power of the colonisers.

“MAN’S MASTERY COMPLETE”: Carceral Systems and Hybrid Resistance

Indeed, Mr Lempriere (also known as “the Surgeon”) and his fixation on the Linnaean system, are labelled “entirely mad” (*Gould's Book* 145, see also 185). A remark he makes, however, reveals the imperialist agenda behind such systems; the maintenance of power through control and domestication of nature and those classed as barely human or nonhuman. He explains that natural history is “NOT INTERPRETING NATURE FOR DECORATION,” but that it has a more important function: “MAN’S DOMINION WILL BE ENTIRELY

KNOWN & KNOWABLE, & MAN'S MASTERY COMPLETE—HIS FINAL EMPIRE NATURE” (148). Yet, as in García Márquez' and Allende's novels, this attempt to control nature through Enlightenment science is undermined by feral animality.

Accordingly, Castlereagh defies Mr Lempriere's belief in “the infinite perfectibility of pigs through breeding” (140). This belief mirrors the shift Ritvo observes “between the early eighteenth and the late nineteenth century,” whereby “animals became significant primarily as the objects of human manipulation” (*Animal Estate* 2-3). Ritvo proposes that nature “became less threatening” in this period through “new methods of acquiring and applying knowledge associated with the Enlightenment” that included “stockbreeding” and “veterinary science” (*Animal Estate* 3). However, Mr Lempriere's attempt at gaining total control over nature by breeding the perfect pig is undermined by the “hog . . . of indeterminate breed” (141). Thus, the foul-tempered Castlereagh quickly disperses Mr Lempriere's fantasy of “bucolic bliss” (253)—a mad delusion, in any case, in view of the “festering, stinking horror” of the pig pen (141)—and makes his entrance at the very moment the scientist lectures “the recalcitrant barrels” (262) about “how overjoyed they ought be at the prospect” of being “of some use to Civilisation” (261). As the squealing pig appears to join the pickled heads in mocking the authority of science and its application in breeding systems and domestication, he lives up to the reputation of pigs in nineteenth century England, where they were seen as unruly and resistant to domestication; one of the “less compliant creatures” (Ritvo, *Animal Estate* 21). Correspondingly, the pickled heads of Aborigines, animalised through scientific practice, are equally non-compliant in their refusal to be useful.

However, their mockery of the Surgeon's totalitarian aspirations is limited, since his stated goal of gaining mastery over nature reveals not only the connection between science, imperialism and pastoral domestication—the “bucolic bliss” of complete control over land and people—but also the inherently carceral nature of his classification systems. This causes

Gould to remark that “[i]t sounded suspiciously like an attempt by the Surgeon & Mr Cosmo Wheeler to recreate the natural world as a penal colony, with me, the gaoled, now to play the part of the turnkey” (*Gould’s Book* 148). This power to define and thus determine the lives of others, based on the authority to write, tell, or paint the dominant story, is also reflected in Carey’s *Illywhacker*. As Herbert, commenting on the sign on Leah’s cage in the pet shop points out: “The sign on her door says ‘Melbourne Jew’. She spends a lot of time explaining that she is not a Jew, that the sign is a lie, that the exhibition is based on lies; but visitors prefer to believe the printed information. This information, after all, is written and signed by independent experts” (*Illywhacker* 636). Both *Illywhacker* and *Gould’s Book of Fish* suggest that those who “own” the story are in control of how reality is perceived and experienced, and that in Australia, perceived and experienced realities—perceived one way by some and experienced (physically, mentally, emotionally) differently by others—are inextricably linked to the concept and practice of caging animals.

Foucault illustrates how scientific ordering of non-human animals, as manifested by animal display cages, for instance, and the penal system reinforce each other and naturalize the power relations they represent. He compares the royal menagerie at Versailles with Bentham’s Panopticon and writes:

[O]ne finds in the programme of the Panopticon a similar concern with individualizing observation, with characterization and classification, with the analytical arrangement of space. The Panopticon is a royal menagerie; the animal is replaced by man, individual distribution by specific grouping and the king by the machinery of a furtive power. With this exception, the Panopticon also does the work of a naturalist. (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 203)⁵³

Both the Panopticon and the menagerie are examples of “heterotopias . . . of compensation,” about which Foucault, significantly, wonders whether “certain colonies have not functioned

somewhat in this manner” (“Of Other Spaces” 27). Accordingly, Lempriere’s obsessive ordering of specimens, of convicts, of Aboriginal heads and bones constitutes such a heterotopia of compensation, with which the mad surgeon, in Foucault’s words, attempts to “create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled” (“Of Other Spaces” 27). Moreover, conceptual delineation is reinforced by physical incarceration in *Illywhacker* and *Gould’s Book of Fish*, as natural history is a manifestly carceral narrative. In fact, Mr Lempriere mirrors Foucault’s comparison, and actively considers “how Bentham’s principle of the panopticon—a model prison in which all men could be constantly watched—might profitably be extended to natural history” (*Gould’s Book* 150).

Not surprisingly, then, Sarah Island’s convicts are kept in “those infamous fish cells” (*Gould’s Book* 49), and shortly before Gould/The Weedy Seadragon’s imprisonment in Mr Hung’s aquarium (another “fish cell”), Gould comments: “I whose role was to assist with classification, have now become the classified” (441). Thus, the aquarium, a glass prison, as it were, with boundaries that are near invisible (especially from the inside), is a symbol for the invisible boundaries of dominant language that define, delineate, and confine.

Correspondingly, several critics agree that animal cages in Carey’s fiction are intimately tied to Australia’s past as penal colony, which continues to shape the stories and realities of the present. Woodcock writes that “[t]he imagery of caging animals and birds is a powerful emblem of colonisation, particularly given Australia’s penal past” (64, see also Woodcock 67). Cliff Lobe, in turn, discusses carceral architecture in *Illywhacker* and argues that Herbert Badgery constructs an “archi/textual edific[e],” that is, “a narrative of confinement and control that culminates in the dystopian Pet Shop” (23). More generally, and referring to Mishra and Hodge, he points out the prominence of “the figure of the convict, patterns and images of imprisonment, and carceral spaces in Australian narrative” (Lobe 27).

Bradley remarks: “Carey sees culture as a sort of prison, like the birdcage in *Illywhacker*, a prison that the storyteller, whether novelist, ad man or historian, has a part in constructing. A sense of confinement underpins the restlessness of his characters, their constant need for escape and change” (664).⁵⁴ Thus, human and non-human animals are ordered into conceptual prisons of language, so to speak, a process that is paralleled by their actual incarceration in the display cages of the Best Pet Shop in the World. Particularly striking in this context is the close identification with the cockatoo as a quintessential Australian. The term “cocky” is used in many variations throughout *Illywhacker*, denoting, for example, both the feathered and the farming kind of cocky, the indigenous animal and the settler farmer, as well as pointing to one original meaning of the term, which refers to the prisoners of Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbour, which Herbert and Hissao visit (*Illywhacker* 577). The 1871 painting, *Sulphur-crested Cockatoo* by Jacob John Halley (Olsen 76), illustrates the association between these parrots and the convicts.⁵⁵ The pet cockatoo depicted is conspicuously chained to the perch, as a convict, too, might be chained, and in this context illustrates the connection between parrots and subaltern groups demonstrated by Boehrer and discussed in my previous chapter.

However, Carey’s settler “cockies” complicate the idea of oppressor and oppressed; they invoke, on the one hand, the victimhood of convicts under the cruel British penal system, and on the other, the usurpation of Aboriginal land by European settlers. This unresolved moral position is decidedly unsettling, and Carey’s (human) cockies, as well as other hybrid characters, negotiate the difficult question of home and belonging when the land at hand is not theirs and they no longer have a home to go back to. Animality hereby plays an important role for strategies of settlement that include the dissociation from the colonial homeland, an identification with indigenous animals, and an understanding of nationhood based upon introduced and naturalised animal practices.

The notion of being British in particular is resisted by the human-animal characters in *Illywhacker*, who bring disorder into imposed carceral narratives and the colonizing role of natural history. To do this, Carey's circensian space incongruously combines movement with the concept of Australia as a rigid taxonomic grid which separates, surveys, and controls different categories of animals. Pratt explains: "Natural history maps out . . . the internal 'contents' of those land and water masses whose spread made up the surface of the planet. These vast contents would be known . . . through verbal representations in turn summed up in nomenclatures, or through labeled grids into which entities would be placed" (30). Thus, rather than allowing themselves to be placed in their appropriate category (*Homo sapiens*), and staying in their designated part of the labelled grid, the hybrid characters appear to move from square to square, belonging to different categories at any given time, and blending with a variety of animals.

Accordingly, Herbert *Badgery* has a "dogfish soul" (342); Charles is "The Snake Boy" (402-3) with an "ape arm" (547), as well as being "bull-necked" (590); Phoebe's hybridity includes elements of being a cat (see 202) and a cow (see 160); Molly, too, is likened to a cat (see 23) and a dove (see 10, 47, 115); Leah is an emu (see 232-33), Nathan Schick has "a little goatee beard" (360), a licensee has "lizard-lidded eyes" (361); a fruit shop owner is "fox-faced" (488); the first names of Goog (who has butterfly ears) and Goose O'Hagan link them to poultry (59), Patrick O'Hare's name speaks for itself (61,66); and it is not a coincidence that the Rawleigh's Man's first name Horace sounds like "horse." The physical movement of the Badgerys' travelling animal show from town to town is thus mirrored by a conceptual movement of all hybridized characters through the taxonomic grid. Consequently, the grid is subverted from within through something resembling a game of hopscotch.

However, the hybrid's relation to place, defined rather as "not British" than "truly Australian," is ultimately unstable. Foucault points out that "[t]he fundamental codes of a culture—those governing its language, its schemas of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of its practices—establish for every man, from the very first, the empirical orders with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home" (*Order* xx). Yet, instead of inhabiting an order within which they are "at home," *Illywhacker's* hybrid characters are within a heteroclitic dimension, the site in which "things are 'laid', 'placed', 'arranged' in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a *common locus* beneath them all" (Foucault, *Order* xvii-iii). Carey's hybrids thus embody the clash and irreconcilability of different systems of representation that Slemon identifies as characteristic of postcolonial magical realism. Slemon proposes that, as a result of the irresolvable problem of reconciling the text with established and recognised systems of representation, such as hierarchical orderings, many postcolonial magical realist fictions characteristically demand "a kind of reading process in which the imagination becomes stimulated into summoning into being new and liberating 'codes of recognition'" (Slemon 421). Both in *Illywhacker* and *Gould's Book of Fish*, the idea of conceptual liberation from systems of thought and language correlates with the idea of physical liberation from carceral structures based on those thought systems, just as conceptual capture corresponds with physical capture. Embracing animality, as an embodied merger with other animals, offers the promise of that liberation.

Huggan, for instance, in his discussion of what he calls "monsters" in Carey's fictional works, presents an argument that complements Slemon's description of magical realism's liberating quality. He proposes that "[t]he monstrous body . . . becomes the site of ideological conflict, the place where different systems of values collide and intersect," whereby "the monster as hybrid" serves as "symbo[l] of possibility for a different future"

(Huggan, *Carey* 69).⁵⁶ His comment illustrates that hybrids are quintessential inhabitants of magical realism's circensian spaces. This is corroborated by Woodcock's description of Carey's hybrids as an expression of postcolonial experience in particular. He finds Homi Bhabha's "view of post-colonialism," which "rests on the transformational possibilities offered by the patchwork hybridity of the colonial experience," especially useful (Woodcock 12). Woodcock explains that Bhabha replaces "the binary model of a dominant centre and resistant margins in the colonial legacy" with

a process which sees the colonial experience as an interstitial, "in-between" experience, a matter of borderlands rather than fixed borderlines, "a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of a political object that is new, *neither one nor the other*, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very form of our recognition of the moment of politics". For Bhabha, this allows for a more subtle sense of the latent possibilities for infiltration, subversion and transformation of the supposedly dominant culture. (12, original italics)

Hybridity, here, is metaphorically described in terms of spatial transgressions ("borderlands," "place of hybridity," "infiltration"). In Carey's and Flanagan's respective novels, physical hybridity corresponds with the spatial movements characteristic of feral animals: by crossing spatial and conceptual boundaries, feral animals resist "domestication," a concept that denotes not only the attempt to gain control over nature here, but also the process of incorporating Australia as part of the British Empire, of making it part of the "homeland." In *Illywhacker* and *Gould's Book of Fish*, hybrids, like feral animals, are always out of place and on the move (which is precisely the quality—besides high reproductive rates—that makes so-called pests so difficult to control).

Thus, the difficulty of accommodating themselves in the gaps between imported European narratives and Australian reality is expressed by Leah, who tells Hissao “that she, for her part, was sick to death of trying to decide what it meant to be Australian” (*Illywhacker* 621). The “in-between experience” of “being neither one nor the other,” of belonging neither to Australia nor Europe, is discussed by Herbert and Leah. Leah tells him:

“This is *not* your place and never can be. . . . You think you can put up some shanty and that makes it your place, but you can’t, and it never will be. . . .

The matter is obvious. The land is stolen. The whole country is stolen. The whole nation is based on a lie which is that it was not already occupied when the British came here. If it is anybody’s place it is the blacks’. Does it *look* like your place? Does it *feel* like your place? Can’t you see, even the trees have nothing to do with you.” “This is my country,” I said quietly.

(*Illywhacker* 320-1)

However, shortly after this exchange, Herbert admits that “the landscape had, indeed, always seemed alien to me, that it made me, in many lights, melancholy and homesick for something else” (321). For Leah, this means that Australia cannot be home, a place of permanent belonging. She negotiates her presence in Australia by being “addicted to movement” and says: “I cannot stay still anywhere. It is not a country where you can rest. It is a black man’s country: sharp stones, rocks, sticks, bull ants, flies. We can only move around like tourists. The blackfeller can rest but we must keep moving” (337).

In *Gould’s Book of Fish*, the key to subversion lies also in movement, yet more explicitly in the idea of “escape,” which, like the Badgerys’ travels, is a process rather than the arrival at an absolute destination. Gould remarks: “The Pudding’s tastes, I was coming to realise, could never—no matter how hard I tried—be mine. He was a cracked system lacking only a subject, Dr Bowdler-Sharpe in search of yet one more egg to measure. He wanted to

be the ichthyologist, but I would rather have been the fish. His dreams were of capture, mine of escape” (52). Thus, Gould escapes definition, as well as the convict system, by transforming into a very strange, indigenous fish, who, in turn, is captured in an aquarium, which he again escapes by metamorphosing. The process is one of constant re-definition and re-identification. Similarly, after listening to Capois Death, a fellow convict, tell the stories of his mother, he “tried to imagine how it might be possible to fly as Capois Death’s ancestors once had; to levitate then fly far from Van Diemen’s Land’s chains & cockchafers by eating fish eyes & smearing a bird’s blood over my arms & leaping off a certain magic mountain, then diving into the sea & swimming as one with the fish until one was a fish” (94). More than escaping through the ability to fly like a bird through the air and swim like a fish under water, the imagined “flight” here is an escape through animality; this is an escape from carceral narratives as much as an escape from the actual prisons of the Empire.

Significantly, Gould temporarily manages to escape from the island with the help of Rolo Palmer, inventor of alternative natural histories, and the “somewhat tatty & partly mutilated 1628 Rotterdam edition of Philemon Holland’s first English translation of Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History*,” a book which describes “strange races” of people with animal characteristics and other nonhuman traits (344) and which “the Surgeon dismissed as superstitious claptrap written by an ignorant Roman” (151). Thus, as in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The House of the Spirits*, defiance of categories is offered through pre-Enlightenment bestiaries as well as animal agency. Gould comments that with his art and storytelling he is “shooting for freedom, nothing less, liberty,” and announces that therefore “I shall confine myself to no man’s rule” (*Gould’s Book* 106). He is “out of control” (106) and embraces the undefinability, the conceptual ferality of the fish he paints, in a statement which suggests that his art and his storytelling are inherently feral, an observation that also refers self-referentially to Flanagan’s use of magical realism to produce “liberating codes of

recognition.” Accordingly, Gould accuses “criticasters” of trying “to define me like the Surgeon does his sorry species, those cursed Linnaeans of the soul, trying to trap me in some new tribe of their own invention & definition. But I am William Buelow Gould, party of one, undefinable, and my fish will free me & I shall be free with them” (*GBF* 108).

This idea of escaping, or eluding, definition by embracing especially indigenous animality is grounded in the actual historical disruption of the Linnaean system by Australian animals such as the platypus and the kangaroo. Australia, at the moment of its “discovery” by Europeans, was already divided up into a taxonomic grid before it was even explored any further. As Pratt points out, Linnaean taxonomy was thought to be universally valid, and European explorers expected to find only what fitted already into their system. Pratt explains that natural history provided ways of knowing unknown spaces, “through verbal representations [...] summed up in nomenclatures, or through labeled grids into which entities would be placed” (30). Yet, as Harriet Ritvo writes, the very existence of some Australian animals proved to be so unexpected and subversive, “undermining the very categories that could not be stretched to accommodate them, as well as the principles on which those categories were based,” that a new category had to be conjured up to make room for the platypus, for example (*Platypus* 11). Representative of the European reaction to Australia at the time, the impression of the “first trained zoologist to land in Australia,” François Péron, is described by Ann Moyal: “[O]nce there, observing and describing, he found in the furred aquatic platypus, the pouched kangaroo, the reversely-coloured black swan and the fleet but flightless emu, inversions and contrarities of nature that challenged a rational explanation” (26).

Flanagan contrasts this superimposed Linnaean grid with a landscape that resembles those described by Pliny and inhabited by “strange races.” Thus, while Gould is on the run, Flanagan offers a vision of Tasmania as a “green immensity that went east for hundreds of

miles with only blacks & wild animals & wilder rivers & God-only-knew-what other monstrous races & creatures” (*Gould’s Book* 346). In *Illywhacker*, it is a conversation between Herbert Badgery and Jack that illustrates the resistance to European preconceptions and categories especially by Australian animals:

“The wheel,” Jack said, “seems an easy thing when you have it, but if you don’t have it then how would you ever know you needed it? Flying is an easier thing to imagine. You can see a magpie doing it. But tell me, Badgery[,] where is an animal, or bird, with *wheels*?” “There is a snake,” I said, “that makes itself into a wheel and chases you.” “Is that a fact now? In what country is that?” “In this country. A friend of mine was chased by one up at Jindabyne.” “There is no doubt,” Jack said, “that if an animal would do it in any country, this is the country for it.” (50, original italics)

Carey, moreover, makes an implicit and humorous reference to Barron Field, a nineteenth century English settler, lawyer,⁵⁷ and colonial poet, in Sid Goldstein’s telegram to Leah, who has joined a sideshow as an emu dancer: “TOO UPSET TOO UNWELL TO WRITE LIFE IS A BARREN FIELD. LOVE FATHER” (*Illywhacker* 297).⁵⁸ Barron Field’s poem “The Kangaroo” celebrates the “contradiction” of Australia’s “chimera,” whom he considers to have the characteristics of a squirrel and a deer (Field ll.17, 26). “British naturalists” at home, however, were, as Moyal writes, “inclined to indulge a lofty view of the Colonies—of monotremes, marsupials and men. They perceived Australia as ‘a faunal backwater’, a kind of ‘zoological penal colony’, and [...] viewed Antipodean aberrations and inversions as a taunt to the hard-won truths of European science” (67). In contrast, Carey and Flanagan adopt this portrayal of Australia and present a positive identification particularly with indigenous Australian animals. Like Field’s kangaroo, Australian hybrids and animals in *Illywhacker* and *Gould’s Book of Fish* embody the “Spirit of Australia” (Field l.2).

Therefore, to elude capture within the walls of definition created by imperial power structures, to dissociate themselves from being British and, furthermore, in order to connect with Australia itself as home, one has to become a different kind of animal, Carey and Flanagan suggest.

However, at the same time, Pliny's *Natural History* dies a symbolic death, as it is pierced by the sword of the island's clerk Jorgen Jorgensen in Flanagan's novel (*Gould's Book* 333). Jorgensen creates the island's "universe" and reality by keeping records in which "every detail . . . was augmented & qualified & tabulated" (320), and who "reinvent[s] all that barbarity & horror of our settlement as order & progress, material, moral & spiritual" (*Gould's Book* 318). Gould's narrative is thus ultimately carceral, as "human fish" keep ending up in aquariums and "fishy humans" in cells. Likewise, Carey places emphasis on the carceral quality of Herbert Badgery's narrative, as all of the Australian nation is entrapped in *The Best Pet Shop in the World*. Thus, the Australian magical realist circus, for all its mockery, remains, like the actual commercial travelling animal show, ultimately carceral, too. In this, the Australian circensian space differs from the Latin American heterotopia in García Márquez's and Allende's novels, which is constructed as a kind of free-range circus, where extraordinary hybrids of all kinds, such as Allende's Rosa and Alba, parade themselves as part of everyday reality. They are not confined to extraordinary spaces and spectacles, but they occupy all spaces and spheres of life in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The House of the Spirits*. This reality, however, engages with pre-Linnaean explorer narratives and medieval bestiaries as the defining epistemology, since Europeans "discovered" Latin America before the Linnaean taxonomy was ever devised, and natural histories included fabulous beasts at the time.

Accordingly, though García Márquez and Allende write, like Carey and Flanagan, in historical terms from the context of, and about, a post-Linnaean era, their magical realism

flaunts and celebrates a pre-Linnaean reality, which is not imposed upon, captured, defined and catalogued by Linnaean taxonomy. On the contrary, García Márquez demonstrates in *Love in the Time of Cholera* that it is Linnaean taxonomy which is contained, even marginalized, as Fermina Daza frames “color illustrations from Linnaeus’s *Natural History*” and hangs them “on the drawing room walls” (23). The Linnaean system is acknowledged, but not overpowering and all-pervasive. Australian reality, in contrast, can be considered post-Linnaean: pre-defined, influenced and shaped by Linnaean natural history from the moment of European contact. In consequence, Australia’s inhabitants of European descent, who cannot situate themselves outside of the system but resist identifying with the carceral narratives of Great Britain, a place they no longer call “home,” seek to accommodate themselves in between its categories. Thus, whereas Latin American magical realism subverts Linnaean taxonomy from the outside, by means of pre-Linnaean European epistemology, Australian magical realism destabilizes the system from within, as its characters keep moving, keep escaping and keep metamorphosing.

Animal Products: Pastoral Myths and the Naturalisation of Settlement

The result of these physical and conceptual movements is an unsettledness, an uneasy awareness of not actually owning the land on the one hand, and not fitting in with the “empirical orders” of Europe, to use Foucault’s term, on the other. In consequence, when finding a home within empirical—and imperial—order is not possible, Carey’s and Flanagan’s characters negotiate ideas of “nationhood” and “belonging” through an identification with, and transformation into, indigenous animals. The rejection of European Enlightenment epistemology (especially in the form of the classification of animals) and the simultaneous alignment with indigenous Australian animals are thus part of the process of approaching one of the central questions posed by both novels, and addressed by Leah in

Illywhacker; that is, the question of what it means to be Australian. *Illywhacker* in particular illustrates the construction of Australianness through stories and histories that naturalise the presence of settler society and represent it as practically indigenous through its relationship with nature.

Herbert is the character who is most vocal about his identification as Australian, yet right from the beginning, his exposure as "illywhacker" (a confidence man) indicates that his stories must be considered with scepticism. Accordingly, Huggan observes that Herbert's make-shift buildings and the "temporary structure[s]," which are "built on land stolen from its original inhabitants," are a comment on Australian nationhood:

Like the Pet Emporium, like Australia itself, [Herbert's camp] is based on a lie of rightful ownership. Australia—Aboriginal land—has been claimed and built on by white settlers. But the Pet Emporium—"Australia's own"—is controlled, in turn, by foreign interests. In each case, the edifice is false or it is built on unstable foundations. It offers only the illusion of permanence, definition, protection. In reality, the structure, like the idea(s) it represents, is inherently flawed and fragile. (*Carey* 41)

Ironically, it is precisely the idea of a "temporary structure" that provides Herbert with the means to negotiate the feeling of dislocation through his identification with bower-birds, an indigenous Australian species. According to Huggan, *Illywhacker* "presents an allegory of Australian nation-building" (*Carey* 47). Thus, Herbert creates a "home" through telling his story, an "archi/textual edifice," to borrow Lobe's term, and, like bower-bird males who build "temporary structures" for nesting and adorn them with blue objects of every description, Herbert, too, embellishes his story with blue items of various kinds. He frequently refers to bower-birds, such as "the famous regent bower-bird" in Charles' pet shop, "which is trained to dig sapphires" (*Illywhacker* 521), reminding the reader of the importance of the bird's

behaviour as a model for his storytelling.⁵⁹ Herbert explicitly identifies himself with the bird when he builds a makeshift house for Phoebe (see *Illywhacker* 162), and he also tries to set up a temporary home in the McGrath's house by constructing a lie as a bower-bird builds his nest. He says: "I was an Aviator. That was my value to them. I set to work to reinforce this value. I propped it up and embellished it a little. God damn, I danced around it like a bloody bower-bird putting on a display. I added silver to it. I put small blue stones around it" (27).

The "small blue stones" he lays out for his reader throughout the narrative are, as a bower-bird's collection, varied and random, such as "a plate with a blue rim" (*Illywhacker* 414), Leah's "pleasantly faded blue-checked shirt" (616), Emma's "baby's blue bunny rug" (499), the vein on Henry Underhill's forehead, which "take[s] on the appearance of a small blue worm" (461), "a bright blue lambswool cover" (566), Emma's "blue patent handbag" (601), a "big blue" bruise on Molly's "backside" looking "[l]ike a map of Tasmania" (72), "assembled pieces of blue paper" (435), "a vivid blue-white neon" light (604), "a blue book with unlined pages" (578), "a little blue dress" (579), "[b]lue curtains with puckered hems" (380), "bright blue creatures" who temporarily inhabit Herbert's ever-changing Vegemite bottle (435), "the blue shimmer of eucalyptus bush" (578) and "the cobalt blue sky above" (14), for example.

Blue is the first colour mentioned in the story, and one of the two dominant colours in Herbert's narrative. He stresses the importance and centrality of the colour blue by inextricably linking it to his sense of self at the beginning of his story: "It's a blessing my eyes are as good as they are and with all my other vanity gone this one remains: my eyes. I speak not of their efficiency, but of their colour, which is the same colour, that clear sapphire blue, which illuminated my father's pale-skinned face" (4). Herbert emphasises these eyes "which I so much admire in myself" (4), and near the end of his story he reminds us again that he is "Herbert Badgery, a blue-eyed illywhacker" (620). Thus, feigning "blue-eyed"

innocence at the same time as he admits he is a swindler, Herbert audaciously creates his own indigeneity through verbal trickery: his eyes are, supposedly, evidence that he is Australian because they are amongst the blue objects of a bower-bird's structure, created by himself, who is shown to be Australian by the narrative he creates and the way in which he creates it.

Accordingly, his argument that Australia is "his" country rests on tautology. He is Australian because the object of the narrative (that is, Herbert's Australianness) and the way the narrative is told (by Herbert, in an Australian fashion, so to speak) reinforce each other. However, Herbert is "true blue" (320), as Leah sarcastically comments, towards an idea of Australianness which, however, is not "grounded" in any physical and cultural connection to the land and its people, but which is as fragile as the temporary structures of bower-birds. He thus demonstrates how an idea of the nation and of its nationals is constructed through language, through stories and histories about being Australian, and by connecting with nonhuman animals as representatives of Australian nature and as natural inhabitants of the continent.

Thus, whilst his Australianness is implied within the narrative structure, Herbert also announces it explicitly through an identification with an indigenous snake, his "pet" (20), whom he shows to some guests: "This . . . is a true Australian.' . . . 'This snake,' I explained, 'has been in gaol. It is a mean bastard of an animal and it cannot be bought.' 'What are you trying to say?' . . . 'I'm trying to say I'm an Australian'" (141). Once again, Herbert *speaks* his Australianness into existence by connecting the snake's story with settler Australia's convict history and, by extension, with himself as its descendant. Correspondingly, later on, he describes himself, in a positive light, as a snake: "By November 1934 I was a different man. . . . I was an old python with his opaque skin now shed, his blindness gone, once again splendid and supple, seeing the world in all its terrifying colours" (352). Herbert's identification with an indigenous animal is an attempt to legitimate, or "ground," his claim to

Australia as his home, an assertion emphasised by the fact that snakes live their lives physically and directly connected to the land.

Moreover, this alignment with native animals is a rejection of the notion that he, himself, is a member of an introduced species. Therefore, at the same time as he is “uncoiling [his] long bowed legs” like a snake (135), he positions himself as “a different animal to the Cocky Abbots” (132), the local farmers, who, in his opinion, are out of place and consequently not true Australians. He says: “‘The rabbit has no place in this country The things that will ruin this country are things like the rabbit.’ The things that I had in mind were the Oswald-Smiths and the Cocky Abbots” (135), whom he considers “Imaginary Englishmen” (126). Likewise, his son Charles creates *The Best Pet Shop in the World* “in accordance with his dream which was . . . an expression of the purest patriotism—pure Australiana—definitely no bunny rabbits or pussy cats no matter how tearfully his little boys begged him” (507). Carey thus illustrates that the respective adoption or rejection of particular kinds of animality are fundamentally important for the self-image of Australian settler society.

John Morton and Nicholas Smith illuminate this issue and point out that “[f]eral species . . . now carry an enormous burden in the symbolic economy of nationalism” (159). They discuss the representation of introduced pest animals as “un-Australian” (154), a cultural narrative that is one of “the many possible recipes for being ‘truly Australian’” (155). Catharina Landström, correspondingly, describes the role biological control promotions play as a means to advance certain ideas of “what it means to be Australian” (211-12). The construction of an “Australian rabbit story” in particular, in which rabbits, introduced by an Englishman and representing “an autonomous agent acting against humanity and against native Australian animals and plants,” is a way of distancing contemporary Australian settler society from English colonisation (Landström 205).

However, as Herbert's slight of the Cocky Abbots suggests, and as Nicholas Gill and Kay Anderson show, pastoral farming is itself a reinforcement of European colonisation, as well as classical-humanist ideals, by which land is transformed—and supposedly improved—from a state of wilderness towards what is perceived as civilised patterns of use, that is, the production of commodities. They argue that

[t]he key process by which this is achieved is through ordering Central Australia's landscape by the labour of pastoralists and their stock, and through processes of remembering that entwine settlers, stock, land, soil, rainfall and plants to produce civilised landscapes. Wild nature, and with it, the indigene, are displaced, or at least accommodated, as what is imagined to be the true potential, the good, of the land is realised through the labour of the settlers.

(Gill and Anderson)

Pastoral settlement is thus supposedly indigenised in contrast to introduced species. Gill and Anderson show that “[p]astoralists reigned in wildness by naturalising their cattle within the landscape and giving them a status of belonging on a par with native fauna.” Accordingly, the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association think of themselves as “caretakers of the land” who “recognise [their] special responsibility” of “protecting and preserving” the land “for generations to come,” and, in their “Cattle Producers' Creed,” state ceremoniously: “We respect our rich heritage, and we embrace a way of life that is integral to Australia's unique spirit and cultural identity.” The premises of this declaration—such as the presence of farmers for the good of the land, land occupation that is rooted historically within the land and legitimately continued into the future, the statement of the cattle farmers' presence as fact rather than as a potentially problematic political and social issue, and the proclamation of an intimate connection between farming and “unique” Australianness—are examples of the mythical, “depoliticized speech” described by Roland Barthes (155).⁶⁰

Barthes defines Myth as a “type of speech,” whereby “everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse” (117). The unquestioned assumptions of the animal industry lobby groups featured here demonstrate the process of Myth making which Barthes explains as follows:

In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, . . . it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves. (156)

Carey illustrates this process at work in Herbert’s announcement “I’m an Australian,” which is meant, in the presence of the imprisoned snake, as a self-evident declaration of an Australianness that Herbert, however, struggles to explain. His Australianness, which relies on imagery, storytelling, and a close association with nonhuman animals who themselves have no interest whatsoever in Australianness or otherwise, ultimately lacks substance in itself, at the same time as historical complexities are passed over. This kind of speech is also reflected in Meat and Livestock Australia’s description of pastoral settlement as settlers “learn[ing] to manage their new environment” (“A Brief History”). The “new environment” is thus transformed into a homeland through farming, whilst there is an unquestioned assumption that this environment is also “theirs” to begin with. The impression given is that the first generation of settlers took their place in an ecological niche that was already waiting for them. Consequently, farming comes to be regarded and represented as a quintessentially Australian activity.

Thus, the politically and historically loaded statements of Meat and Livestock Australia and the Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association appear not only self-evident, but also completely innocent. As Barthes writes, “myth is experienced as innocent speech:

not because its intentions are hidden—if they were hidden, they could not be efficacious—but because they are naturalized” (142). The intentions are clear: settler farmers, cattle producers in this case, lay claim to the land historically, now, and in the future, displacing any notion of Aboriginal ownership, as much as Aborigines were removed physically from the land and their communities. The ideals and idealised versions of history propounded by the meat and dairy producers’ lobby groups are examples of the conviction described by Gill and Anderson in relation to Central Australia: “For pastoralists, cattle belong to an authentic nature, they are part of an authentic Central Australian nature; that which was proto-pastoral and which is now fully pastoral.” Farmed landscape and the animal practices that define it thus provide the mythic imagery that signifies the origins of nationhood, and farmers are regarded as the embodiment of the nation itself.

Both Carey and Flanagan question the idea of a natural connection with the land and thus a quasi-indigenised settler population who legitimately occupy the land as if it were an ecological niche made for their arrival. Consequently, as the settler Australians in *Illywhacker* have a troubled relationship with the land, they, too, attempt to occupy alternative spaces. Woodcock writes that “[i]n Peter Carey’s world, we are all creatures of the shadow lands. His fictions explore the experiences lurking in the cracks of normality, and are inhabited by hybrid characters living in in-between spaces on the margins” (1). Thus, the Australians in *Illywhacker*, as in *Gould’s Book of Fish*, are not only characterised by hybridity, the state of being in between human and nonhuman animals, but also by the “in-between spaces on the margins” they inhabit. In *Illywhacker*, this space is the air. As Huggan argues: “One of Herbert Badgery’s many attempts to claim a future for Australia is through the setting up of a ‘genuinely Australian’ aircraft industry” (*Carey* 47), and, significantly, Herbert, who has already identified himself as a “bower-bird,” builds the home for himself and Phoebe out of “the spare wing sections that had come with the Morris

Farman” (*Illywhacker* 162). At the same time, Herbert’s comment on the land he built the house on, “I found my land, and took it . . .” (160), indicates the illegitimacy of this act. Through aviation, Carey provides a way of removing Herbert from land he has no right to claim. It is therefore also fitting that Herbert finds himself metaphorically “in mid-air” (135).

Aviation, moreover, is directly linked with animality. In connection with Jack and Herbert’s discussion about snakes who can turn themselves into wheels, Jack comments that Australia is not only the country for such strange animals, but that “[i]t is the country for the aeroplane as well,” as though aeroplanes were themselves a type of animal (*Illywhacker* 50). Correspondingly, pilots are represented as birds, as Herbert points out: “When the press wrote up a pilot he wasn’t just a pilot; he was an ‘eagle soaring above our skies’” (29-30), and aviation, claiming the air as a human space, becomes a heroic national endeavour. As the narrator says: “They were eyries, the birthplaces of the great. Australians, it seemed that night in Western Avenue, were born to rule the skies. We drank a toast: ‘To our eagles’” (30-1).

In *Gould’s Book of Fish*, similarly, Gould finds he cannot connect with the land, nor can he connect with the indigenous culture, even though Towtereh’s daughter (derogatively called “Twopenny Sal”), offers him this bond when she paints him with red earth mixed with her own saliva during a funeral rite for Tracker Marks, an Aboriginal tracker:

As she rubbed the ochre in she stared at me, as though I were some long lost friend, as if I were her man, her brother, her father, her sons, all the other people who had preceded Tracker Marks, for whom she had rubbed ochre on her face & charcoal on her body to mourn as one by one they had perished of colds & smallpox & the clap & musket shot, as if we shared something that transcended our bodies & our histories & our futures, & as if by marking me

so with red ochre I might somehow also know something about all this.

(*Gould's Book* 370)

However, he finds that “with the daubings of death and life on my face & the secret mysteries of which they spoke, I only sensed that I knew none of it” (370). Gould fails to connect with the woman, who, like all characters in the narrative, is revealed to be a fish, but who, unlike the other characters, is a fish of the land, so to speak, as “her hair had been remade with a thick pomade of red ochre & grease, fashioned into overlapping scales like those of a fish. The children were similarly naked and similarly decorated” (366). Her appearance as a fish of red earth represents her connectedness with and belonging to the land, which contrasts with Gould’s feelings of being out of place and incapable of understanding her story and her suffering. Thus, unable to be a “fish of the earth” despite the woman’s invitation, it is his metamorphosis into the Weedy Seadragon that allows him to find a place in Australia.

Accordingly, throughout Gould’s narrative, European culture is associated with water and the sea. For example, Gould believes Sarah Island to be “not a colony of men at all, but a colony of fish masquerading as men” (*Gould's Book* 281), and wonders whether “some effect of the southern light is making me see men as fish everywhere” (252). Just as Carey’s story mimics a bower-bird’s nest and a pet shop, Flanagan thus creates an aquarium of sorts, a space where his hybrid fish are collected and assembled. As Sid Hammet explains: “My desire was only ever to make a vessel—however crude—in which all Gould’s fish might be returned to the sea” (34). This “vessel” is described as “a charming kaleidoscope of changing views” (16), much like an aquarium full of colourful fish. Correspondingly, Gould’s book is characterised by “wetness” throughout the narrative, as it “teemed with words as the ocean did fish, and these schools of words formed a chronicle that explained the curious genesis of the pictures” (27). Furthermore, Sid Hammet describes how, “[a]s I drew to its conclusion the pages first grew damp beneath my fingers, then wet, and finally, . . . I had the inexplicable

sense that I was now reading words written at the very bottom of the ocean” (29). Not only is the book “wet,” but so is the landscape of the colony, which is characterised by constant rain (see 200-1, 280).

Ultimately, Gould recognises that his place is neither England nor the Australian landscape, but the sea, the space between Europe and the Australian continent. By suggesting the sea and the air may be appropriate “niches” for their characters, Carey and Flanagan submit a new version of settler-Australianness, which neither claims ownership of the land, nor does it pretend there are no historical injustices, or that colonisation is a natural process and an improvement on wild nature. Indeed, the kind of animality into which the characters in both novels transform is far from domesticated. Even where there is an association with farmed or “useful animals,”⁶¹ the blurring of human-animal boundaries precludes domestication; mastery over nature—or compliance of the animals in question—may be physically enforced by carceral systems, but it is never achieved conceptually.

On the contrary, the idea that settlers enhance and develop a domesticated nature is further subverted in Carey’s novel by the figure of Les Chaffey, a farmer described as “a man with a dictionary on his shelf, a map of the world on his wall, a habit of poking at things with a fork or a screwdriver when they interested him” (*Illywhacker* 402) and who displays his “trophies from the rifle club” (438). Surrounded by icons of the British Empire, Les Chaffey embodies the connection between science, farming and imperial expansion. The humanist ideals underlying these practices are resisted by Australian nature itself, as “[t]he earth had been ploughed and seeded twice but the expensive seed had never germinated and the paddocks, the subject of mortgages and other substantial documents, were drifting like bad dreams in the wind” (400). Carey ironises and complicates the supposed dichotomy between introduced “pest” species and Australian farmers, as Les Chaffey is as European as it gets, and his efforts are thwarted by a combined resistance of Australian nature and introduced

mice, who “ate all the books. . . . They ate all his plough drawings too” (442). Les Chaffey’s situation is clearly at odds with the idea that farmers represent “pure Australiana.”

Illywhacker is thus a reaction to the popular link between rural society and the animal practices on which it is predominantly founded and the idea of the nation itself. As Meat and Livestock Australia, an industry lobby group, puts it, “[m]eat and livestock production is an industry that has developed hand in hand with Australia’s growth as a nation and it will continue to play an important role in the 21st Century” (“Paddock to Plate”).⁶² Notably, the emphasis here is on the nation itself and as a whole, rather than on the nation’s economy. Carey engages with the significance of animal industries for the perception and development of nationhood by depicting animal products as omnipresent, pervasive and essentially Australian. Accordingly, he describes Ballarat as “made from wool” (96), whilst “wool-bound Geelong” (84) is characterised, in addition, by the presence of pigs who “sum up everything Phoebe hates about Geelong” (5). Phoebe, moreover, is associated with dairy products, as Herbert describes her “creamy skin” (20, 30), her “creamy shape” (40), her “milky neck” (41), and as he draws attention to her eating “a dish of vanilla ice-cream” (123). Cream and milk are linked with the colour yellow, as Molly “heat[s] up some milk” for Charles (345), which is “yellow with cream” and which “wrinkles its yellow face” (348-9).

Yellow is the other dominant colour throughout the narrative, which is mirrored, for example, in Phoebe’s “bright yellow flying suit” (162) and the tannery’s “yellow dusk” (348), a reference that precedes not only Charles’ yellow-creamed milk, but also Molly’s “cream dress” (349) and the “cream-rose” in “her gold-dyed hair” (350). Indeed, dairy products and gold are closely connected, not only by being two shades of the same colour, but also, implicitly, through Leah Goldstein, who is also associated with yellow (see 393 and 415) and whose family name literally means “golden stone.” Using yellow to signify dairy products thus links the industry with the prosperity of gold mining, and Carey thus indicates

the profitability and importance of dairy farming for the Australian economy. Moreover, the pervasive presence of dairy products throughout the narrative, referred to either literally, metaphorically or through the colour yellow, suggests the importance of dairy farming and milk products as markers of settler Australian space and identity.

However, whilst the connection between animal industries in general and the idea of the Australian nation is very significant, meat production and consumption remains the ultimate signifier for Australianness. It will not do, for example, to consume eggs and milk products as part of a vegetarian diet, as a current Meat and Livestock Australia campaign makes abundantly clear. The Australia Day and, most recently, “Australia Week” commercials featuring local celebrity Sam Kekovich are designed to promote the consumption of lambs as an inherently Australian activity. In part, this is achieved by presenting it as an unquestioned given that eating lambs epitomises Australianness. However, to complement this premise, the refusal to eat lambs is portrayed, conversely, as “un-Australian.”⁶³ Thus, whilst the commercials are meant to be humorous, their polemical tone reveals and reinforces the deep-seated stereotypes and prejudice against anyone who does not conform to predominant animal practices. Vegetarians are constructed—only half-jokingly—as “placard-waving, police-bashing, weed-worshippers” who may be “too un-Australian to chomp a few chops with the rest of us” (Kekovich qtd. in Meat and Livestock Australia, “Australia Week 2008”). The series of commercials suggest that vegetarians are somehow “foreign” and may need to be shown “the way to the airport” (Kekovich qtd. in Meat and Livestock Australia, “Australia Day 2005 Commercial”). Kekovich and Meat and Livestock Australia, to borrow William Buelow Gould’s definition of swindling, are “confirming preconceptions” as they construct their version of what being Australian means.⁶⁴

Many Australians appear to identify with the commercials. Meat and Livestock Australia states: “Since his first tongue-in-cheek address to the nation in 2005 Sam Kekovich’s Australia Day campaigns have continued to strike a chord with Australians. The week leading up to Australia Day continues to be the biggest trading period for lamb each year . . .” (“Sam Kekovich - Eat Lamb and Fix the Economy”). Herbert Badgery’s announcement to readers that he will not sign “your protest letter about the battery hens” can be seen in this context (*Illywhacker* 275). In view of Kekovich’s call “If you still call Australia ‘home,’ stack the fridge full of lamb!” (“Australia Week 08”), it makes sense that Herbert is averse to criticising any Australian animal industry. From such a perspective, signing such a petition is tantamount to fouling his own nest, so to speak, and would put Herbert, who is proudly Australian, on a par with “un-Australian,” “hairy-legged . . . lentil eaters” (Meat and Livestock Australia, “Australia Day 2007 Commercial”). Notably, neither Leah, who feels rather disconnected from the idea of Australianness, nor Hissao, who is inexplicably Japanese, eat anything from the “famous five-bob barbecues” of a Sydney beer garden “redolent with burning meat and alive with the small blue flashes of burning chop fat” (*Illywhacker* 620-1), a space defined even by its smell as essentially Australian.

In contrast to Leah and Hissao, Goon Tse Ying uses meat as a means to become Australian, as he is described as “a man driven by a desire to prove himself civilized to the English he despised. . . . He joined Chinese-Australian associations and had grandchildren with names like Heather and Walter. He ate chops and sausages, roast beef on Sundays, and the only invisibility he would acknowledge was that which comes from dressing like everyone else” (*Illywhacker* 216). Annette Davidson, Phoebe’s lover, who values all things European, identifies meat-eating as an Australian characteristic, too: “Annette, as usual, was disgusted by the Australian habit of consuming large quantities of lamb, great slabs of dead dark meat smothered in near-black gravy. She scorned her knife and picked moodily at her

shepherd's pie with fork alone" (152). Accordingly, other characters consume large quantities of meat and dairy products. Molly McGrath eats "a breakfast of steak, chops, bacon, fried bread and eggs" (155), and Leah cooks Charles "a big breakfast with grilled sausages, steak, kidney, onions, eggs, chops, buttered toast, cups of tea" (414). Herbert describes this as a "monstrous meal," and adds that "[s]he probably cooked him fried bread and liver as well" (414, 417). Furthermore, butchers are literally an everyday presence as Emma "begged a calendar from the butcher's" (475),⁶⁵ and "all around [Leah] people worry about sausages" (322). Carey thus reflects not only the importance of meat for the national economy,⁶⁶ but his novel illustrates that Australian settler society constructs much of its national identity from the use and consumption of animals. To be Australian is to eat meat and vice versa. Indeed, the nation itself, in this version of Australianness, is a product of animal industries.

Meat thus "unites" the nation, a narrative perpetuated by Kekovich, who, in a parody of Martin Luther King, claims that it is his "dream that lamb could unite Australians of all colours and creeds" (qtd. in *Meat and Livestock Australia*, "Australia Day 2007 Commercial"). Similarly, Landström argues that "[i]n all of their different roles in biological control stories animals serve to articulate Australian nature as a primary cultural value in a way that produces the nation as unified" (212). Presenting a "unified" nation on the basis of Western animal practices, however, glosses over cultural differences and social inequalities, and delegates not only historical injustices, but also their effects on contemporary populations firmly to the past, an attitude expressed by Sid Hammet in *Gould's Book of Fish*: "Once upon a time terrible things happened, but it was long ago in a far-off place that everyone knows is not here or now or us" (5).

As Landström points out, "human practices are backgrounded and conflicts made to disappear in the struggle against a foreign nature that threatens to corrupt Australia" (211-12).

She refers, in particular, to the effect of agriculture on the environment, whereby environmental problems are blamed on “unnatural nature,” that is, introduced pest species, whilst farming, in conjunction with biological control research, is seen as promoting solutions (Landström 207). As Landström writes, “agriculture is not depicted to be in any way responsible for the degradation of native environments. Agriculture and nature are both represented as victims of historical mistakes and powerful pest organisms” (207). Gill and Anderson comment, too, on the “relative silence in pastoral discourses” about the fact that cattle and sheep have the same or a similar impact on native environments that feral rabbits have.⁶⁷ *Illywhacker*, however, highlights environmental degradation caused by animal industries connected to pastoral farming. Thus, there are descriptions of the “the rank foul smell that came drifting from the abattoirs” (164), “the yellow dusk and the white smoke from the tannery” (348), the pollution of the Maribyrnong, which “is, in places, a pretty river, but as it snakes down through Flemington and pushes through the flats to the bay it is neglected and dirty, enriched by the effluent from the Footscray abattoirs” (160). From these abattoirs emanates the “stink of rendering sheep boiling into tallow” (165), and Phoebe’s family, looking for picnic spots, avoid any river “with the constant risk of dead heifers just a mile upstream” (11). Such imagery contrasts with the Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association representation of contemporary animal farming as producing food “the way nature intended” and thus as an integral part of Australian nature.

However, the naturalising of agriculture and the unifying of an Australian nation, positioned alongside indigenous nonhuman animals and in conflict with “alien invaders,”⁶⁸ also obscures the connection between animal farming and Aboriginal dispossession, and implicitly legitimates settlement and its history. Indeed, the Meat and Livestock Australia commercials featuring Sam Kekovich illustrate this further. Despite Kekovich’s “dream,” settler Australians are not only by far the dominant group featured in the commercials and

posters of the campaign, but there is also a notable absence of any reference to Aboriginal culture or populations.⁶⁹ Aborigines, it appears, are not part of what Kekovich's or Meat and Livestock Australia deem to be the epitome of Australianness.

Carey draws attention to the marginalisation and silencing of stories that contradict or compromise the image of a unified nation built upon naturalised, innocent and heroic settlement. Huggan comments that “[i]n *Illywhacker*, Australian nationhood is built on false foundations; it is an imaginary construct based on the lie of peaceful occupation. The allegory of Australia's development into an ‘independent’ nation is similarly founded on lies, strategic theft, and crooked salesmanship” (*Carey* 47). Such distortions are not only founded on what is said, but also on what is not said. Meat and Livestock Australia, for example, make reference to the achievements of the meat industry in Australia since 1788, hailing “the spirit of the nation's early pioneers” (“Paddock to Plate”), and employ euphemisms to describe a process of colonisation that resulted in death, suffering and dispossession of Aboriginal populations. They write: “Further exploration found more land suitable for raising stock . . .” (Meat and Livestock Australia, “A Brief History”). The two simple words “further exploration” cloak the fact that pastoral settlement entailed, for example, theft of land and violent clashes with and displacement and exploitation of Aboriginal populations.⁷⁰ Carey contrasts this representation of history with the “Footscray abattoirs” in Herbert's neighbourhood (*Illywhacker* 160) and the nearby tannery (see 348), both industries that processes animals and which are built on land that, as Phoebe announces bluntly, is “stolen” (320).

The juxtaposition between official or dominant versions of history and the felt experiences of history by those usually left out of or marginalised by those accounts is an effect of circensian dynamics that exposes the “gaps, absences, and silences,” to use Slemon's phrase again, in the former and increases visibility or perception of the latter, as

both versions have equal weight in the narrative. Kafka yet again provides a model for this in his narrative “Auf der Galerie,” a short piece that contrasts the misery of an ailing circus equestrian on a “swaying” horse and terrorised by the ringmaster and his whip with the illusion of a beautiful lady and a caring ringmaster (60, my translation).⁷¹ On the surface, the first, gloomy version is represented as false, but it is suggested that if it were true, audience members might intervene to stop the sorry spectacle. Even though this is dismissed, and the second, glamorous account presented as true, the priority given to the first version, the recurring insistence that the second version is true, and the fact that the horse is shivering undermine and ironise the credibility of that claim.

The suggestion is that the second version is the one spectators want or care to see and therefore accept as reality. They do not intervene and are, moreover, moved to tears at the end of the show as if in a “ponderous dream”; they cry “without knowing,” an ambiguous statement that undercuts their unquestioned acceptance of the glitzy show they are presented with (Kafka, “Auf der Galerie” 61-2, my translation).⁷² Karl Brinkmann reports, in relation to “Auf der Galerie,” that “[t]he opposition of real misery and superficial glamour in the circus” was “a subject of avid interest” among expressionist writers (47, my translation).⁷³ Correspondingly, Woodcock argues that *Illywhacker* “reveal[s] a hidden history beneath the surface ‘show’” (71). This approach is indeed reflected not only in *Illywhacker*, but also in *Gould’s Book of Fish*. I propose that in both novels the perception of “real misery,” obscured by prevalent, more convenient, desirable or marketable accounts, is facilitated by empathy, another anti-Cartesian strategy employed by Carey and Flanagan to dismantle the foundational tenets of colonial settlement.

Animal Writing: Empathy and the Unsettling of the Nation

Flanagan comments on the political and social climate in the past decade up until the very recent and momentous “Apology to Australia’s Indigenous Peoples” issued by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on 13 February 2008. Before then,

[i]n 1995 the Paul Keating Labor government commissioned an inquiry into the forcible removal of Aboriginal children. But by the time the report was tabled in 1997, John Howard’s Liberal party—widely seen in its early days to have had truck with a racist far right—was in government, and empathy for the dispossessed was in short supply.” (Flanagan, “An Invitation”)

It is in this wider context, which Flanagan describes as being characterised by “jingoistic nationalism,” former Prime Minister John Howard’s refusal “to condone what he referred to as ‘a black armband version’ of history,” and Howard’s promotion of “a revisionist school of history that claimed the suffering of Aboriginal Australia had been grossly overstated” (“An Invitation”), that *Gould’s Book of Fish* was written.

Gould’s Book of Fish is a response to this lack of compassion, and highlights the need for empathy, especially in the processes and practices involved in the representation of others through art or science. *Illywhacker*, too, is concerned with empathy as a means to address historical and contemporary injustices which mar the foundation of the Australian nation, and focuses on seemingly inconspicuous practices and animal products in order to show that not only the nation’s history, but also the fabric of everyday life is pervaded by hidden, unacknowledged or deliberately ignored cruelty. The suffering of others, Carey’s novel suggests, is decidedly *understated* in a wider social context. Both authors create an empathic awareness in order to dismantle the narratives that conveniently cloud aspects of Australia’s history such as those Prime Minister Rudd has called “uncomfortable things to be brought out into the light,” “not pleasant” and “profoundly disturbing” (2). Empathy, the ability to

imagine the position, feelings, thoughts and experience of another, and to accept the other as same or similar, is the means by which injustices and pain caused to others can be recognised and acknowledged; a capacity that, Flanagan's comment suggests, was lacking in a nation for which the denial of historical practices and responsibility for contemporary social ills has been expedient for so long.⁷⁴

This may raise the question of why empathy towards nonhuman animals should matter in the context of human dispossession and exploitation. In *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery*, Marjorie Spiegel makes a compelling case for the parallels between racism and speciesism and proposes that “as divergent as the cruelties and the supporting systems of oppression may be, there are commonalities between them. They share the same basic essence, they are built around the same basic relationship—that between oppressor and oppressed” (28). She points out that speciesism often forms the basis for oppression of human beings and argues that “any oppression helps to support other forms of domination” (Spiegel 30). Both *Illywhacker* and *Gould's Book of Fish* illuminate the fact that structures and mechanisms of oppression are the same or similar, regardless of whether the victim is human or nonhuman, indigenous or non-indigenous. In *Gould's Book of Fish*, this is made transparent especially by the pickled heads of Aborigines and the connection between natural history, phrenology, and the convict system, whilst Carey illustrates the link particularly strongly in a scene that shows Leah being sexually abused by Mervyn Sullivan, who coerces her into having sex in exchange for a job as a dancer in an emu costume (see *Illywhacker* 290-93). Leah, in addition to being a woman and a Jew, represents several instances of subalternity, as her emu costume also signifies indigeneity and animality. The latter is reinforced by the fact that Leah finds herself “spread out across a desk and making tiny bird-sounds” during the abuse (*Illywhacker* 293). Leah embodies all of these marginalised groups, which are exploited by the same oppressor.

Moreover, the scene is set by Sullivan, “a bully and a bastard” (*Illywhacker* 293), sitting “hunched over a metal wastepaper basket, his left hand on his chest, carefully keeping his silk tie from harm whilst he ate a meat pie, the watery contents of which dripped messily and landed noisily amongst the crumpled papers in the bin” (290). Leah is directed to “sit in the chair next to the waste-paper basket” (291), which contains the drippings from the meat pie. The gesture signifies not only that Leah is treated as a disposable object, but the waste basket is also the final destination of the animal rendered into the meat pie. Sullivan “consumes” both Leah and the animal, illustrating the connection between sexual violence and the butchering and consumption of animals as described by Carol Adams. She writes: “‘Meat’ becomes a term to express women’s oppression, used equally by patriarchy and feminists, who say that women are ‘pieces of meat’” (Adams 59).

Adams argues that through this comparison nonhuman animals are rendered “absent referents,” their victimhood delegated to the metaphorical realm (57). She defines the absent referent as “that which separates the meat eater from the animal and the animal from the end product. The function of the absent referent is to keep our ‘meat’ separated from any idea that she or he was once an animal . . . , to keep *something* from being seen as having been *someone*” (Adams 14, original italics.) Adams suggests that language obscures the lives and deaths of animals by renaming their “fragmented body parts” before they reach the kitchen (59). Thus, “cows become roast beef, steak, hamburger; pigs become pork, bacon, sausage” (Adams 59). She further argues that making use of the “imagery of butchering” to describe violence against women, without, however, taking the “literal oppression of animals” into account, is to “uphold the patriarchal structure of absent referents, appropriating the experience of animals to interpret our own violation” (Adams 57). In short, “meat” becomes a metaphor, a “something,” rather than being perceived as the remains of an animal, a “someone.”

However, Sullivan consumes the pie as literally as he abuses Leah's body; the absent referent is not so absent in this scene. Carey places the focus of the scene in Mervyn Sullivan's office as much on the meat pie as he does on Leah, as Sullivan "had, always, tremendous concentration on anything he took a mind to tackle, and the meat pie did not allow anything else" (*Illywhacker* 291). In this way, the reader's "tremendous concentration" is also directed towards the meat pie and the significance of the seemingly incidental detail is highlighted, signifying that Sullivan's consumption of meat is not as innocent as it may appear. There is, moreover, the suggestion that the reader is complicit in the various forms of abuse, as Carey draws attention to the fact that Sullivan's sexual exploitation of Leah is a show, and the readers are his audience: "Mervyn Sullivan had been a tap-dancer. He was brilliant, alone in a spotlight, which itself suggested there might be an audience for the event . . ." (293). This scene in particular, and the narrative in general, illustrates the everyday entanglement of ordinary people within various patterns of exploitation and subjugation of those configured as "others." Carey indicates that the consumption of animals, an expression, supposedly, of Australianness, is closely linked with other forms of oppression. *Illywhacker* shows that the denial of the historical violent and oppressive practices upon which the nation, the nation's self-image and the nation's economy have been built translate into an everyday callousness as part of the animal practices supposedly quintessentially Australian. Thus, callousness is either quietly accepted or barely perceived, or indeed celebrated as an Australian attitude as, for instance, in the Meat and Livestock Australia commercials featuring Sam Kekovich.

In response, *Gould's Book of Fish* is very explicit in its application of empathy and the resulting description of animal victimhood. Accordingly, Gould relates how, in the process of painting fish for classification, "I wanted to tell a story of love as I slowly killed those fish, & it didn't seem right that I was slowly killing fish in order to tell such a story, & I

found myself beginning to talk to the dying fish as their movements grew sluggardly, as their brains slowly ceased working from lack of oxygen” (429). He makes it clear that in order to create the legacies of colonial natural historians in the form of paintings and catalogues of animals, which give the impression of nature-loving scientists and artists, the animals depicted were actually killed. By way of comparison, Gould relates that he and Jean-Babeuf Audubon, a character modelled on the nineteenth-century ornithologist, natural historian, wildlife artist and hunter John James Audubon, would “shoot birds & bring them back,” after which he would “watch as Audubon wired their bloodied corpses up to form dramatick shapes of ascent & descent, stretching wings this way & that, & then sketched & painted these bedraggled tormented forms as beautiful birds” (70). Flanagan highlights the ways in which animal histories are distorted and forged through verbal and visual representation. Thus, Gould admits that the animals, lifelike in the paintings, were in fact already dead:

The pictures did not end up the most truthful. The orange-bellied parrot, a small, rather sweet & colourful bird in the flesh, bulked larger on paper than in life. It was unavoidable: half the poor creature’s head had been blown apart by the captain’s shot & much of its body was matted in dried blood. I drew on experience to fill the hole the captain had made, & the bird took on a regal splendour (97)

Moreover, such images also do not show the fact that the animals are cooked and eaten after Gould has finished with them (see *Gould’s Book* 96).

Both Carey and Flanagan acknowledge that Australian histories, whether they pertain to nationhood or the related matter of its relationships with animals, are inherently deceptive. Gould comments: “Everything that’s wrong about this country begins in my story: they’ve all been making the place up, . . . because anything is easier than remembering” (*Gould’s Book of Fish* 443). Histories are invented and distorted because they serve particular interests, such

as commercial and political interests, as well as the self-interests of individual consumers, as a remark by Herbert Badgery illustrates:

I took the lies and held them gratefully. I wrapped them round me and felt the soft comfort a child feels inside a woollen rug. And this, of course, is what anyone means when they say a lie is creditable; they do not mean that it is a perfect piece of engineering, but that it is comfortable. . . . In all these cases, of course, there is a part of us that knows the thing is not true, and we hold it closer to ourselves because of it, refusing to hold it out at arm's length or examine it against the light (*Illywhacker* 191).

Empathic awareness is precisely the process of “holding out” every day items, circumstances, and representations of others, historical or otherwise, and “examining them against the light,” whilst imagining the experience of those others and how they may be affected. *Illywhacker* and *Gould's Book of Fish* encourage, in a climate of denial, to do what Rudd has finally asked non-Aboriginal Australians to do in relation to the Stolen Generation: “I ask those non-Indigenous Australians listening today who may not fully understand why what we are doing is so important to imagine for a moment that this had happened to you. I say to honourable members here present: imagine if this had happened to us” (Rudd 3). Flanagan and Carey implicitly ask their readers to make reading—whether it is reading fiction or the interactions of daily life—an act of empathy: a strategy, I propose, that is also usefully employed as a tool for literary criticism, as it illuminates cultural blind spots and the workings of “mythical speech.”

Barthes argues that “[m]ythical speech is made of a material which has *already* been worked on so as to make it suitable for communication: it is because all the materials of myth (whether pictorial or written) presuppose a signifying consciousness, that one can reason about them while discounting their substance” (119, original italics). In this context, Carey

draws attention to the fact that all of his animals are “paper animals,” created through writing and storytelling. References to newspapers, for example, which “pass across the sky like migrating birds” (*Illywhacker* 504) or which flap their “pages in the wind, fluttering like a captive dove or fortune-telling chook” (332), or to a “a cockatoo whose tail feathers conveniently echo the color of the telegram in Leah’s hand, a pretty coincidence not noted by the idle clergyman who stops to stare” (322) are self-referential comments that question the substance of such verbal creations. In the “idle clergyman’s” case, moreover, Carey comments on the ability of observers to recognise that substance or rather, the apparent absence of it.

Accordingly, one of the questions posed by the connection between animals, writing and paper(s) throughout *Illywhacker* is the question of what real animals have to do with such representations.⁷⁵ Carey draws attention to the fact that language about animals and using animal imagery may have little to do with the actual animals themselves. Jack illustrates this by finding it difficult to reconcile expressions such as “kangaroos in [the] top paddock” or “galah” as synonyms for stupidity with the animals in question (*Illywhacker* 48). He finds that such expressions have “no sympathy in them” and are “not fair or sensible,” because “the galah is not a stupid bird” (48). He implies, moreover, that this lack of sympathy may be an Australian trait: “‘I don’t think,’ Jack said, ‘that we have taken the same trouble with our expressions that the English have’” (48). Elsewhere, he remarks: “‘I don’t know anything about analogies, . . . but by Jove I know about animals’” (143).

The connection or otherwise between symbolism and nonhuman animals as referent is also addressed by a sceptical Herbert, who visits a psychiatrist: “‘I told him something (but by no means all) about the snakes. By God, you should have heard him. Snakes and aeroplanes, he says, are not snakes and aeroplanes at all, but symbols. Well, it’s entertaining anyway and I would not have missed it for worlds’” (156). This is both a hint that not all animals in the

narrative are necessarily symbols, and a self-referential recognition that, whether representations of animals have a symbolic use or not, their function within a novel such as *Illywhacker* is, in the first instance at least, to entertain. Carey further indicates that representations of animals are often motivated by commercial concerns. This kind of discourse is illustrated by advice Les Chaffey gives to Charles about how to explain his idea for a pet shop to the banks. He says:

You are doing the right thing, Chas, to have a pet shop. By that I mean—you are handling a product that already exists. . . . So what you need, when you approach them, is something they can understand without thinking. You won't have to make them imagine a pet shop, because they'll have already seen one. You won't have to give them drawings of cockatoos or prove to them that a cockatoo can actually fly and talk and that, if it could, people would want to pay money for the privilege of owning one. The cockatoo already exists. (452).

The Myth here is that cockatoos “already exist” as a “product”: they are meant to be pets “by nature.”

However, Barthes comments that the “substance [of Myth] is not unimportant” (119). The “substance” here consists of real animals who live their lives regardless of how we define them, or how we position ourselves in relation to them, but who are affected by the way we treat them as a result of our definitions. This is further illustrated by the Best Pet Shop in the World, which is referred to as “poetry,” with a cashier sitting “in the middle of the floor” whilst being “deep in a book” (*Illywhacker* 507). Carey shows that commercial concerns are central to this “archi/textual edifice,” which represents the foundational narratives upon which the nation is built, and that the interests which motivate mythical speech are generally detached from or the complete opposite of the interests of the animals

portrayed in such narratives. Leah points this out when she confronts Hissao and demands “that he admit the companies he worked for . . . would almost certainly have values that were against the interests not only of fish and birds, but also of marsupials and mammals, human beings included” (620).

Mythical speech thus transforms animals into replaceable and disposable commodities, as in Nathan Schick’s scheme to sell talking cockatoos, whereby “once the cockatoo had been in the newsreels and in the papers it would be worth a lot of money. . . . What he knew was that one cockatoo looked exactly like another, and that he could produce fifty MacArthur’s cockatoos, or even a hundred, and sell each one as the original. It was a good scheme, as smooth and flawless as an egg” (*Illywhacker* 511). Writing, in *Illywhacker*, facilitates these capitalist transactions, whereby animals themselves become a kind of tradable currency.⁷⁶ Mythical speech, moreover, is designed to hide and protect the interests that drive it, as Carey’s connection between animals and newspapers shows. The fact that Leah’s and Rosa’s prawns, who, it is made clear, end up crushed and dismembered, are wrapped in newspaper symbolises the fact that language packages, obscures and legitimates the substance of Myth; that is, those aspects of consumption people might find disturbing if they stopped to think about it, as Rosa does (see 266). This is also illustrated in the encounter between Sullivan and Leah, when Sullivan is depicted as “complet[ing] his meat pie and carefully wip[ing] his fingers with the newspaper cuttings” (291). It is the newspapers, so this symbolic act indicates, that absolve Sullivan of any wrongdoing.

Illywhacker, however, reintroduces this substance, the lives and interests of real animals, whose bodies are processed into actual or conceptual animal products—that is, meat and novels, for example—and rendered marginal in our awareness or discounted through relative dismissal. Carey addresses this obscurity and dismantles mythical speech by highlighting seemingly inconspicuous animal products. By repeatedly drawing attention to

such items and indicating a connection with animal suffering, Carey's narrative raises an empathic awareness that leaves readers, at the very least, with the feeling that something about the ordinary consumption of animal products is amiss. Accordingly, the inhabitants of the Best Pet Shop in the World, the representatives of the Australian nation, "discussed the quality of the harbour prawns, got drunk, crunched the prawns' heads, imagining themselves free and happy," a behaviour that Leah considers "disgusting" (*Illywhacker* 615). Similarly, "the whale-fat flavour" of Emma's lipstick appears to spoil the taste of a commodity associated with luxury and beauty (597), and Sullivan's silk tie reappears, as Leah, about to be sexually abused, comes "level with his splendid tie. It was a big tie, and tied into a luxurious fat knot" (293).

Leah is literally and metaphorically on the same level as the animal product; her fate is thus implicitly connected with that of the silk worms who die in the making of the material. Spiegel cautions that the comparison between "the suffering of animals" and that of "any other oppressed group" is "offensive only to the speciesist," since "[t]o deny our similarities to animals is to deny and undermine our own power. It is to continue actively struggling to prove to our masters, past or present, that we are similar to those who have abused us, rather than to our fellow victims, those whom our masters have also victimized" (30, italics omitted). However, Leah wears silk herself in the form of a dress later on. Given that silk has rarely been in the limelight for cruelty to animals, the gesture illustrates perhaps not so much the pervasiveness of speciesism and dismissal of the suffering of animals even by those who are equally or similarly victimised, but the rather dim awareness of consumers that animals are even involved in the process.

Consequently, Carey spotlights the victimhood of the animals involved. Thus, when Wysbraum points out the value and quality of silk to Leah, he inadvertently also refers to the animals who die because of it: "Silk,' he said, as if it was somehow her fault. 'Very nice.'

‘Silk, from silkworms,’ he said, almost angrily, nodding his big head and making funny blinking signals with his eyes” (*Illywhacker* 369). Although Carey does not overtly state the fact that silk worms are boiled alive in order to obtain the silk thread from their cocoons, Wysbraum’s “signalling” behaviour—even though supposedly motivated by unrelated matters—leaves readers with the uncanny feeling that somehow there is something wrong with silk.

Details such as these ground the novel in realism. Carey explains, “I suppose I do have a passion that if I am going to have something extraordinary happen, I want it to be real. I want the reader to believe that the chairs in the room are solid. If a ghost comes into the room, then you believe it because everything else is so real” (qtd. in Willbanks 57). However, not only do realistic details make the extraordinary real, but here they unsettle illusory histories and Myths; in this case, they highlight the absence or repression of animal histories in the awareness of consumers. In this regard, the chairs in Jack McGrath’s house are significant. As Herbert says, “[t]he other remarkable thing about the house was chairs. . . . They were all chairs to him [Herbert], some old, some new, some tatty, some gilt, some comfortable, some overstuffed, some bursting with horsehair which would prick the back of your legs and make you itch” (*Illywhacker* 28-9). Later on, these chairs are occupied by “an odd collection of characters . . . from the racetrack,” who are “[s]harp-looking punters and toffee-nosed horse owners all . . . as different from each other as the chairs they sat on” (42). Yet, as the reader already knows, at least some of these chairs will make those horse owners and punters very uncomfortable, a prickly reminder for those responsible that chairs are where horses, no longer fit for racing and no longer celebrated for their wins, may end up, a known but usually ignored and unspoken detail.

In this manner, Carey does not allow the reader to pass over and dismiss any animal victim out of hand. Instead, he reminds us that there is an issue to be addressed, as in the

case of a “ewe caught in O’Hagan’s muddy dam a quarter of a mile away” from Phoebe, who overhears her becoming “silent” (16). We, the readers, put the silent ewe out of our minds just as Phoebe does; this sheep is only a minor detail. However, several pages later, “[t]he ewe resume[s] its bleating” to remind us of her suffering (20). The question that arises is why, it appears, none of the characters have enough sympathy for the ewe to rescue her from her predicament, yet the answer has already been given earlier: sheep, it is made clear, are a part of the landscape because they are meant to “make a quid” (14). As such, they are as replaceable as the human and nonhuman inmates of the Best Pet Shop in the World, for example (see 635). Thus, Carey alerts readers that others, in this particular case sheep, pay the price for Australia’s prosperity created by pastoral settlement and wool.

Carey plays with the fact that what is usually absent are not so much the animals themselves, but the inclination of consumers to think about such details. In other words, neither the animal body nor the knowledge of that animal body is actually absent; people know to a greater or lesser degree that animals are involved (with the exception of children who have not yet been told). What is absent is an empathic awareness, the ability to acknowledge the lives and life experiences of nonhuman animals, and discern them and their suffering within the animal product, so to speak. Empathic awareness opens up questions beyond the interests of consumption and does not easily allow relative dismissal. It prompts consumers—and readers—to look behind the given and question the history of a particular product, whether it is the history of a race horse no longer fit for the track, or that of a battery hen living inside a cage with a floor space no larger than an A4 piece of paper. It is indeed to recognise the “someone” rather than the “something” behind the product.

Huggan observes a certain “ethical imperative” within Carey’s work, revealed “in the fictions’ constant moral promptings,” which include “their narrators’ persistent hectoring of the morally complacent reader; and, not least, their exposition of unimaginable acts of

cruelty, of behaviour so beyond the pale that it seems to merit the label monstrous” (*Carey* 77). Many of Carey’s “promptings” regarding animal suffering in *Illywhacker* are subtle, yet persistent. However, in addition, he presents a rather graphic “scene of execution,” whereby “a headless Rhode Island Red spurted its last spasms of bright red blood beneath the picnic sky and then fell, drunkenly, and lay twitching in the dust” (*Illywhacker* 283). Responsible for the scene is Teddy, a “nice bloke,” who passes a bowl of eggs, “[n]ice fresh cackleberries for your mum and dad,” to Izzie and then “dunk[s] the headless chook into the cauldron and the rank smell of its steaming feathers fill[s] Leah’s nostrils” (283). Leah, who had been looking forward to meeting Izzie Kaletsky’s “famous chooks” (282), reacts to the slaughter with “confusion” (283), and her contemplation of evicting Teddy illustrates John Berger’s argument that “a dead animal in the cities is first thought of as an object of disgust” (“Animal World” 1042).

Her confusion and disgust over the slaughter arises from the supposed inappropriateness of the Kaletskys’ suburban back garden as the “site of harm,” as Elder, Wolch and Emel call it (197). As Armstrong writes, “the development of an urban-centered commodity capitalism has demanded that images of animal suffering be removed from public visibility” (“Farming Images” 107). Moreover, Teddy’s method of slaughter represents a pre-industrial relationship between peasants and animals, described by Berger as a “familiarity with animals,” which he suggests is more grounded and authentic than contemporary industrialised animal processing (“Animal World” 1042; see also “Animals as Metaphor” 504). Teddy’s friendly gesture amidst the gory scene invokes and mirrors the kind of nostalgic rural charm represented by Phoebe’s parents Jack and Molly, who are portrayed positively as “friendly and neighbourly” people who “offe[r] hatfuls of hens’ eggs across the fence,” and who “[do] not understand Geelong society” (10).

However, in contrast to the figure of a rural peasant or someone like Jack, who, as a former bullock driver, is iconically tied to the Australian pastoral landscape, the goriness of the scene surrounding Teddy undermines “the romantic idyll of agrarian and pastoralist communion with nature” (Armstrong, “Farming Images” 117), which, Armstrong writes, is a common advertising strategy for animal products (“Farming Images” 117-18). The reader is “lured . . . into moral condemnation,” to use Huggan’s expression (*Carey* 77), although the “picnic sky,” which may invoke the common picnic fare of boiled eggs and chicken sandwiches, suggests the irony of the situation: most Western readers will themselves be consumers of chickens and eggs; moral condemnation of slaughter is thus at odds with the ordinary, everyday behaviour of most Westerners. After all, animals are victims regardless of the “site of harm.” Moreover, while the backyard scenario may be shocking for Leah and readers alike, it would be somewhat less traumatic for the chickens than any industrialised method that keeps them out of sight. At least until death, they can take “possession [of the Kaletskys’ property] like a conquering army. . . . The chooks scratched and pecked at the remains of the front lawn” (*Illywhacker* 282). In other words, they are able to display natural behaviour and their deaths under Teddy’s axe are relatively sudden, unlike the experience of battery hens and so-called “broiler chickens” (see Armstrong, “Farming Images” 121-26).

In order to create an empathic vision or awareness, Carey employs a strategy described by Armstrong in “Farming Images” as one used by animal advocates: “Most importantly, they must attempt the return to visibility of that most easily obscured and unpalatable of knowledges—that of history” (124), whereby “they seek to bring into view the industrial, genetic and biological histories by which a particular breed of living creature has been constructed for human consumption and profit. They do so with the aim of restoring to visibility not only actual animals, but also history itself,” such as the “life history of the individual animal, prior to its conversion into packets of chilled meat” (125). Accordingly,

Carey makes some animal histories visible, including that of animals within the legal and illegal pet trade. At the same time, he also highlights the absence of many other histories and leaves it up to the reader to fill the gaps.

The recognition of animal suffering in *Illywhacker*, as well as *Gould's Book of Fish*, is thus not only important in raising awareness, by extension, of human suffering. Spiegel warns against prioritising victims, which, she writes, does “tragically little to upset the very foundations of cruelty” (30). Magical realism addresses these “very foundations of cruelty,” as it decentres the dominant position of “masters,” to borrow Spiegel’s words (30), and balances this out with those who are marginalised. The absent referent is thus presented once again in magical realism through polyphony and the carnivalesque dissolution of Cartesian hierarchies characteristic of the mode.

Moreover, this destabilising of species hierarchies converges with Darwinian theory, which, as Spiegel points out, stresses kinship of different species—including *Homo sapiens*—through common ancestors. Accordingly, Darwin suggested that “we may all be netted together” (qtd. in Spiegel 20). Spiegel notes that Darwin’s evolutionary theory has been, and still is, popularly seen as a ranking of a “‘worst-to-best’ ascension list,” which, she writes, is a “chronic misinterpretation and misapplication of Darwin’s evolutionary theory, falsely concluding that humans are evolution’s ‘finished product’” (20). Magical realism undermines such popular and anthropocentric misconceptions, dismantles hierarchical orderings and power structures and, instead, reflects the idea of a web of complex relationships and interactions between human and nonhuman animals—ecologically, genetically and socially. Therefore, and within the circensian dynamics that counter the prioritising of one species over another, magical realism also precludes a purely symbolic reading of animal suffering for the pain of human beings who are “treated like animals.” Such a representation would dismiss the substance of the animals’ experience in the narrative

and accept the basic premise that it is defensible to treat animals “like animals” (cf. Spiegel 25; Tiffin, “Unjust Relations” 32-33). The pain of animals, human or nonhuman, matters in magical realist fiction such as *Illywhacker* and *Gould’s Book of Fish*.

These novels hereby follow a literary tradition described by Armstrong. He identifies sympathy in connection with late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century literary production as a quality that challenges “modernity’s valorization of dispassionate rationalism,” whereby “the recognition of animal suffering, like instances of animal agency or ferity, provided a means to disrupt the instrumentalist paradigm that united Cartesian philosophy, new scientific practice, capitalist economics, and colonial dominion over populations and terrains” (*What Animals Mean* 38). Empathy, closely associated with sympathy or compassion, is indeed an anti-Cartesian strategy in *Gould’s Book of Fish* and *Illywhacker*, and it fulfils precisely the functions outlined by Armstrong. It disrupts Myths of naturalised, and therefore, by implication, supposedly harmless or innocent settlement, which are followed and replaced by contemporary Myths of equally naturalised and harmless, or innocent, consumption. Animals are victims in a chain of exploitative practices. From settlement and pastoral farming to animal industries such as the battery egg production explicitly emphasised by Herbert, cruelty has systematically and habitually been hidden away in the interests of the powerful. Animal victims are the end product, so to speak, of a history marked by oppressive human-animal and subject-object relationships that are perpetuated in the patterns of everyday life. Empathy in *Illywhacker* and *Gould’s Book of Fish* counteracts and exposes the callousness inherent in both.

Correspondingly, the “Australian” lack of sympathy towards animals is contrasted with the figure of Phoebe’s father Jack, a former bullock driver, who represents a nostalgic version of an authentic, genuine Australian. His past profession is another example of the integration of cattle and the people who work directly with, and use, these animals into a

national Myth of down-to-Earth, pragmatic people in tune with, and part of, the environment. Accordingly, Jack is presented as an archetypal Australian, suited especially well to the dry and dusty landscape, as he “was built like a bullock driver, was the son of a bullock driver, and there was still . . . plenty of bullock driver left in his walk . . . , a man made to endure the dusty day and the solitary night, a man whose natural style would be reserved, who would be shy with men and women alike” (*Illywhacker* 49). Carey evokes an image of genuine, unpretentious Australians who, like Jack on his bullock drives, drink “champagne from metal pannikins and call it ‘Gentlemen’s grog’” (*Illywhacker* 12), and who are therefore by their very nature part of a genuinely Australian landscape.

Jack is presented as a natural bullock driver with a “bullock driver’s body” (*Illywhacker* 83). He can be seen as having claimed the land as his own step by step, by “cover[ing] twenty thousand dusty miles beside his bullock teams,” and by sleeping in touch with the land, so to speak, on the ground and under the stars (12). This image of genuine Australianness is consolidated through Jack’s relationship with “each individual” bullock, whom he knows “like you might know a man or woman, each one with their strengths, their weaknesses, their little quirks” (24). Jack’s close relationship with the bullocks, as well as the practice of bullock driving in general, evokes a past in which supposedly authentic Australians were directly connected with “real,” “raw” nature. Jack is thus tied closely into a Myth which obscures the fact that the bullocks were as foreign to the land as the people who supposedly share a bond with them. This, and his appearance as a sympathetic character, provides a point of identification for settler Australian society.

However, Carey makes it clear that Jack is an exception, at least as far as his treatment of animals is concerned. His “talent” for bullock driving lies in “a sympathy with the beasts that got them moving when other drivers whipped and swore and tangled themselves in hot confusion,” and he “soon became famous for two unlikely qualities: he

used none of the profanities for which bullock drivers were renowned, and he was a teetotaller” (*Illywhacker* 84). He stands out for his ability to “handle animals with great feeling and sensitivity” (13), telling Herbert: “If there is one thing I know about . . . it’s animals” (143). Jack is a proponent of kindness, who explains to Herbert that “[t]here isn’t a creature alive who won’t respond to kindness” (143). Accordingly, he cares not only about bullocks or other mammals, but kicks a stranded jellyfish “back into the water” (51), and he liberates the snake Herbert kept in a Hessian bag (see 143).⁷⁷

Seemingly in contrast to Jack is Herbert, the self-professed embodiment of an Australian. He disillusioned Jack, who tells him:

“You don’t know anything about animals You’re not a kind man, Badgery, and it hurts me to say it.” . . . He sat with his heavy smudged tumbler before him and looked at this stranger he had invited into his house and wondered how any man alive could not believe in kindness. “It’s a great disappointment,” he said. I always believed he was referring to the aeroplane. (*Illywhacker* 143)

Indeed, when Herbert asserts at the end of the narrative that “I am, at last, the creature I have so long wished to become—a kind man” (637), the statement is deeply suspect. Herbert is an “opportunist” (153); his kindness is a means to an end, such as his “kindness” in prison, which he only took up, “originally, to stop myself being bullied by my fellow prisoners” (479). Moreover, his kindness is relative and directly in relation to relative dismissal. In order to stop Molly from “go[ing] mad with grief,” as he says, he loans his car to Molly’s doctor, a bad driver, and judges later: “I felt myself, not incorrectly, a kind man. . . . It had been worth climbing gates, breaking windows and running over both dog and cockerel. I would have run my wheels over cats and goldfish to achieve this end . . .” (153). Herbert’s relative kindness, like relative dismissal, is thus either motivated by self-interest or, as in

relation to Molly, by the interests of another human being at *any* cost to animals. He thus represents a different model of Australianness to Jack, whose kindness appears to include all creatures.

However, Carey offers no simplistic formula of kindness to animals equalling kindness to humans or vice versa, as Jack is a racist, whilst Herbert is not (see *Illywhacker* 50-51). Both characters complement each other; each lacks the other's positive qualities, and each perpetuates a different version of oppressive discrimination. Thus, Carey shows that kindness is a behaviour which involves choices, whereby kindness in one sphere of life is not an absolute which redeems all decisions, beliefs and behaviours in others, nor is kindness in one instance necessarily negated or devalued by the lack of it in another. At the same time, though, Carey demonstrates that being kind is not a question of having to choose between kindness to animals and kindness to humans, for example. Rosa Kaletsky illustrates that empathic awareness, looking with empathy, reveals the areas where kindness may be lacking and offers, in this way, the possibility of extending acts of kindness further.

Thus, at least momentarily, she bridges the gap of kindness revealed by the juxtaposition between Jack and Herbert. Having just agreed with Leah that kindness "is important," and acted upon that sentiment by giving money to a young beggar with "downcast" eyes and "cardboard tied to the bottom of his shoes," she rethinks her relationship to the prawns she and Leah have just eaten: "'I am suddenly struck,' Rosa said, her smile quite collapsed, 'by how evil we are.' She looked down at the empty prawn shells, the broken heads, the long thin feelers and something—perhaps it was only the flies crawling on them—made her shudder" (269). The juxtaposition of the beggar and the prawns suggests that Rosa, a communist, realises at this moment that both the young man and the prawns are victims of the same capitalist system, where both people and animals are disposable and replaceable. Rosa feels empathy towards humans and nonhuman animals alike, because, at

this instance at least, she feels it unconditionally, that is, without regard for Cartesian humanist species boundaries. Therefore, regardless of its complications, kindness towards others, human or nonhuman, is ultimately “the point,” which runs counter to common practices and beliefs, in *Illywhacker*. As Jack says: “If kindness is not the point, what point is there?” (143)

Gould's Book of Fish, in turn, is concerned with a concept closely related to kindness, sympathy and empathy: love. Flanagan comments that “[a]ll of my books have been about love” (“Flanagan Novel Condemns Modern Australia”). Accordingly, Gould looks with sympathy at a “poor leatherjacket” he killed to paint and asks himself about the desensitisation of a society that treats fish as commodified objects (*Gould's Book* 226). He wonders

whether, as each fish died, the world was reduced in the amount of love that you might know for such a creature. Whether there was that much less wonder & beauty left to go around as each fish was hauled up in the net. And if we kept on taking & plundering & killing, if the world kept on becoming ever more impoverished of love & wonder & beauty in consequence, what, in the end, would be left? (226-27)

Flanagan highlights the value of extending emotions to include nonhuman animals, even those as generally unloved and regarded as devoid of feelings as fish.⁷⁸ A fish, Gould recognises, has not only “its own truth,” but also his or her own joy (227). Empathy—more than sympathy or compassion which tend to focus on the pain of others—is also the capacity to recognise a *joie de vivre* in others, including animals, a sentiment entirely consistent with the carnivalesque spirit of the mode. Magical realism, like carnival, is a celebration of life in all its caprice and disorder, after all.

Accordingly, like sympathy for nonhuman animals, Gould's love for fish is an inherently counter-Cartesian force that undermines scientific rationality and ordering, human-animal boundaries, colonial power structures and oppressive practices and consumer capitalism. Gould calls Mr Lempriere's scientific method of "smash[ing] the mystery of the world up into enough fragments & ship[ping] them all back to Mr Wheeler to catalogue," so that "all would be knowable . . . solvable & improvable, all matters of good & evil explicable & remediable on some Linnaean ladder of creation," a "gargantuan act of vandalism" (144). In this way, Flanagan criticises dispassionate scientific methods directly and, moreover, connects its lack of love and emotion with a capitalist exploitation of nature. Thus, Gould imagines "a world of the future as a barren sameness in which everyone had gorged so much fish that no more remained, & where Science knew absolutely every species & phylum & genus, but no-one knew love because it had disappeared along with the fish" (227). Gould's all-encompassing love is the expression of an environmentalist sentiment here, which runs counter to the consumer capitalist exploitation of nature, such as the overfishing of oceans, and the consumerist patterns that perpetuate such practices. Love and empathy are indeed subversive forces which erode the power of industries that exploit the environment, another important context for the publication of *Gould's Book of Fish*.

In this regard, Flanagan has been a vocal opponent of Tasmania's logging industry for a number of years.⁷⁹ In "Out of Control: The Tragedy of Tasmania's Forests," Flanagan describes a climate of corrupt company practices; the intertwining of the dominant corporation in the Tasmanian woodchipping business, Gunns Ltd., with local politicians; and its influence on the major political parties and senior politicians on a national level, including then "prime minister John Howard, and the Opposition leader, Kevin Rudd," who, Flanagan writes, endorse this industry nationally. Flanagan recounts a particularly callous "senior ALP politician," whose aggressive and crude behaviour, shown not least by swearing of the worst

kind in the presence of Flanagan's twelve-year-old daughter, is telling in regard to displaying a decided lack of empathy. In this insensitive climate, any kind of opposition to logging is configured by those in power as practically un-Tasmanian, it appears, despite the fact that "[t]he great majority of Tasmanians appear to be overwhelmingly opposed to old-growth logging." However, as Flanagan points out, logging continues, although "only by the constant crushing of opposing points of view, and the attempted silencing and smearing of those who put them."

Flanagan highlights the effects of logging on humans and animals alike, which include "slaughter" that "sees not only possums, wallabies and kangaroos die slowly, in agony, but other species—including wombats, bettongs and potoroos—killed in large numbers, despite being officially protected species"; the poisoning of wells in the local community; and the endangering of the giant freshwater crayfish, a species that characterises one of the chapters in *Gould's Book of Fish* ("Out of Control"; see *Gould's Book* 367-94). To name these effects openly and publicly is to counter power and corruption with empathy for all species in a climate of fear that "stifles dissent, avoids truth" (Flanagan, "Out of Control"). Showing such empathy thus becomes an act of courage, as well as an activist strategy, similar to that used by animal advocates and described by Armstrong. Accordingly, employing an empathic way of looking is to make the history of "a ream of copying paper" visible (Flanagan, "Out of Control"), and to lay open the power structures and corrupt practices that facilitate the slow deaths of animals and the destruction of ancient trees.

Gould's Book of Fish counters this context of environmental destruction by offering a vision that recognises humanity as but one species amongst many. As Gould remarks, "the truth is that there is something irretrievably fishy about us all" (*Gould's Book* 432). In turn, *Illywhacker's* species diversity, the crossing and blurring of human-animal boundaries, and references to environmental degradation, suggest similar environmentalist sentiments, and it,

too, presents *Homo sapiens* as one of many animal species “netted together.” This connection between the species forms the basis of Carey’s and Flanagan’s respective novels, designed to undermine the nation’s foundational narratives based on animal economies. Therefore, in order to offer a different version of Australianness, both authors submit a different kind of “animal product.”

Accordingly, whilst *Illywhacker* is produced by a human animal storyteller who is caged as a menagerie exhibit and who, by adorning his narrative with blue items, mirrors “the famous regent bower-bird” imprisoned in the Best Pet Shop in the World (*Illywhacker* 521), Gould’s “*Book of Fish*” is identified as an animal product on a material level, as Sid Hammet finds it in a “galvanised-iron meat safe” (*Gould’s Book* 12). Besides oxymoronically being the “meat” of its own story, it contains references to two other such animal products: on the one hand, there are the books in Sarah Island’s Registry “covered in dark Morocco leather,” “vellum-bound,” or “clad in abortive, that dainty vellum made from cow foetuses” (*Gould’s Book* 313); details which connect human and nonhuman animal victimhood, and the unacknowledged histories of those victims, under the colonial regime. On the other hand, there is the journal of Matt Brady, an escaped convict, which Gould finds while at large from the penal colony himself. Its union of animal products and writing is the manifestation of a merger between settler culture and indigenous culture, and between settlers and Australian nature.

Gould thus discovers the journal in a hut described as an animal space, “a giant sea-eagle’s nest,” with “[s]kins of wallaby & possum & quoll hung on the walls at unusual angles, as if they might momentarily take back their original form as animals & leap down” (*Gould’s Book* 391). The skins represent a non-European form of writing, as they are painted with “charcoal & red ochre,” and show “tigers & devils & kangaroos,” “hunting parties, . . . men & women dancing, . . . the moon in its various guises” (391). The journal itself is made

of animal parts, as Gould describes it as “roughly bound with gut sinew, which I recognised as having been stretched & softened in the blackfella manner of chewing. Its cover—wallaby hide, like the rest of the book—was stained red with ochre like that which, I realised, touching my cheek, still remained on my face from where the black woman had rubbed it on” (387). Unlike Gould’s watercolours, which emphasise Gould’s association with the sea, kangaroo blood, sinew, wallaby hide and red ochre connect the journal, a European form of writing, to the land, and, significantly, Gould (who is also painted with red ochre) finds the journal after “swaying falling dreaming embracing the earth” (385).

Gould, rolling up inside the animal skins, perceives the hut as a protective, womblike environment, which is defined by what he first experiences as the “stinking human & animal odours” (382). These become, however, “comforting, halfway between meat cooling & coming home” (383). Although he feels he has “no way of understanding” the stories painted on the animal skins wrapped around him as he falls asleep (392), he begins his own dreaming: “being drawn out of my nostrils by those dancing animals & then sent hurtling out of the hut, I finally felt my soul taking flight” (392). In this way, Gould experiences a kind of homecoming through the discovery that “implicit in a single seahorse was the universe, that everyone had the capacity to be someone, something, somebody else, that Numminer were Palawa & Palawa Numminer” (393).⁸⁰ He thus acknowledges the interrelatedness of all species, as well as “Twopenny Sal’s” belief that all human beings are related. As she explains: “Long time before . . . you were us” (378).

This does not suggest, however, that Gould himself is practically Aboriginal and thus a legitimate occupant of the land. Instead, like the freshwater crayfish, Gould is “prepared to abandon the shell of who & what I was, & metamorphose into something else” (392). This metamorphosis reveals that the connection to the land, as well as that between the two cultures, cannot be made on the basis of a common humanity, which would leave European

paradigms of self and otherness intact, but on the basis of “something else,” that is, a shared animality. Moreover, in order to approach Matt Brady’s dream of “building a white man, black woman home, the whole something other than either in the merge,” and of “growing old together” in the wider sense of a cultural union that may, finally, make Australia home for a displaced European like Gould (390), he needs to acknowledge his own otherness, a process made possible by alternative ways of configuring animals. In a comment that applies to magical realism as much as the bestiaries of Pliny, Sid Hammet, reading Pliny’s *Natural History*, discovers

in its pages something more than a mythical bestiary of manticores & basilisks. In Pliny’s observations I discovered that man, far from being central in this life, lived in a parlous world beyond his knowledge, . . . a world in which man is lost & less but lost & less amidst the marvellous, the extraordinary, the gorgeously inexplicable wonder of a universe only limited by one’s own imagining of it. (151)

Through the transcendence of the Cartesian subject, “lost” among a community of interrelated others, the magical realist narratives of Flanagan and Carey thus open up their readers’ imaginations to encompass other ways of being a nation and a species; “the point,” they suggest, is not to dominate and destroy, but to live, to love, and to be kind.

Conclusion

Both *Illywhacker* and *Gould’s Book of Fish* reflect Alice Walker’s description of the “heightened consciousness” that recognises “the pain felt by humans who are abused and the pain felt by non-human animals who are abused . . . as the same pain” (14). By presenting readers with details normally overlooked, ignored, or dismissed, Carey and Flanagan shift realism’s focus on rationally observable phenomena to the material, sensate experience of the

body, or rather, the experience of a multitude of other bodies, which is accessible to readers through an empathic imagination and the recognition of their own human animality and otherness. *Illywhacker* and *Gould's Book of Fish* thus make the suffering bodies at the core of foundational practices visible and in this way, reveal obscured, ignored or distorted histories and hidden interests, interrelated structures of power and oppression, and the everyday complicity of consumers. By presenting their novels as “animal products” and thus situating them firmly within the tradition of national Myths, Carey and Flanagan effectively write two quintessentially Australian narratives, whilst unsettling, at the same time, those very foundational Myths they relate to, as well as the animal practices that shape the self-image of settler Australian culture. Carey and Flanagan thus offer the descendants of colonial settlers other, more compassionate ways of being human and of being Australian that may, they suggest, productively address the rifts of the past.

Chapter Three

Animal Country:

Maban Realism in *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* and *The Kadaitcha Sung*

Australian novelist and literary critic Mudrooroo describes a mode of writing related and similar to magical realism or sometimes even synonymous with it, which he calls “maban reality” (see *Indigenous Literature* 96, 101).⁸¹ This, he writes, is characterised by its contrast with what he calls “natural scientific reality” and depicts, instead, “an Australian reality which comes from the land and from one of the oldest, continuous cultures in the world” (Mudrooroo, *Indigenous Literature* 91, 105, sic). Maban reality, or maban realism (Mudrooroo uses the terms interchangeably to mean two somewhat different things, as I will make clear below), shares basic characteristics with postcolonial magical realism, yet its grounding in an embodied relationship with the land, characterised by human-animal relationships determined by the Dreaming and traditional subsistence animal practices, renders it distinctive and unique to Australia.⁸² The first section of this chapter discusses the connection between maban realism, animality and the land, and considers how Mudrooroo’s theory of maban realism and his fiction can be read after revelations about his non-Aboriginal genetic background have raised questions about the authenticity of his work.

Focussing on Mudrooroo’s *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* and Sam Watson’s *The Kadaitcha Sung: A Seductive Tale of Sorcery, Eroticism and Corruption*, the following sections of this chapter investigate the significance of human-animal relationships and animal practices for the construction of maban realism. Mudrooroo’s novel features animals most strikingly in the form of Dreaming companions, with whom the inmates of a small island mission connect in an attempt at cultural survival in the context of European invasion, as well as to achieve spiritual healing for themselves and the so-called ghosts, the white invaders.⁸³

The mission is overseen by Fada, an English missionary and amateur anthropologist, his wife Mada, homesick and addicted to laudanum, and their inept son Sonny. The compound houses a displaced mob from the mainland, which is lead by Jangamuttuk, the “*mapan*,” or “shaman” (*Ghost Dreaming* 87). The mob includes Ludjee, Jangamuttuk’s wife and a kitchen help in the missionary’s house, as well as Wadawaka, an African convict born on a slave ship. Wadawaka is an initiated member of the mob and his Leopard Dreaming therefore materialises in Jangamuttuk’s ceremonies, alongside Jangamuttuk’s Dreaming companion Goanna and Ludjee’s Dreaming companion Manta Ray. In *Ghost Dreaming* and through his theory of maban realism, Mudrooroo sets up the discrepancy between indigenous and settler animal practices, both spiritual and material, as the defining division between these two cultural contexts (see *Indigenous Literature* 89), and thematises its effect on the spiritual health of the mission’s inhabitants and the island’s environment.

This clash of animal practices is developed further in *Kadaitcha*. The story is set in contemporary Brisbane, and its protagonist, Tommy Gubba, is a Kadaitcha man, a powerful “sorcerer” and demi-god (*Kadaitcha* 47, see also 32), whose task it is to restore the heart of the Rainbow Serpent, Biamee, and with it the balance between good and evil to the land. Accompanied by Purnung, the Dingo Dreaming, he must hunt down Booka Roth, another Kadaitcha, who is confined to Brisbane as punishment for stealing Biamee’s heart, trying to usurp the supreme deity’s position and leading the “migloo,” the white invaders, in their destruction of the land, “Biamee’s garden” (33-34). Booka inhabits the body of the white captain of the vicious Native Mounted Police (NMP) and has considerable influence amongst Brisbane’s political, legal and social establishment. In order to prevent his own destruction, he tries to hunt Tommy down in turn. The narrative plays out in a space that is colonised by the cattle empire of European settlement, yet defined, at the same time, by the Law of the Dreaming.⁸⁴

In both novels, moreover, the incorporation of Aboriginal human-animal relationships and animal practices serves to dismantle what Mudrooroo calls the “Master text” (*Us Mob* 8).⁸⁵ With this overarching term, Mudrooroo denotes any kind of imperialist narrative or writing—such as historiography, anthropological discourse or the realist text—that constructs an other from a Eurocentric perspective characterised by the relationship between an all-knowing, all-seeing subject and a passive object⁸⁶. This chapter explores how the Cartesian humanism inherent in the Master text is undermined by the inextricable connection between maban realist representations of animals and the idea of “country,” a term that indicates the intertwinement of animal practices, the land and spirituality, as well as the oneness of people and animals within an all-encompassing universe governed by the Law.⁸⁷ I discuss how this relationship to country and the related indigenous animal practices shape the narrative especially in *Kadaitcha*, and what role they play for recuperating and renewing Aboriginal storytelling within the Western genre of the novel.

Furthermore, Mudrooroo declares that “[b]oth Sam Watson and I agree that Indigenous texts should intervene politically and socially in the dominant ideology and that texts should not only be political but also enjoyable and entertaining” (*Indigenous Literature* 96). Watson’s and Mudrooroo’s representations of animals, such as Dreaming companions, and animal practices such as hunting, fishing and meat consumption, signify the intersection of leisure and survival, and of politics and entertainment, as different ways of looking at their meaning come into play. The final section of this chapter investigates how *Kadaitcha* in particular implicates the reader in structures of oppression in ways that make an innocent and leisurely perusal of the novel (in a deckchair by the barbecue for example) impossible.

Strange Beast: Maban Realism as the Expression of a Multicultural Country

Mudrooroo suggests that Australia has its own, home-grown version of magical realism. He writes that this maban reality, as he calls it, “is sometimes labelled ‘magic realism’” (Mudrooroo, *Indigenous Literature* 101). In fact, Mudrooroo provides not one but two terms to describe indigenous Australian “magic realism”: “maban realism” and “maban reality.” Whilst the boundaries between maban realism and magical realism may be fluid, Mudrooroo’s concept of maban reality is a specifically Australian phenomenon that denotes both a mode of writing and “the living within a maban reality based on the Dreaming” (*Indigenous Literature* 101-2). According to Mudrooroo, this experience of everyday life has been disrupted, displaced, weakened or destroyed in the course of colonisation, which banished the “shaman or maban” and replaced “the magic implicit in the world” by a natural scientific reality, a dominant, European worldview “formed from eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century scientific thought” (*Indigenous Literature* 90).

However, such life experiences that are not explained by European science still play an important role, not least for Watson, who says he is following his “dreaming path that was mapped out . . . at the point of creation, and has been prepared for me by every single generation since then” (Davies and Watson 190). He describes, moreover, the experience of “the fourth dimension of aboriginal people—the hidden spiritual dimension we take for granted” (qtd. in Dean).⁸⁸ Watson gives as an example ways of communicating between Aboriginal people that are outside Western scientific conceptualisations. He says: “You can have two people who need to meet. They may be separated by a continent and regardless of what events take place, they will come together. It’s happened to me on numerous occasions. We accept this. . . . Our old people are with us every moment of the day and we accept it” (qtd. in Dean, original ellipsis).

Correspondingly, Mudrooroo suggests that maban realism is “about describing a world which is as existent and as real as that constructed by European thought” (*Indigenous Literature* 98). He proposes that, by representing maban reality in literature and returning to the “great mythic narratives” and “mythic structures” that are the “literary heritage” of indigenous Australians, at least some indigenous traditions can be maintained and developed in contemporary fiction (*Indigenous Literature* 96). Indeed, Watson comments that “Murri people, until quite recently, have never really stopped passing down all the knowledge and wisdom that one generation needs to impart to the next one. . . . So, I think what I create in my books is just an echo of things stored within my own psyche . . .” (qtd. in Davies and Watson 190). This approach has moved Mudrooroo to remark that Watson’s novel is “to date perhaps . . . the best example of how maban reality can be used to create an original work” (*Indigenous Literature* 97).

Maban realism thus denotes a mode of writing that incorporates the conflict between conventional realism and representations of the mythic structures of the Dreaming. These two systems of representation hold an equal (though not harmonious) balance, equivalent to the balance between different systems of representation, such as the “magic” and the “real,” in magical realism. In fact, Mudrooroo explicitly states that his explanation of maban realism is derived from “some of the work done on Latin-American magic realism” (*Indigenous Literature* 96). Clare Archer-Lean, commenting specifically on Mudrooroo’s and Thomas King’s fiction, suggests that “the way in which transformation of discourse occurs is not simply through competition or *opposing* motif, the interaction is more complex, more *incorporative*” (245, original italics).⁸⁹ Correspondingly, Mudrooroo echoes Slemon’s analysis of magical realism in his description of the maban realist text: “[T]he reader or viewer might see that there is a contestation between two realities—maban and natural—with the contest not usually being resolved, or a drifting over from maban reality into a natural

scientific reality, which appears to be the only reality that many in the audience can accept” (*Indigenous Literature* 94).

It should be noted here that Mudrooroo uses the term “maban reality” interchangeably for the pervasive and all-encompassing influence of the Dreaming on everyday Aboriginal experience, as well as a representation of this influence in literature. This chapter is concerned with the literary representations of maban reality. To avoid confusion, I will employ the term “maban reality” for the system of Aboriginal thought, spirituality and experience that is opposed to European scientific thinking, and “maban realism” for the mode of writing as a whole henceforth, although Mudrooroo uses this latter term (once only) as an equally flexible and fluid definition (see *Indigenous Literature* 103).

Mudrooroo suggests that the effect of maban realism is to confront readers with “strange beasts of quotations,” created through the textual infusion of maban reality into the natural scientific reality of Western literary genres. He argues that these beasts “do not belong to those who read books like this and who often have no entrance into any reality pertaining to another people’s reality.”⁹⁰ Alluding to natural history, one of the defining animal practices of imperial expansion, Mudrooroo links natural scientific discourse, conventional realism and Western animal practices as different manifestations of the Master text, the dominant speech and “world-shaping” view constructed by the colonisers (*Indigenous Literature* 90).

He thus contrasts the strange textual beasts of maban realism with “scientific discourse,” which, he asserts,

is static rather than dynamic and allows intrusions from within the scientific field, but not from without. If it does so, there are transmogrifications of the beast into startling shapes of such repelling attractiveness that there are cries for an ethnic cleansing that will remove once and for all such non-scientific

intrusions. The beast must become tamed, static and able to be petted, examined and made known. It cannot be strange, it must be scientifically acceptable, and indeed all that that strangeness deserves is a bullet between the eyes, or rather a scientific research grant to imprison it within the folds of properly constituted discourse and theories. (Mudrooroo, *Indigenous Literature* 90)

As in Flanagan's and Carey's magical realist fiction, scientific discourse is represented here as an attempt to capture the (animal or animalised) other both physically and conceptually. Mudrooroo's evoking of an elusive animality in relation to rigid, natural historical categorisations, however, suggests that the mode itself is resistant to definite conceptual capture within Western genre classifications. As Mudrooroo remarks, "Surrealism and Magic Realism" are the best means "to escape the awfulness of the realist text" (qtd. in Little). In this context, his description of maban realism in terms of animality and natural history implies, more specifically, that maban realism is in itself a "strange beast"; that is, an animal—or feral—mode of writing which undermines the Cartesian humanist structures imposed by colonial settlement.

This ferality is not only reflective of a resistance to imposed systems of order and power, but it is also intimately tied to the Aboriginal concept of "country," a dynamic relationship to the land as a changing, living entity that is expressed through being on the land, caring for it and engaging with it through various cultural and everyday practices, including their relationships with, and uses of, animals.⁹¹ Accordingly, Mudrooroo describes the link between maban reality and the land as an essential feature of maban realism: "Maban reality might be characterised by a firm grounding in the reality of the earth or country, together with an acceptance of the supernatural as part of everyday reality" (*Indigenous Literature* 97). It is through this relationship to country that everyday practices are

essentially spiritual. In *Kadaitcha*, Watson portrays this everyday numinous dimension in Tommy's hunt for a wallaby, for instance, when Tommy, according to the Law, "offer[s] the silent prayer to Biamee. It was the duty of any hunter who took a life that belonged to the deity" (249).

Adrian Franklin, moreover, argues that country is "[t]he key to understanding Aboriginal views of animals" and explains that "it is through their relations to the natural world around them and their co-dwelling in that world that specific elements take on meaning. The natural world does not exist as a separable world, beyond and different from the human world" (*Animal Nation* 167, italics omitted). The idea of country can neither be fully captured by Western knowledge or language, nor are the practices related to it compatible with Western concepts and uses of nature, land, or landscape. As Deborah Bird Rose points out, "country has its own life, its own imperatives, of which humans are only one aspect. It is not up to humans to take supreme control, or to define the ultimate values of country. Aboriginal relationships to land link people to ecosystems 'rather than giving them dominion over' them" (*Nourishing Terrains* 10-11).

This life and agency of the land itself is reflected in *Ghost Dreaming*, as the "island" becomes an embodied, living and personified "Island." In contrast to Fada, who, observing the landscape from a high vantage-point, sees only "the island," which, nonetheless, resembles an animal of sorts with a "central spine" he perceives as menacing (55), the Aboriginal characters engage with "Island," who feels "his skin [being] tickled by the claws of animals" (128) and who is aware of "the presence of humankind on and under his skin" (147). Jangamuttuk, additionally, perceives the geography of the island in terms of the body of a snake, which changes colour as it winds from the beach through the forest "and continued on as a red serpent with a bloated head which was the wide clearing in which the mission had been erected. There stood . . . a chapel in which Fada entertained them with

incomprehensible sermons which hurt his head when he tried to reason them out” (24). “His head” might be Jangamuttuk’s, the snake’s, or even Fada’s here. All three are thus intimately (and humorously) linked.⁹²

The Aboriginal relationship with country as an ever-changing, complex and living entity thus resists Western thought and eludes the scientific observation of a Cartesian subject.⁹³ As Franklin argues: “Unlike the scientist, they [Aboriginal people] do not deal in absolute categories, classifications, boundaries pure and impure but in the messiness of life itself, in the complex way real life confounds the possibility of such a neat and ordered world” (*Animal Nation* 167). He refers here also to the incorporative and pragmatic relationship of Aboriginal people with introduced species, who are not only tolerated on the land but seen as integral to country on the basis of merit, so to speak: “Aboriginal people work with a concept of the landscape as it *is*, as they ‘find it’ and as they work with it” (*Animal Nation* 174, original italics). In contrast to settler Australian ideas about which species do or do not belong in the Australian landscape, Franklin explains that Aboriginal Australians “are not concerned with what a proper Australia should be, with its identity, natural or social, relative to other nations. This can only be the concern of those in the grip of nationalism” (*Animal Nation* 174, italics omitted). In contrast to idealised, nationalistic or conservationist paradigms, he observes that the Aboriginal “model is more pragmatic. It is based on what *does* work, not what should be. It is based on the way things have worked out over time . . .” (Franklin, *Animal Nation* 174-75, original italics).

This incorporation of others, of strange beasts, so to speak, can also be seen as resulting from the Aboriginal concept of country as “synonymous with life,” which “needs no justification,” as Rose writes, and which entails “that other living things also want to live, and have the right to live their own lives. It follows that other species, as well as humans, have the right to the conditions which enable their lives to continue through time . . .” (*Nourishing*

Terrains 10). Thus, even an introduced species as reviled in Australian settler culture as the feral cat can be integrated into everyday human-animal interactions (both as food and as companion animals), as well as into the Aboriginal spiritual framework in the form of the Pussycat Dreaming (see Franklin, *Animal Nation* 168-78). Mudrooroo reflects this incorporativeness by integrating both Wadawaka's African Leopard Dreaming and Mada's European Ghost Dreaming, a "weird bird [Ludjee] had never imagined before" with "[g]reat white wings," into the spiritual realm accessed by Jangamuttuk (*Ghost Dreaming* 61).

In this way, he also translates the incorporation of foreign species into an integration of foreign cultures in *Ghost Dreaming*. However, this, too, is connected to a relationship with country, in what Rose describes as the Aboriginal tolerance towards their neighbours, where "each country is surrounded by other countries" (*Nourishing Terrains* 9). Whilst, as she writes, "differences are known, respected and culturally elaborated in many ways," those boundaries are "rarely absolute" (*Nourishing Terrains* 9) and meant to be crossed: "Aboriginal boundaries . . . while they promote and rely on difference, mark difference primarily in order to overcome it. Boundaries are permeable, flexible, rarely monolithic" (Rose, *Nourishing Terrains* 45). Comments by Watson confirm this interaction with neighbours and newcomers, who "should be entitled to camp" in an area where they "feel comfortable and secure," so as long as they ask "the local mob and they give their permission. That's always got to be done" (Davies and Watson 205).

Mudrooroo's integration of other cultures—and their respective Dreaming species—into the island's mob and the spiritual realm, moreover, makes use of the Dreaming as a "global" concept (Davies and Watson 195). Likewise, Watson's inclusion of "Homeric legends," "aspects of Christian legends" and "American Indian ways of making connection with the land and the spirit of the land" in *Kadaitcha* is "absolutely deliberate," as Watson advocates an earth-based multiculturalism: "I think there's enormous parallels between our

different spiritual paths. . . . [W]e need to understand that all of us are descended from earth-based cultures. There's a universality about spiritual journeys and dream paths" (Davies and Watson 195).⁹⁴ In *Kadaitcha*, this is portrayed in Tommy's mixed heritage and his white mother, whom Watson calls "the eternal mother of the indigenous people" (Davies and Watson 200). As Ningi, the Kukaburra totem explains, Fleur's "blood reaches back to sorcerers from the northern lands. They worshipped stones, great standing stones, and their powers are equal to those of the Kadaitcha" (*Kadaitcha* 228).

Watson refers to the incorporation of these different elements as a case of cultural borrowing that is not unusual amongst "Murri tribal cultures" (Davies and Watson 201), a process reflected in the cultural hybridity of maban realism. Thus, at the same time as maban reality clashes with Western concepts, and as maban realism represents a feral, disruptive project, this mode of writing makes use of and develops the very Western genres it critiques. Mudrooroo not only deems the "cultural, historical and social context" of Aboriginal affairs to be essential for the consideration of "Aboriginal writers and their literature," but he also, conversely, maintains that "contemporary Aboriginal communities are the end result of 200 years of white history, and this past must never be forgotten" (Narogin 3). He portrays this kind of cultural borrowing in the opening scene of *Ghost Dreaming*, where Jangamuttuk, the island's maban, conducts a ceremony that involves participants painted as though they were wearing European clothing: "He was not after a realist copy, after all he had no intention of aping the European, but sought for an adaptation of these alien cultural forms appropriate to his own cultural matrix" (*Ghost Dreaming* 3).

Correspondingly, and reflecting the cultural pragmatism of country, Watson argues that "you can't reverse the colonial process, so they're here and you've got to learn to live with them, number one and number two, there's a lot of things you can learn from Migloo" (Davies and Watson 201). The elusiveness of maban realism as a textual beast and its

composition as a cultural hybrid featuring both Aboriginal cultural forms and the Western genre of the novel thus reflect the idea of country in relation to Aboriginal human-animal relationships and in terms of cultural boundary crossing, borrowing and tolerance. As a result, Mudrooroo's novel, with its contradictions arising from the simultaneous use and critique of Western modes of expression, an oxymoron also characteristic of magical realism, had been well received along with his other works both within and outside of Aboriginal communities at the time of publication.

However, it is not Mudrooroo's use of Western, but of Aboriginal culture that has raised the question of authenticity: following the 1996 article "Identity Crisis" by Victoria Laurie, published in the widely read *Australian Magazine*, it was revealed that Mudrooroo's ancestry is not, as he had claimed, Aboriginal, but African-American, English and Irish (see M. Clark, *Likely Story* 34, 41-45). Mudrooroo had formerly been celebrated as the first Aboriginal author of a novel (see M. Clark, *Likely Story* 27), but the question whether Mudrooroo could indeed claim an Aboriginal cultural matrix as his own, and whether he was not, rather, appropriating Aboriginal culture and integrating it into a Western cultural matrix, has been hotly debated ever since. Indeed, Maureen Clark, whose *Mudrooroo: A Likely Story* provides a thorough account of the controversy surrounding Mudrooroo's identity, the associated ethical and political questions, and the various reactions and positions from Australia's Aboriginal and academic communities, writes that "Johnson's claim to Aboriginal genealogy is unfounded. His assertion of tribal belonging has been refuted" (*Likely Story* 64).⁹⁵

Nyoongar elder Rosemary van den Berg points out that the Nyoongar people, with whom he had alleged to be related, have rejected his claim.⁹⁶ Speaking in the context of settler Australians posing as Aboriginal people in order to gain access to particular markets for their products, such as the author Leon Cameron and painter Elizabeth Durack, she calls

Mudrooroo, here addressed as Colin Johnson, “an imposter of the worst kind” who “used an Aboriginal identity for his own ends” (“Intellectual Property Rights”).⁹⁷ She emphatically rejects the assumption of an Aboriginal identity by association and suggests, moreover, that “the literati, academia and the publishers, besides those ignorant Aborigines, seem to uphold his right to maintain his false identity” (“Intellectual Property Rights”).

On the other end of the spectrum of opinions in the wider Aboriginal community are author Ruby Langford Ginibi and activist Gary Foley, who reject a definition of Aboriginality on racial grounds. Langford Ginibi, accordingly, argues that “[a]ll blood runs red, and we come in many colours,” denying the right of white Australians to define who is Aboriginal and who is not, and at the same time expressing her dismay at the Nyoongar people’s decision to distance themselves from Mudrooroo (227). She argues that he should be included in the wider Aboriginal community on the basis of merit, “because how he writes and what he’s writin about is *for* our people” (227, sic, original italics), and on the basis of life experiences and a shared spirituality: “He couldn’t write that sort of stuff if he didn’t have an Aboriginal spirit. It’s there. And he’s lived the life of a Blackfellow in Australia from the day he was born, he’s been in jail, too. He’s shared a life, and experience, and a spirituality, the whole lot” (226-7). Foley, citing Barry Morris, argues likewise that “relationships are not perceived in terms of a biological model but are defined primarily in terms of cultural notions of interconnectedness,” and asserts that he regards Mudrooroo as an Aborigine on the grounds of having “lived the life of an Aboriginal person” and “displayed Aboriginal values.” Both Foley and Langford Ginibi thus reflect the incorporative dynamics of country, as Mudrooroo, in their view, has earned his place.

Arguing in a compatible fashion, Mudrooroo himself makes a case against a genetic determination of Aboriginality and writes, “[t]he question of blood is what else but a clinging onto Victorian classifications of race” (“Tell Them You’re Indian” 262). He claims an

existential Aboriginality and postmodern identity, arguing that it is questionable “whether ‘culture’ as a formal entity did survive in heavily settled areas and what is often put forward as Aboriginal culture of a particular area is but a pastiche collected from various books written by Europeans” (“Tell Them You’re Indian” 265). Mudrooroo thus prefers to “res[t] his authenticity on doing rather than being” as what he calls a “crossblood” and asserts that “[w]hatever my identity is, it rests on my history of over fifty years and that is that” (“Tell Them You’re Indian” 263-64).

Intriguingly, Mudrooroo’s use of the Leopard Dreaming in *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* to provide a spiritual legitimization for Wadawaka’s belonging, seems to anticipate the way Langford Ginibi would later argue for Mudrooroo’s own “Aboriginal spirit.” Wadawaka’s Leopard Dreaming is consistent with Mudrooroo’s assertion that an appropriation of the Dreaming as “the heritage of all Australians . . . is not impossible,” as “Indigenous motifs and myths can provide the well-springs of a vibrant Australian culture resting on the land and the sense of national identity which can only come from our land” (*Indigenous Literature* 2). Moreover, Mudrooroo’s inclusion of the African Wadawaka, who is initiated into the island mob “under our Law” (*Ghost Dreaming* 83), is, Maureen Clark maintains, consistent with his “embedding” of autobiographical elements in his fiction; through Wadawaka, Mudrooroo is “textualising himself” (*Likely Story* 188).⁹⁸ She argues that “it is not unreasonable to suggest that the parallels to be drawn between the author and his character suggest the possibility he may have always been aware of his African-American antecedents” (M. Clark, *Likely Story* 189). Clark proposes that Wadawaka’s choice of a Leopard as Dreaming animal may be an indication of “his unwillingness or inability to renounce the African side of his identity . . . ,” implying that this may be pertinent to Mudrooroo himself (M. Clark, *Likely Story* 187).

Choosing a big cat in particular connects the Leopard Dreaming—and Wadawaka—to the “wildcat” of Mudrooroo’s *Wild Cat* trilogy and especially to “his most autobiographical novel, *Wild Cat Falling*,” as Maureen Clark observes (*Likely Story* 187). She suggests that Mudrooroo aligns himself with “the sign ‘cat’” through the main character of *Wild Cat Falling*, “strongly mark[ing] the character’s sense of self, metaphorically constructing him in a way that denotes the plurality of his hybrid persona. He is the quintessential ‘native’ cat—the European import gone feral” (M. Clark, *Likely Story* 96). Whilst Clark regards the cat motif recurring in Mudrooroo’s work as a “sign” or “signifier” for various other meanings, I propose that, insofar as the characters associated with cats have, or may have, autobiographical connotations, Mudrooroo sets himself up as disruptive, feral, human animal, consistent with an elusive identity that runs counter to European binaries and which undermines the construction of colonised others as nonhuman animals. He, too, is a strange beast, so to speak, and with maban realism he has arguably constructed a hybrid mode that reflects and accommodates his own feral, shifting identity as a “mongrel,” a term he prefers for himself (Mudrooroo, “The Global Nomad”).⁹⁹

Furthermore, Mudrooroo’s integration of the African big cat and, by association, the African Wadawaka into Dreaming and country mirrors Franklin’s equation of the Aboriginal inclusion of introduced feral species with a legitimate belonging of settler Australians. Commenting on settler aversion to and control of feral species versus Aboriginal acceptance, Franklin argues that “we might finally concede that the ferals are as Australian as we are, that we all, after a while, belong to *country*” (*Animal Nation* 192, original italics). Yet, the problem with Franklin’s assumption is that the settlement of humans and the introduction of nonhuman animals are different kettles of fish, as it were. As Watson has pointed out, and as Rose documents, it is absolutely essential to “always ask” before moving onto somebody

else's land, a courtesy European settlers have consistently failed to observe, to say the very least (see Rose, *Nourishing Terrains* 44-47).

In comparison, Mudrooroo's equating species introduction with cultural integration, if it indeed suggests autobiographical connections, is similarly problematic. His setting up camp, so to speak, as an Aborigine has been of an existentialist and political rather than a land-grabbing nature, but he has crossed boundaries nonetheless, as the Nyoongar reaction clearly shows. Mudrooroo's claim to an existential Aboriginality is, as Clark puts it, "individualistic," removed from any kind of relationship with, or the "value standards" of, the community he identifies with (M. Clark, *Likely Story* 57). At the same time,

[a]ny claim to authenticity that Johnson may make, whether in his writing or in his being, cannot be defended against a background of the collapse of the political, social and cultural issues that he has always claimed matter most to him in his life. In the postmodern world, the notion of self-identification is an ideal that exercises a powerful attraction, but it is a concept that does not recognise any boundaries—anything pre-given that individuals must respect in the process. (M.Clark, *Likely Story* 57)

In other words, once aware of his African origins, Mudrooroo did not give the Aboriginal community to which he claimed to belong the opportunity to include him. Foley's and Langford Ginibi's reaction shows that at least some parts of the wider Aboriginal community would have accepted him as one of their own, genetic credentials or not. However, Foley himself, commenting on Archie Weller, stresses "the importance of convincing others of the group with which you seek to identify to accept your identification." This raises the question as to why Mudrooroo did not ask to be accepted once he knew that his claims to Aboriginality were unfounded, and at what point and in what form he could have made such

a request to belong. Mudrooroo's dilemma, it appears, ultimately stems from the failure to observe the courtesy of asking permission when crossing boundaries, rather than his DNA.

As a result of this debate, Annalisa Oboe reports that "academics, journalists and writers in Australia and around the world have felt it appropriate" to position themselves "in favour of or contrary to [Mudrooroo's] Aboriginality" (x). However, given the history of white, racist definitions of Aboriginality and degrees of Aboriginality and whiteness, as well as the divided opinions amongst Aborigines themselves, I agree with Adam Shoemaker's assessment: "[W]hat I am not doing is asserting that Mudrooroo is, or is not, an Aboriginal person. I cannot make that determination and it is not my place to do so" ("Curse" 7). As a German, European migrant and "new New Zealander" living in Aotearoa New Zealand, part of a white, international, and Western readership, I am an outsider to this debate. It is well and truly not my place to pass that kind of judgement, nor is it necessary for this analysis.

However, the question raised by critics such as Maureen Clark and Shoemaker is how Mudrooroo's work can be read now.¹⁰⁰ Certainly, Mudrooroo's work cannot simply be dismissed as suggested by Robert Eggington, for example;¹⁰¹ it is worthy of consideration not least due to its significant influence on the Australian literary scene.¹⁰² Langford Ginibi, for instance, enthusiastically attests to Mudrooroo's foundational and lasting impact on the present generation of Aboriginal writers (226). Watson has expressed a similar sentiment, regarding Mudrooroo as positioned alongside Australia's most influential Aboriginal writers:

Mudrooroo, Oodgeroo, Kevin Gilbert and others opened up whole new horizons for black expression and black communication. They were our literary champions of the sixties, seventies and eighties, and they made it much easier for younger writers like myself to get published. Those people defined the boundaries of new black literature and the black writers of the nineties owe them a great debt. ("I Say This" 595)¹⁰³

Certainly in regard to maban realism, Mudrooroo has succeeded in constructing a mode of expression with which contemporary Aboriginal authors are able to identify, and which they have adapted and developed further. This is not only the case for Watson's novel, but also for Alexis Wright's *Plains of Promise* (1997), for example.¹⁰⁴

As for the question of authenticity, I propose that in relation to maban realism this is not an issue in the first place, as there was never a claim that the mode in itself is authentic. Authenticity carries connotations of purity—racial, ethnic, historically accurate, or otherwise—that simply do not apply to an explicitly hybrid and deconstructive or “mongrel” mode such as maban realism.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, in relation to *Ghost Dreaming* specifically, there is no claim that the novel is anything other than fiction. Mudrooroo himself has stressed in regard to maban realism that “[a]n important point is that there is not an attempt to rehabilitate traditional culture as such which, after all, might be an impossible project, but it is the using of our traditional storytelling content and structures in an effort to gain a wider readership” (*Indigenous Literature* 97).¹⁰⁶ It is the “using,” the fictional adaptation, not an accurate or authentic reproduction, that is of interest in my reading of both *Ghost Dreaming* and *Kadaitcha*. Indeed, Watson, in turn, maintains that his novel is entirely fictional in this regard. He comments: “*Kadaitcha Sung* never ever traded, never ever used real business, or real special ceremony. . . . Because I wouldn't use that as a trade good. I wouldn't use that as a convenient currency to advance my own interest” (Davies and Watson 191). Thus, the concept of authenticity applies to *Kadaitcha* as little as it applies to *Ghost Dreaming*.¹⁰⁷

At the same time, maban realism, like magical realism, can convey other truths, such as subversive histories, experiences other than those conceivable within a Western worldview, or reflections on structures of (neo-)colonial power and oppression.¹⁰⁸ Mudrooroo suggests that, “unlike many high cultural or message constructs, maban reality can not only pass on a message, but also find a popular audience who will read the work

because it is, at least on the surface, enjoyable” (*Indigenous Literature* 97). Thus, his novel *Ghost Dreaming* is not, for instance, designed to exploit Aboriginal culture in an exoticising fashion for trivial entertainment, but it is, on the contrary, a political and feral narrative that, amongst other strategies, uses animality to undermine the language of oppression.

My reading of both *Ghost Dreaming* and *Kadaitcha* is a response to Mudrooroo’s argument that

Aboriginal literature begins as a cry from the heart directed at the whiteman.

It is a cry for justice and an asking to be understood. In some ways it is

different from other national literatures which are directed towards a national

readership and only after that to other nations. Black writers . . . have a White

Australian readership firmly in mind when they write and it is their aim to get

across to as many people as possible the Aboriginal predicament in Australia.

(Narogin 1)¹⁰⁹

In this context, an understanding of representations of animals within an indigenous Australian framework is inevitably limited for non-Aboriginal readers unfamiliar with Aboriginal culture. For instance, as Stephen Muecke writes in relation to translations of traditional texts, “[i]f one is familiar with the landforms, as well as the local flora and fauna, these texts would be much more accessible” (53-4), a circumstance that also applies, for example, to the maban realist landscape of Watson’s Brisbane. A thorough knowledge and experience of Aboriginal spirituality, moreover, would undoubtedly provide a different kind of access to Mudrooroo’s and Watson’s representations of animals.¹¹⁰ However, this chapter does not aim to examine what these fictional animals might mean in and for Aboriginal culture, or for an Aboriginal readership, but rather, it looks at how they function within the postcolonial, magical or maban realist narratives as far as they are aimed at a white, Western, European, or European-descended settler Australian readership.¹¹¹ Accordingly, the

following section explores ways in which the contrast between Aboriginal animal practices and settler pastoralism is employed to dismantle the subject-object relationships inherent in European ways of looking and the Master text.

Farming Country: Pastoralism and the Master Text

Mudrooroo's and Watson's respective narratives each represent oxymoronic spaces that are characterised by the overlap of different ways of seeing, with each corresponding to different kinds of animal practices. Whilst Aboriginal animal practices are determined by a spiritual unity of all creatures living with the land, settler pastoralists view the land and its animals as usable commodities.¹¹² These different ways of seeing find their expression in different ways of telling stories: maban realism as an essentially embodied mode on the one hand, and realism's focus on vision—the singular vision of the Master—on the other hand.

Mudrooroo describes the Master text's inherent mechanisms and power structures as a "hierarchical structure of order, of power, in which the Master constructs his own text, one in which he positions . . . himself as subject and others as objects. His is the all-powerful gaze and consciousness" (*Us Mob* 8). Maban realism disrupts this power structure by countering the Master's single, authoritative version of reality with multiple alternative realities through the infusion of maban reality (see Mudrooroo, *Indigenous Literature* 90-91, 96, 100). This other reality is accessed through Aboriginal human-animal relationships and ways of dealing with the land, as Watson points out. He explains that it is "the human beings' relationships with the natural things of the world" that reconnects them with "the spirit, the gods of the natural universe, through their treatment of lands and animals and the natural environment. It's only by being responsible guardians of the natural world that we can then reconnect with those who create us" (Davies and Watson 194).

Critics of *Ghost Dreaming* and *Kadaitcha* have discussed the subversive qualities of maban realism in terms of the “blending of the real and the fantastic; the intermixture of the natural and the supernatural—the hallmarks of magic realism,” to use Shoemaker’s expression (*Mudrooroo* 75), as well as the creation of alternative, Aboriginal “mental” universes (see Shoemaker, *Mudrooroo* 67-68).¹¹³ Kate Hall, moreover, provides a thorough discussion of the dialogic dynamics of Australian magical realist fiction. She offers a succinct description of how the cultural hybridity of magical realism—rather than simply the opposition or combination of the magic and the real—functions in relation to dominant discourse, such as the realist text, and writes:

[T]hese hybrid texts unsettle the monologic discourses of white Australian historiography and narratives of nation. With its characteristically deconstructive approach to notions of empirical reality, singular versions of history, and “truth”, magical realism is an ideal mode for narratives of revision—writing that interrogates normative ideologies and assumptions, and illuminates that which is repressed or elided by authoritative discursive formations of nation and identity in Australia. (Hall 111)

Neither Hall nor other critics of maban realism, however, have recognised its characteristic contrast between introduced and indigenous animal practices as a marker of an essential cultural difference between settler and indigenous culture in Australia. So far, the clash of indigenous human-animal relationships with settler pastoralism—an animal practice *and* a “narrative of nation,” after all—has not been identified as a crucial aspect in constructing a hybrid narrative space and the oxymoronic interplay between different points of view in *Mudrooroo*’s and *Watson*’s respective novels.

Indeed, *Mudrooroo* begins his theory of maban realism by characterising the colonisers in essence as people “who had other animals to hunt and plants to gather from a

place other than Australia” (*Indigenous Literature* 89).¹¹⁴ The conflict between European and indigenous Australian animal practices and conceptualisations has shaped and continues to shape the history and inter-relations of Aboriginal Australians and Australians of European origin. Accordingly, indigenous representations of animals and animal practices play a significant part in tying Mudrooroo’s and Watson’s respective narratives to a spiritual connection with the land and are therefore instrumental in challenging the singular reality of the Master text. Representations of animals expose the cultural frameworks that structure different perceptions and points of view and open up the dialogue between them.

Both Watson and Mudrooroo initiate their white readers into their fictional, maban realist universes and the associated animal practices, allowing them to consider the narrative from an alternative perspective. Accordingly, in *Ghost Dreaming*, aspects of the Law and the presence of Dreaming companions are, as the narrator clearly states, “secrets known only to the initiated” (60). Yet these secrets are revealed to the reader regardless of cultural background, who, significantly, also follows Jangamuttuk’s novices through their initiation ceremony. The readers are like the novices who “were all eyes and ears when it came to knowledge” (60). In *Kadaitcha*, in turn, the reader “participates” in Tommy’s initiation ceremony, as Mudrooroo puts it (*Indigenous Literature* 99), as well as in Tommy’s secret talks with Dreaming Companions and his conversation with a dog called Nugget (*Kadaitcha* 264-5).

Correspondingly, Davies remarks that *Kadaitcha* is “a profoundly revolutionary novel in its possible effects on the reader. It opens up for white readers the possibility of seeing differently . . .” (Davies and Watson 191). Her comment on the experience of reading in general is particularly pertinent to maban or magical realism, where there is not only an encounter with a different life, place or time, but with a different worldview altogether. Davies writes: “For the duration of the reading [readers] live the imaginary possibility of

being otherwise, of being in ways they might not have imagined possible until they experienced that way of being in the novel. This is not simply an intellectual/rational act, but something that is lived bodily in the act of reading” (Davies and Watson 191). In regard to *Kadaitcha* in particular, she argues that the narrative represents a way of viewing the land that is akin to that of Aranda hunters, whose performance of stories through dance and song emphasise “incorporation and folding,” whereby “the movement of the dancer’s body incorporate the folding and unfolding of the landscape that is moved through, and merge the body, the land, the hunter, and the hunted” (Davies and Watson 202, italics omitted). This way of narrating the story, she proposes, enables readers to move beyond the singular vision of conventional Western writing.

In contrast, Mudrooroo’s character Fada is set up to be without access to Jangamuttuk’s world, a concept that, significantly, is both spiritual and geographical. Thus, Fada finds that the highest peak, the site of Jangamuttuk’s camp, is “[a] cultural refuge off limits to the uninitiated and uninvited” (M. Clark, *Likely Story* 199). His conquest of the mountain top is thwarted by nature, as the density of the vegetation hinders his progress and the site itself is protected by leeches, who, covering his whole body, instil “terror” in Fada (*Ghost Dreaming* 55). The reader gets a sense of an active nature participating in the spiritual protection of Jangamuttuk’s camp, since neither Jangamuttuk nor his novices have problems accessing the site. Fada finds that “[t]he incident had put all ideas of climbing the mountain out of his mind forever” (56). In this way, Fada’s attempt to be at the “top” of the island’s hierarchy, as it were, are frustrated from the beginning by the land itself.

Thus, the idea of different points of view is presented not only in its metaphorical, but also in quite a literal, spatial sense in *Ghost Dreaming*, as Mudrooroo reverses and destabilises the relationship between seeing, active subject and “the Other, the object which is defined and described by the all-seeing gaze of the Master” (Mudrooroo, *Us Mob* 8). In order

to survive physically, culturally and spiritually, the island's mob needs to subvert Fada's authority over, and authorship of, their lives. Even Sonny, the missionary's son, is "overconscious" of his father's overpowering gaze (*Ghost Dreaming* 74). "Damn him and his eyes" is his comment (74). However, whilst Fada surveys the landscape all around him from an eye-of-God perspective (55-6), Jangamuttuk, who establishes himself on the island's highest peak, is described as "the wily one" who "had picked the perfect camp site to keep the whole area under observation" (59). As Ludjee points out, "He [Fada] always watchin' us But we watchin' him too" (25).

In this way, the perception of the "all-seeing eye" of Fada is exposed as narrow and limited (12). Mudrooroo reveals that the central, Cartesian subject is not the centre of attention after all, and that his vision for and of the island colony (both literally and metaphorically) cannot be anything but highly subjective. Likewise, Fada's authority is further eroded by "the small capering form of a monkey," whom the members of "his flock" find much more interesting than Fada's speech, but whom Fada, trying to get their attention, fails to notice entirely (133). Animals, like the monkey and the leeches, thus work alongside other spiritual forces to ridicule Fada as both authority and author of the Master text. The wind, for example, which is "same as cousin" to Jangamuttuk (143), blows away the inventory of the island's supplies, which Jangamuttuk mockingly calls "[s]trong paper" in allusion to Fada's petition, a vision to having the island's population moved to the mainland (see 67). What can be seen as a weather-related incident is thus imbued with spiritual meanings and connections, and Aboriginal spirituality emerges as a strongly subversive and counteractive force to official texts.

Moreover, the significance of writing as a European expression of power is continually undermined by Jangamuttuk's deliberate mispronunciation of Fada's self-bestowed title of "commandant" as "com-mand-ment" (*Ghost Dreaming* 64-5, 131), for

example, which signifies, as Shoemaker observes, “one way of denoting the Aborigines’ rebellion against imposed authority and the transmission of that authority, both in the person of Fada and on paper” (*Mudrooroo* 73). Indeed, Fada represents the Master text himself, a disembodied verbal construct, as Mada comments: “That’s all he was: words. And that’s all he had, never anything else” (*Ghost Dreaming* 9). Shoemaker argues that “[t]he larger issue alluded to here is not one of linguistics in isolation. It is a question of the English language as an agency of domination, and of writing that language as a form of silencing Aboriginal voices” (*Mudrooroo* 73). *Mudrooroo* foregrounds, here and elsewhere, the use of biblical language in particular as a means of domination and control, which, viewed from a different point of view, however, reveals its lack of substance, as it were.

This is exemplified by the use of biblical animal imagery, as Fada casts himself as the central, god-like subject in command of everyone else’s attention. Within a framework of biblical language, he visualises “a fresco of himself surrounded by his adoring sheep” (*Ghost Dreaming* 115). Like a shepherd of actual sheep, Fada, as “the shepherd at the head of his newly saved flock” (130), is in charge of the physical control and incarceration of his “mob of sheep” on the island (115).¹¹⁵ His role is to get the mission’s Aborigines to accept and internalize the European view of them as their own. Thus, the concept of “pastor,” a “shepherd of souls,” takes on an especially sinister meaning, as Fada attempts to capture and confine the Aborigines’ minds and souls within the boundaries of European and biblical discourses.

In contrast, Jangamuttuk, “the hero” of the novel, as Shoemaker argues, is “concerned with converting the European interlopers to the Aboriginal way of seeing. It is a paradox that he must first get inside the Europeans’ heads—the ‘ghost dreaming’ of the title—in order to fend off their invasion. The battle becomes a spiritual one, literally for the souls of the Aboriginal Tasmanians” (*Mudrooroo* 68). As part of that “battle,” *Mudrooroo* invites the

reader to view biblical animal imagery in a different light, as he literalises and presents it in the flesh, so to speak. He parodies the allegory of the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-29) by paralleling the self-styled “Good Shepherd” Fada with the image of his son, who takes possession of a neighbouring island populated by sheep (see *Ghost Dreaming* 148).

Sonny’s pathetic and displaced reign over a “kingdom” of actual sheep, where the only spirituality is provided by alcoholic spirits, is an indictment on colonial rule and the powerlessness of a spirituality that is detached from its land of origin. Mudrooroo’s interplay between (dead) metaphors and their (living) referents uncovers the pastoral farming practices on which European spiritual concepts and language are based. Thus, “pastoralism” has both a spiritual and an agricultural meaning in *Ghost Dreaming*. The double meaning of the term reveals a spirituality wholly divorced from the animals who populate its language, whereas Aboriginal animal practices in *Kadaitcha* and *Ghost Dreaming* are presented as intimately intertwined with spiritual beliefs and customs. At the same time, “pastoralism” proves to have a corrosive effect on the cultural, spiritual and physical survival of indigenous Australians.

Tony Dingle describes the clash of Aboriginal hunting and gathering with European pastoralism thus:

Aboriginal society was so strange to the first European observers that they found it incomprehensible. For centuries Europeans had relied upon agriculture to feed them, yet Aborigines did not plant crops or tend herds of cattle or live in towns and cities; they did not even possess houses worthy of the name. Apparently always on the move, Aborigines appeared to most Europeans to be a lower form of life, usually on the brink of starvation and little advanced from the animal kingdom. (4)

Dingle adds, though, that “[w]e now know that hunters and gatherers were knowledgeable and sophisticated managers of resources who were able to live off the land with a minimum of effort. They possessed ample time to enjoy a full and satisfying spiritual, ceremonial and social life once their food needs had been satisfied” (4). David Unaipon explains that due to hunting skills and detailed knowledge of prey and its environment acquired from childhood onwards, “you can never come across or hear of an Aboriginal dying of thirst or starvation. He is well informed about where and how to procure water and food. These are the two principles that constitute the means of existence for an Aboriginal” (17).

However, as both *Kadaitcha* and *Ghost Dreaming* illustrate, these means of existence dwindled rapidly during the course of European colonisation, as the ecological impact of the settlers’ pastoral economy took its toll. Watson comments: “The land and the environment was in a pristine condition when the white man came here and after two hundred and seven years of white settlement is an absolute wasteland” (qtd. in Dean). Elsewhere, he says: “Very few parts of Australia are untouched by white settlement, and wherever the whites have come onto the land they have butchered and destroyed it and that leaves me with a great sadness” (“I Say This” 591-2). Accordingly, in *Kadaitcha*, the narrator recounts that “[t]he migloo displayed an astonishing sense of industry and the entire land was conquered and bound to their needs and desires” (35). In *Ghost Dreaming*, the natural balance has been disturbed by the displacement of Aborigines onto the mission and the resulting overfishing and overhunting. As Jangamuttuk points out, “[l]and all forest and empty ‘cepting for leeches. No kangaroo, no wallaby, no possum on this place—all gone” (132), whilst Ludjee mourns the loss of shellfish.¹¹⁶ As Jangamuttuk, Ludjee and their people leave the island, Jangamuttuk declares: “We ‘bout ready go and find that new world. This one finished. All finished” (143).

A comment by Fada suggests that he blames the island's lack of native wildlife on the Aborigines' hunting practices. He proposes that Sonny could take them hunting to the nearby island of sheep, but, he says, "you must look after the sheep on the other island. If you take care of them, then, maybe you hunt 'em sometimes just like you did kangaroo. But kill only what you need for food, otherwise soon no sheep" (133). The implication is that if the Aborigines learned to "take care" of the sheep, that is, engage in pastoral sheep farming, their food supply would be much securer. The idea that nature may be out of balance and that Aboriginal survival techniques may now be inadequate on the island because of European intervention does not occur to Fada. Ironically, at the same time, Fada's son contemplates kangaroo hunting for profit on one of the other islands: "Kangaroo skins brought a good price" (132). This scene exemplifies a settler attitude towards the land, who, as Broome argues, "saw it economically, as a commodity to be taken, exploited, bought and sold," which led to "dramatic clash[es]" with "the Aboriginal people who saw the land religiously, as an intimate part of themselves and all life" (40).

Mudrooroo writes:

One of the main features of Indigenous spirituality is to keep the earth and the environment in good repair, to look after it, and this obligation has been passed down as Law from the Dreamtime. The Dreamtime is always present within us. We are there at the beginning of creation and it is our very selves which continue the processes of creation and preservation. (*Us Mob* 52)

Accordingly, Eva Rask Knudsen finds that "the divine creation of the environment and the secure binding of man and nature through a complex system of social and religious Law" sets the tone both in the prologue to *Kadaitcha* and the opening of *Ghost Dreaming* (275).

Correspondingly, *Kadaitcha* addresses the destruction of the environment in spiritualised

terms: “The fair-skinned races gathered beneath Booka’s standard and the horde laid waste to Biamee’s garden” (33). Dingle explains:

In Aboriginal Australia people and land were united in ways that are difficult for outsiders to grasp. Access to land was vital for the maintenance of both body and soul. Food and water were necessary for physical survival but land was far more than an economic resource. People were tied spiritually to a particular locality; this was their ‘country’, ‘home’ or ‘dreaming place’, a tangible link with the ancestors who had lived and died there and with the Dreaming beings who originally created the territory. Through such links people derived a sense of belonging, of identity and of oneness with the living world. (9)

In *Kadaitcha*, this is described as “the natural order” to be kept by all: “Men and women were created and fostered, who would live upon the land. They were shown that they must worship the gods and keep the laws, were taught to revere all life and respect the natural order of all things” (32). Jarroo, “a sub-chief of a fierce southern tribe” (95) observes the absence of these values in the settlers: “They don’t belong to this land. . . . They pull down the trees and change the courses of our rivers. This land will be devastated even within our own generation” (132).

Broome points out that “[t]he Aborigines also lost access to their sacred places when pastoralists drove them away to ensure that cattle would not be disturbed. Aboriginal anger arose at this disruption to their traditional life” (42). He outlines the historical progression of pastoralism, and the consequences of the British government’s decision to drop the duty on Australian wool in 1822. Broome recounts the “rapid expansion of flocks and the inflow of over 200,000 British immigrants to Australia between 1832 and 1850,” which resulted in “a fantastic land grab which was never again to be equalled” (41). “The Aborigines,” he writes,

“were quickly outnumbered in their own land,” as “about 4000 Europeans with their 20 million sheep occupied over 400 million hectares of Aboriginal land stretching from southern Queensland to South Australia by 1860” (41). William J. Lines describes the process thus:

Private property triumphed over this landscape, not only because of the Aborigines’ military defeat, but also because the business of sheep raising changed the very nature of the country. It subverted the environment, destroyed the material basis of an aboriginal culture inextricably bound to topography, flora and fauna, and delivered the land into the hands of the pastoral pioneer. The squatters and their flocks drove away the game, and the sheep ate the plants and killed the roots upon which the Aborigines lived. (82)

Lines goes on to say that, “[b]y 1890, two years after Australia’s centennial, over 100 million sheep and nearly eight million cattle grazed over much of the continent” (124). Pastoral practices thus destroyed Australian bush, resulting in “a landscape and environment created largely in the interests of flocks of sheep and herds of cattle. Later generations accepted, even celebrated, this diminished and impoverished scene as typical Australian landscape” (Lines 124).

Dreaming Country: Human-Animal Companions, Anthropomorphism, and Hunting Stories

In *Ghost Dreaming*, the result of the exploitation of country through animal practices disconnected from the land is spiritual impoverishment. Thus, although Mada has a connection to the Dreaming via the Ghost Dreaming, the bird spirit, she is afflicted with a “spiritual malaise” at the same time (Shoemaker, *Mudrooroo* 69). Shoemaker interprets her condition as a suggestion that “it is Black Australians who can liberate non-Aborigines from the frozen prison of their souls in the ‘land of the ghosts’ if the path to the ‘sky-land’ can be

opened. In so doing, the novel gives primary control over the spiritual destiny of the world to Aboriginal people” (*Mudrooroo* 69). By creating the Ghost Dreaming, Mudrooroo opens up an entrance into maban reality. Whilst he argues that “[s]cientific reality had dispossessed the Indigenous people not only of their lands but also of their reality” (*Indigenous Literature* 92), Mudrooroo also suggests that Europeans and European settlers have, in turn, limited their own reality through natural science. As Shoemaker writes,

[i]t is obvious that when colonial powers subjugated Aboriginal peoples the invaders invariably attacked their indigenous language, religion and culture. One of the insights Mudrooroo communicates in *Ghost Dreaming* is that language, religion and culture of the colonisers suffered at the same time, by virtue of the fact that they were locked into a place and a function which was soul-destroying. (*Mudrooroo* 70)

Watson, in turn, portrays the spiritual detachment of settler Australians in terms of a replacement of the Dreaming with commodity consumption, as Jack Finlay, a young lawyer representing Aborigines in prison, drives a green Jaguar.¹¹⁷ Finlay is an ambivalent, white “Jacky Jacky” figure, so to speak, situated between being an admirable hands-on volunteer and being part of the novel’s privileged and corrupt white legal establishment. His driving in the car is a comical juxtaposition to Tommy riding Purnung, the Dingo Dreaming, as the car is portrayed as an animal: “Finlay drove the green Jaguar through the deserted streets with an almost arrogant ease. . . . ‘This brute still runs well.’ Tommy spoke to snap himself back to a modicum of readiness. The purr of the engine had lulled him into a trance-like state” (*Kadaitcha* 83). The Jaguar thus almost seems to exercise a spiritual power, which, however, amounts to nothing but a dull feeling in the head. As an expensive status symbol, it denotes Finlay’s privileged upbringing: “‘I picked it up the day after I graduated. My old man had made me that promise in my first year.’ Finlay smiled, pleased with the memories. ‘He

didn't bat an eyelid. Just pulled the old chequebook out and started writing'" (83-4). The juxtaposition of Finlay riding an expensive Jaguar, a dream car one might say, and Tommy riding the Dingo Dreaming illuminates the difference between spiritually and materialistically motivated animal practices, as it were. The ridicule lies in the fact that whilst the Jaguar may be an impressive car, it is not connected to country and Dreaming in any way and has no value in that regard. Finlay's proud Jaguar ride thus falls short rather pathetically in comparison to Tommy's ride on his Dreaming Companion.

In contrast, both in *Ghost Dreaming* and *Kadaitcha*, the spiritually connected characters derive strength and reassurance from their Dreaming companions, and the strong bond and kinship between Dreamings and humans is shown in their sharing of experiences and feelings. For instance, Wadawaka's Dreaming companion Leopard is "[s]uffering as much as Wadawaka" (*Ghost Dreaming* 100), as is the Red Kangaroo Dreaming of Bulley Macow, a tribal Aborigine in prison for the revenge killing of a rapist policeman in *Kadaitcha*. Tommy asks the imprisoned Macow: "How does that big red fullah feel about being locked up in this stinking little hole?' 'No good. I feel him inside me, he need that open country. He no good in a cage like this place, he need wide open place'" (*Kadaitcha* 71). In addition, Tommy's Dreaming, Tapu "the snake of the Biri Gubba people," is the source of his "cunning and stealth" (37) and his green eyes (28). Watson comments about the relationship between Tommy and the various Dreaming spirits that "what I was trying to convey was the closeness of the Aboriginal warrior to all facets of the natural environment" (Davies and Watson 209), such as the water, represented by Dituwonga, an "ancient groper" (*Kadaitcha* 296), and the air, inhabited by Ningi, the Kukaburra Dreaming.

In *Ghost Dreaming* and *Kadaitcha*, this closeness is not only represented by the human characters' relationships with Dreaming companions, but also the undermining of Cartesian human-animal boundaries, a blurring of physicality and spirituality, and the

omnipresence of Dreaming spirits within humans, animals and land. Kakkib li'Dthia

Warrawee'a explains the Aboriginal relationship to animals thus:

The sundry macropods are not just a fine animal that looks cool on a coat of arms, they are a part of this land. Dtjowdtjba, the Eastern Grey Kangaroo, *Macropus giganteus*, is not my brother or sister: Dtjowdtjba and I are one. Hurt Dtjowdtjba—and you hurt me. I, just because I'm human, am not superior to Dtjowdtjba; neither is Dtjowdtjba superior to me: we are simply one. Sure, I will eat Dtjowdtjba if I am hungry—but only after asking Dtjowdtjba if I may. Sometimes we die, and we provide food for the grasses that feed Dtjowdtjba. This is life. Dtjowdtjba and I are a part of the universe: a part of the web of life. Vital and important to that web as the other. (97)

Accordingly, in *Kadaitcha*, Dreaming companions and also apparently ordinary animals have both human and animal traits, and they are also both spiritual and material creatures. A wallaby hunted by Tommy, for example, displays intelligence, agency, and a sense of purpose and planning. The animal, aware of potential danger from humans, uses a remarkable skill to assess the situation: “Small flies buzzed around the roney's head, attracted by the strong, gamey smell, and from time to time the wallaby plucked one out of the air and held it to his nostrils. But the flies did not carry the scent of man” (248). To a Western, urban reader, this seems like an extraordinary and unexpected ability, yet it is presented in a matter-of-fact way. Tommy only manages to outmanoeuvre the animal's intelligence by employing equally extraordinary, though no magical, skills. Unaipon comments on the difficulty of hunting kangaroo, because of the animals' considerable cognitive abilities: “Hunting the kangaroo requires a great deal of skill and patience because there is something that is almost [like] human reasoning in some animal life” (65, parenthesis in original).

Humans and kangaroos are close and share common traits, according to Unaipon. He writes:

“Kangaroos are like human beings, they choose to live in one locality and frequent one particular feeding ground regularly” (65).

In *Kadaitcha*, characteristics that in a realist text would be considered exclusively human are also an inextricable part of Dreaming companions such as Ningi the Kukaburra spirit, Purnung the Dingo spirit, and Dituwonga the Groper spirit. Thus, they are frequently described as “wise,” and use human language. In Ningi’s and Dituwonga’s case, the language is verbal, whilst Purnung uses some human body language, such as “a nod of approval” (23) or shaking his head (6). Ningi “lift[s] an eyebrow” (226), yet even though kookaburras look a bit as though they have eyebrows, they do not raise those in disapproval. Neither do fish shake their heads “sadly” (298), as Dituwonga does, or “whisper” (296). Spirit companions, frequently called “elders,” are also described as “uncle” (6), “teacher” (128), and “mentor” (24), whilst Tommy is their “son” (25) and “student” (225). At the same time, these animal spirits are interchangeably labelled “it” or “he.” This shift in the English language between the animal “it” and the human “he” indicates either a blurring or an absence of human-animal boundaries.

This boundary blurring is particularly striking in the ubiquitous and numinous presence of Purnung the Dingo Dreaming, dingoes and dogs in *Kadaitcha*, as the spirit of the Dingo pervades the land and its inhabitants, whether they are human or animal, good or evil. Dogs, dingoes, and Purnung himself are evoked at significant moments in the narrative. Thus, the comet, which marks the time of transformation and the battle between good and evil, is “really the great one’s watchdog,” as “even the youngest child in the tribe knew” (68). A dingo marks the moment Jelda’s and Tommy’s child is conceived, as “[f]rom far off, a dingo bellowed a challenge, and the gods laughed once again upon the promised land” (203), and the dawn of the day Booka is finally trapped is greeted by dogs: “A few dogs were beginning to emerge into the cool air, shaking themselves and scratching at fleas” (294). The

Dingo Spirit is a reassuring presence throughout the narrative, providing companionship and encouragement to Tommy, and guaranteeing the safety of the protagonists. In view of this, the dogs' matutinal barking on the day of the final battle gives a reassuringly ordinary quality to the day and defines the space of the mission as safe, as people get on with their everyday business (295). As a hunting spirit, Dingo is both ominous and frightening, though no less omnipresent. Thus, whilst Tommy, himself doglike in some aspects, and Purnung hunt Booka and his policemen, they, in turn, are also "dogs," both hunters and hunted, throughout the narrative.¹¹⁸ Moreover, Jonjurrie declares to Tommy that "the migloo will pay for what they have done, and we shall also punish their dogs" (99).

Rose's account of the Yarralin concepts of the Dingo Dreaming explains the all-pervading presence of Dingo, and his spiritual and bodily connection with humans.

In Dreaming, only the dingo (wild dog, *Canis familiaris dingo*) walked then as he does now. He was shaped like a dog, he behaved like a dog, and dingo and human were one. It was the dingo who gave us our characteristic shape with respect to head and genitals, and our upright stance. Ancestors and contemporaries, dingos are thought still to be very close to humans: they are what we would be if we were not what we are. (*Dingo* 47)

Accordingly, people from very different backgrounds are all associated with dog qualities or imagery in *Kadaitcha*, reflecting the connection with Dingo as ancestor both metaphorically and physically.¹¹⁹ The connection to Dingo pervades all aspects of life, sacred or profane, and regardless of a person's cultural background. Human life is inherently animal in all its aspects, whilst human beginnings are reflected in the Dreamings' human traits.

Nonetheless, the Dreaming companions retain some distinctively animal behaviour, sometimes to comic effect, as they almost appear as eccentric humans through the combination of human and animal behaviour. Thus, in response to Tommy's question

whether he will be all right on his own, “Purnung lifted his leg with studied contempt and urinated on the rock at his feet to indicate that he would hold his post to the end of eternity. He growled and shook his head” (6). Ningi “squawk[s],” “ruffl[es] his feathers and dust[s] the fine grains from himself” after falling off his “perch” (249-50). His kookaburra laughter is at the intersection of humanity and animality, reflecting the actual call of kookaburras, the common, anthropomorphised understanding of it as laughter, and the laughter of the humanised character Ningi.

Moreover, Purnung, at the same time as being a spirit, also takes on the very practical function of being a camp dog, whether that means guarding Tommy and his camp (see 292), or being the supreme deity Biamee’s “watchdog” (68). The relationship between humans and Dreaming companions, furthermore, offers mutual benefits, comparable to the bond between people and their animal companions. Tommy, for example, reassures Purnung in the same way he would reassure an ordinary dog (see 5, 120), and Purnung, in turn, “whine[s] softly, reassuringly” (6).¹²⁰ In *Ghost Dreaming*, too, Ludjee and her Dreaming companion Manta Ray “had missed each other” (60).

In addition, instances such as Purnung relieving himself and Ningi “rubb[ing] his beak into the mists beneath, to ease an itch” (*Kadaitcha* 129) serve to foreground the Dreaming companions’ physicality. Franklin points out, in regard to totemism, “that animals are experienced sensually and intimately by those who live close to them and not just symbolically” (*Animal Nation* 112). Neither Dreaming companions in particular, nor animals in general, can be reduced to a purely symbolic, abstract function in either Mudrooroo’s or Watson’s respective novels. As Mudrooroo points out in regard to *Kadaitcha*, “the Spirit Dingo . . . is as much material as Tommy Gubba” (*Indigenous Literature* 99). Furthermore, whilst a dog like Nugget can and does have an allegorical function as the spirit of survival in the face of invaders, for instance, his physicality, too, is strongly emphasised: he is a

“monstrous dog with a misshapen head,” an “ugly brute” with a “shaggy coat,” “stumpy tail,” “pink stomach” and “scar tissue that ran across its pink belly” (*Kadaitcha* 264). Maban realist animals therefore demand a reading in terms of their material, bodily presence in the narrative at least as much as any other functions they may have, as they, like humans too, are “vital and important” and “part of the universe.”

However, the prevalence of animals in particular, especially in combination with blurred human-animal boundaries or anthropomorphism, human-animal communications, and transformations considered “magical” from a Western perspective, contributes to the trivialisation of traditional Aboriginal narratives, as animals are (still) conventionally associated with children’s stories in Western literary traditions. It is those traditions, exemplified by Rudyard Kipling’s stories, which, as Muecke suggests, served as a template that translators of Aboriginal narratives have historically drawn on. Muecke explains that when traditional Aboriginal texts have been transcribed into English, they were paraphrased and “the social and ethical importance of the original stories and songs was stripped away in favour of some basic human or anthropomorphic content” (53). Jackie Huggins comments on “children’s literature based on creation stories” and writes: “Much of what has been written about Aboriginals by non-Aboriginals has been patronising, misconstrued, preconceived and abused. We’ve had so much destructive material written about us that we must hold together the very fabric of the stories which created us” (qtd. in Heiss 197-98). Van Toorn discusses such trivialisations and marginalisations of Aboriginal oral narrative, and points out that, “[d]isqualified as history, Aboriginal encodings of the past are often categorized as myths, legends, or fairytales—markers of the primitive and the child-like” (123). She identifies the frameworks provided by academic disciplines as part of the problem, as well as the prevailing primitivist discourse which delegates Aboriginal culture to the past, and writes: “According

to the prevailing demarcations between academic disciplines, ‘primitive’ or ‘prehistoric’ societies are the province of anthropology and archaeology, rather than history” (123).

Thus, anthropomorphism is often seen as a sign of supposedly primitive and childlike qualities of totemic cultures. Anthropomorphism, “the ascribing of human characteristics—thought, feeling, consciousness and motivation—to non-human things” (Masson and McCarthy 43), is, according to James Serpell, “the normal and immediate response of the vast majority of people to animals,” including people in the West, and probably “a universal human proclivity” (*Company of Animals* 172).¹²¹ However, in relation to the Master text, anthropomorphism was a disconcerting influence for a “post-Enlightenment Europe” used to “nice clean lines separating animals from humanity,” and “a disturbing hybrid state of affairs, where the boundary between humanity and animality was apparently dissolved and fluid,” as Franklin points out (*Animal Nation* 50). Seen as “a form of scientific blasphemy” (Masson and McCarthy 12) and a “dirty word” in the context of “scientific objectivity” (Serpell, *Company of Animals* 167), anthropomorphism is directly in opposition to the natural scientific reality that maban realism undermines.

Essentially, anthropomorphism is “a sin against hierarchy” (Masson and McCarthy 44), which questions the foundations of Cartesian humanism, as well as its patriarchal, Eurocentric assumptions. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson and Susan McCarthy report that it is “regarded as a species confusion, an unprofessional merging, a forgetting of the line between who one is and what one is observing, between subject and object, womanish” (45). The prominence of anthropomorphism within other knowledge systems, such as the Aboriginal Dreaming and attitude to country, triggers the derision described by Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert, which is directed at “lay and ‘indigenous’ knowledges (or ethnosciences)” by “dominant Western scientific cultures and the ‘rational institutions which adopt their logics as a guide and model” (8-9). In other words, it disturbs those areas of human-animal

relationships, such as natural science, vivisection, or animal industries, that rely on the use of animals as objects (see Masson and McCarthy 43, 47). The trivialisation of anthropomorphism as belonging to the realm of “inferior” and “emotional” women (Masson and McCarthy 45)—or, indeed, children—functions as a means to maintain the hierarchical position of the Cartesian (male, European) observer.

The post-Enlightenment attitude towards anthropomorphism thus affects the reception and translation of Aboriginal stories. Muecke writes in regard to the transcription of Aboriginal texts into English that “one traditional narrative device of (magical) transformation was retained for ‘just so’-type stories,” and finds that while the “use of Aboriginal children’s stories in translation may be appropriate” for such a purpose, the reduction of other major texts in this way is “much more serious” (53). In terms of contemporary fiction, there is certainly a possibility that the perception of maban reality as trivial or as an entertaining anthropological curiosity may extend beyond transcriptions of traditional oral narratives and into readings of maban realist, or magic realist, texts. Wendy Faris describes how readers, in her view, perceive magic realist fiction and writes:

The narrative appears to the late-twentieth century adult readers to which it is addressed as fresh, childlike, even primitive. Wonders are recounted largely without comment, in a matter-of-fact way, accepted—presumably—as a child would accept them, without undue questioning or reflection; they thus achieve a kind of defamiliarization that appears to be natural or artless.

(“Scheherazade” 177)

Hall objects to the terms “fresh, childlike, even primitive” and responds to Faris’ statement: “In speculating about ‘non-Western’ cultural systems . . . critics of magical realism have framed the genre within an orientalist hermeneutics comprised of cultural essentialism and binary oppositional critique” (119). Yet, given the deep-seated traditions of primitivist

discourse in Western society, Western readers may well perceive counter-realist narratives in the way Faris describes. This, however, is not a limitation of the text, but it would be a mark of how much the readers' (and critics') perception is framed by their own cultural universe, so to speak, how much readers are preconditioned to look at other cultures in certain ways, and just how much readers are willing to step outside of frameworks determined by hierarchical binaries in their reading. Indeed, as Suzanne Baker, with reference to Amaryll Chanady points out, magic realist texts themselves actually resist an "exoticised" reading through their "interweaving of realism and fantasy" ("Magic Realism" 57).

Griffiths, in addition, draws attention to the intermixture of traditional narrative and "those forms which also resist the closure of 'realism' within contemporary popular culture," such as video and computer games ("Representing Difference" 477), and highlights the fact that such blending of genres prevents the relegation of contemporary Aboriginal fiction into categories that historically have been considered, as Muecke puts it, "an appropriate destiny" for traditional tales (53). Indeed, though imagery associated with kitschy (yet entertaining) *Star Wars* creatures could not contrast more starkly with Aboriginal Dreamings, mixing traditional and postmodern imagery serves its purpose in resisting exoticised readings. Accordingly, referring to the transformation of Bulley Macow's glowing flesh into a "pile of ash" and then into a black goanna (*Kadaitcha* 239.), Griffiths argues: "If such descriptions are open to criticism as too popular and lurid, they nevertheless act as an effective counter to those older forms of representation which restrict Aboriginal icons to a folksy, ethnic discourse that effectively disempowers them within contemporary life" ("Representing Difference" 478).¹²² At the same time, the lurid veneer and popular culture references do pose the risk of readers' reception of the novel as a work of graphic pulp fiction and underestimating its depth and complexity. As Griffiths argues, the strategy of including popular culture references is designed to attract a mass market and young audiences (see

“Representing Difference” 476). Nonetheless, given the pornographic aspects of *Kadaitcha*, whereby oppressive and violent sexual commodification are portrayed in explicit detail, the x-rated nature of the novel certainly precludes it from being read as a “folksy” tale for children. Mudrooroo employs a similar, though less graphic, strategy, as the complexity and subject matter of *Ghost Dreaming* renders it a narrative attractive to adults and less suited to young children.¹²³

Nevertheless, both *Ghost Dreaming* and *Kadaitcha* still function in much the same way as traditional Aboriginal storytelling, as van den Berg’s illuminating comments of the purpose of traditional Aboriginal oral narrative shows: “Traditionally Aboriginal story telling had many functions, and it still does. It reinforced the Aboriginal people’s ideological beliefs in the Dreamtime—their Creation and other cultural stories of the Rainbow Serpent and their environment. . . . All these stories referred to the Aborigines’ environment or the practices of their everyday life” (“Aboriginal Storytelling”). Significantly, spiritual, allegorical and practical components are intertwined and equally important, as van den Berg illustrates:

In a sense these stories were parables that children learned from, much like the Bible stories in Christian culture. Aboriginal story telling gave information of where the best game and water sources were to be found; where people could venture and where they weren’t permitted to go, such places as sacred sites and where men’s and women’s businesses were conducted that was off-limits to the uninitiated. (“Aboriginal Storytelling”)

She further stresses the importance of storytelling for cultural, spiritual and physical survival, both historically and in the present day, and explains:

Aboriginal storytelling is as old as the cultures themselves. Based on the Nyoongar practices of storytelling, it is not presumptuous to say that Aborigines all over mainland Australia and Tasmania kept their respective

cultures alive by passing on their beliefs, and their social and spiritual, cultural and economic practices to the younger generations. Storytelling is an integral part of Aboriginal oral cultures. Not only were stories entertaining, but they enabled a learning process whereby the matter of survival became the basis of their telling. Children had to listen and learn; not to do so meant certain death. (“Aboriginal Storytelling”)

Animals are portrayed as an integral part of social, spiritual, cultural and economic practices in both *Ghost Dreaming* and *Kadaitcha*, and thus animal practices lie at the heart of both novels, although in *Kadaitcha* more markedly and explicitly so. Moreover, different conceptualisations of and practices involving animals are one area where cultural conflict becomes most apparent. Mudrooroo’s and Watson’s maban realist animals are both spiritual and material beings, as important to the narrative as human characters, providing strength, reassurance and continuity in a changed and changing world. Accordingly, alongside and in contrast to European animal practices, both Mudrooroo and Watson inscribe and reinstate Aboriginal animal practices into the traditionally Western genre. Pastoralism, which focuses on the usefulness of animals in terms of profit, products and labour, is thus contrasted both with a view of animals as spiritual and powerful entities and, in *Kadaitcha*, with the hunt, which forms the basis for the physical and spiritual survival of Aboriginal culture, as well as the narrative itself.

Hunting skills are described by Unaipon’s *Legendary Tales of the Australian Aborigines* (60-8). However, his account, written in the 1920s, is not so much a “legendary tale” or anecdote, and more than instructions on how to hunt different types of animals. Instead, the narrative itself is a hunt, rather than simply a story about hunting. As Unaipon writes “Now we shall begin our hunting expedition” (60), he imparts an immediacy that sets this animal practice firmly within the present and renders it very much alive, rather than

relating it as a distant event, or a long lost tradition designated to the past. The reader is enticed to participate (“*our* hunting expedition”), that is, to be present, at the very least, as an observer, with an emphasis on the “bodily” experience of reading. Notwithstanding the 1990s setting of *Kadaitcha* in and around urban Brisbane, Watson equally takes his readers on a hunting expedition alongside the protagonist Tommy Gubba and his Dreaming companion, the dingo spirit Purnung. As Purnung and Tommy, riding on the Dingo’s back, are introduced, they are surrounded by the omnipresence of other hunters: “The hunters and the bird, fish and animal totems hunted silently. . . . [D]eath stalked on hushed feet. The hunted fled in terror to find the secret places while far above, in the vaster oceans of the air, the most feared hunter of all was abroad” (5). As Watson writes, Purnung “and Tommy had hunted many times and the killing had been good” (6).¹²⁴ Likewise, “greenish clouds [roll] forward to hunt” (40) as Tommy’s “prey” (226), Booka Roth, makes his first appearance in the setting of present-day urban Brisbane. Thus, the hunt is established as an all-pervading practice early on and throughout the novel.

The reader follows Tommy in his ambition to hunt, entrap and kill Booka. This quest drives the sequence of events and urges the reader to keep turning the pages. Other major and minor characters are also associated with the hunt. For example, the “death spirit” Jonjurrie is an ancient hunter (9);¹²⁵ Worimi, a tribal woman abducted, raped and abused by Booka’s white policemen, is “[l]ike all her people . . . a hunter” (7); the mental powers of Ningi, the kookaburra totem, are likened to essential hunting skills: “Ningi could read his mind as easily as a child could follow the tracks of an adult kangaroo” (225).

By inscribing the hunt into the narrative and infusing it into the plot and its characters, Watson employs the literary representation of the hunt as a strategy for cultural survival in a world where hunting and hunting skills have been eliminated from the everyday lives of urban Aboriginal populations.¹²⁶ Broome reports that “[a]ll Aboriginal communities were

semi-nomadic hunters and gatherers which meant that each tribe foraged for food across its own defined territory. . . . It was not an aimless search but one directed by an intimate knowledge of the land and the seasons” (15). Yet Watson’s strategy of reinscription is a reminder that, as Mudrooroo puts it, “even today, scratch many an Indigenous person and beneath his or her contemporary skin, or the persona he or she shows to the white world, you will still find the old hunter or gatherer” (*Indigenous Literature* 39). Watson himself has commented that *Kadaitcha* is a form of redress, as “the recording of white history, white economists and white administrators have tried to separate the so-called true Aboriginal person, the so-called full-blooded tribal person, who is essentially a hunter-gatherer, from the urban blacks who were agitating for such bullshit things as land rights . . .” (“I Say This” 590). He points out,

not only to white Australia but also for my own brothers and sisters, that even though we live in a land of concrete and bitumen, and even though we speak in the language of the conqueror, wear the clothes of the conqueror, deal in the currency of the conqueror and essentially earn a living within the camp of the conqueror, we are still very much a tribalized, fully cultural people and we still have, even through that boundary of concrete and bitumen, we still have a very strong link to the land. (“I Say This” 590)

Maban realism thus facilitates the perception of different kinds of cultural spaces and systems which exist within the same place and time in an oxymoronic fashion. Davies likens this to the way Aranda hunters perceive the land, as “. . . *The Kadaitcha Sung* takes us to many places and enables us to see from the multiple folds in the political landscape,” which contrasts with the “Western model,” in which “the author should take us to a clear and singular position from which to view the land” (Davies and Watson 204). Indeed, hunting itself is at the intersection of different cultural universes, which hold equal balance in magic

realist fashion, and different perceptions of what hunting means and how and why it is practised illuminate the spiritual and cultural abyss between Aboriginal and white Australian society.

A conversation about fishing (the hunt for fish, as it were) between Tommy and judge Justice Jones, a wealthy, respected, and well-connected member of the white establishment, illustrates the two completely different perspectives at play. Tommy, a go-between who operates in and understands both cultural universes, is able to participate in the conversation from both angles. Through Tommy's eyes, Jones appears ignorant to the reader, since the literal and spiritual meaning of Tommy's affirmative response to the judge's question "You a salt-water man, are you?" eludes Jones completely (*Kadaitcha* 77). Tommy, after all, is able to breathe and speak under water (295-7), which makes Jones' assertion "I am a trout man myself" (76) look patently ridiculous. In contrast to Tommy, who catches fish for subsistence,¹²⁷ Jones considers fishing a trivial matter, "relaxation," and a "hobby or distraction" (76). He is clearly not interested in catching fish as food, but he does it "for the sport" (77). Jones' view of fishing evidently relates to the tradition described by Thomas R. Dunlap as that of "[m]any Australians and New Zealanders . . . willing or eager to play the sporty English squire," following a "model of gentlemanly recreation" (65). Tommy is "amused by the rambling dialogue" about fishing (*Kadaitcha* 76), at the same time as he sees right through the supposedly gentlemanly act.

More than a cultural and spiritual issue, however, these contrasting hunting practices have had very serious material and political consequences, as hunting for sport and taxonomic specimen decimated Australian wildlife in the course of colonisation. Kakkib li'Dthia Warrawee'a comments: "A couple of hundred years ago some fellas rowed ashore on this continent and preceded [sic] to shoot everything that moved or flew, and chop down or dig up everything that didn't; how the Aboriginal people standing and watching this event

survived that day is a miracle” (95). On contemporary Australia, he remarks: “Two hundred years later and these whitefellas a[re] just as greedy and destructive” (95). Indeed, Aboriginal subsistence hunting and European recreational hunting continue to clash. Jon C. Altman, Hilary Jane Bek and Linda Mae Roach document that tourism, for example, “can have both direct and indirect negative impacts on Aboriginal subsistence activities. Direct impacts occur at locations like Kakadu National Park where Aboriginal people who are harvesting resources for a livelihood are in direct competition with recreational fishers” (14). Furthermore, writing five years after the publication of *Kadaitcha*, Altman, Bek and Roach reported that, since Federation, changes in legislation regarding hunting and fishing rights had resulted in “a considerable reduction in the rights of Aboriginal people to hunt and fish for food” (5).

The clash between different animal practices is not only indicative of a cultural conflict, the contrast between the necessity of survival and the luxury of leisure, but it is ultimately a source of injustices, murders, deprivation and other violent episodes in Australia’s colonial history, as *Kadaitcha* illustrates. Accordingly, Jones’ status as a cattle station owner implicates him in the processes that rendered Aborigines landless in their own land and destitute in the cities;¹²⁸ which decimated their numbers and facilitated the large-scale exploitation of their labour and bodies.

Slaughtering Country: The Cattle Empire

As the ironically-named Justice Jones offers Tommy a position as an overseer on his cattle station, it is clear that his business rests on the exploitation of Aboriginal labour, and the theft of vast tracts of their lands. Jones’ stated purpose for his “rather large cattle holding out near Cunnamulla” is that he “intend[s] to make a lot of money out of it. The station is huge, hundreds and hundreds of square miles and some good improved pastures, too” (*Kadaitcha*

76). He needs Tommy because, as he says, “we can’t get any work out of our coons and we need someone like you to get through to them” (76). Tommy, knowing that he cannot “afford to alienate the white man” (78), who, after all, is responsible for “just sentenc[ing] a[n Aboriginal] man to death” (75),¹²⁹ evades giving an answer to the powerful judge’s offer, but reveals to his friend Jack Finlay that he has no intention of “making a career out of being a white man’s Jacky-Jacky” (78).

Watson, an Aboriginal and political activist and community worker, involved with the Brisbane Aboriginal Legal Service and the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) in the 1990s, shows an acute awareness that historical processes continue to have an impact on the lives of today’s Aboriginal communities, and that the mechanisms of oppression continue to take their toll.¹³⁰ By portraying the corrupt judge as a capitalist cattle baron intent on making as much profit from as much land as possible, Watson’s maban realist polychronotopia effectively conflates past, present and future, and connects past conflicts on remote cattle stations with a present-day urban white establishment.¹³¹ The author brings historical atrocities and injustices forward to today’s Brisbane, to highlight the ongoing concerns resulting from the wrongs committed in the wake of pastoral expansion.¹³²

The historical background to Jones’ pastoral business can, for instance, be found in Rose’s *Dingo Makes Us Human*, a study of the Yarralin people in the Victoria River valley, which outlines the decimation of the indigenous population. She argues that “the process of establishing cattle stations was the one which had the most profound impact on Aboriginal people” in the Victoria River District (*Dingo* 9).¹³³ According to Rose, their first encounter with Europeans occurred in 1883, when Victoria River Downs in the Northern Territory was established as “the largest cattle station in the world,” with “four or five thousand Aboriginal people living in the area” (*Dingo* 1). But, she writes, “[f]ifty-five years later only 187

remained” (*Dingo* 1). Rose describes the cattle industry’s role in “forcibly wresting control of the land” from the indigenous population. She explains: “The essence of the cattle station economies was that as Aboriginal labour was virtually free, labour-intensive production was profitable. Unwilling to cut into profits by investing in capital intensive production, station owners maintained a strong interest in keeping the cost of Aboriginal labour as low as possible” (*Dingo* 17).

In fact, the cattle industry was reliant on what was effectively slave labour, as state governments withheld their wages. Rosalind Kidd’s report *Hard Labour, Stolen Wages* gives an extensive account of the practice marked by abuse, fraud and neglect, which continued until as recently as 1972. Bob Weatherall from the indigenous rights group Fairstates: “Aborigines were forced into the rural industry. We were the ones who built the state of Queensland—as slaves. Everyone else in Australia has been able to acquire enormous comfort and wealth through this labour” (“In Pictures: Victims and Campaigners”). Concurrently, Broome writes, “Aborigines were absolutely essential to the pastoral economy because of their skills and their acceptance of low wages The cattle industry was profitable only because the Aborigines had little choice but to work at below subsistence wages” (130-1).¹³⁴ Rose relates the personal experience of Hobbles Danayarri, who tells of “lack of wages, minimal health care, appalling living conditions, violence, back-breaking work for men and women, and insufficient and unhealthy food” on the cattle stations (*Dingo* 18).¹³⁵

In addition, Rose describes the disturbing practices in place to gain control of the land: “Most of the managers and workers came to the Northern Territory from Queensland where they had apparently developed strategies through which the country could efficiently be made safe for their purposes. It seems that the initial tactic was to kill; after this period of ruthless extermination, the second tactic was to incorporate the survivors into the station

work force” (*Dingo* 9). Conflict arose when “[s]carcity of food,” caused by the displacement of native wildlife with sheep and cattle, “encouraged Aborigines to look to European stock as an alternative” (Dingle 57). Dingle explains that, in consequence,

[s]quatters threatened to shoot them if they killed sheep, fenced off water supplies that had already been damaged by sheep and encouraged them to move away. . . . Pastoralism and hunting and gathering proved to be incompatible forms of land use although it should be noted that Aborigines generally did not object to the presence of Europeans on their land and attempted in various ways to incorporate them into their kinship networks. It was only when Europeans insisted on their exclusive use of the land and failed to fulfil what Aborigines considered to be their reciprocal obligations that there was violent retaliation. (57)

In *Kadaitcha*, the fictional Native Mounted Police (NMP) “opened the country up” for the pastoral economy by murdering Aborigines (11). The historical NMP was “an Aboriginal fighting force to be used against the Aboriginal resistance” and marked, according to Broome, “the absolute rock bottom of government Aboriginal policy. Not only was violence against the Aborigines being institutionalised, but several hundred Aborigines were being encouraged to hound and kill other Aborigines in the service of colonial expansion” (48-9). Again, Watson conflates past and present, as the NMP was disestablished in Queensland in the 1890s (see Broome 49), and his fictional NMP is interchangeable with the regular urban police service (see Griffiths, “Representing Difference” 474).¹³⁶ Chambers, one of the white officers, talks of the connection between pastoral settlement and the genocide of Aborigines in Tasmania: “All the cockies and the government fullahs were screaming for shooters early in the piece. They had a bloody stack of new settlers and immigrants stuck in the towns, too

toey to get out on the land ‘cause of the coons. But we soon set them straight” (*Kadaitcha* 14).¹³⁷

Rose describes the alliance between police and cattle stations: “In the early years of settlement, cattle men and police were engaged in the serious business of conquering the country by decimating its people” (*Dingo* 9). In *Kadaitcha*, the Jesuit priest Father Senior at the Cribb Island Native Compound sums up the attitude that made such violence towards the Aboriginal population possible. He comments: “These poor devils have only come out of the trees a few generations back . . .” (89). Such racist animalisations of Aborigines were reported by a Reverend W. Yate, for instance, who “[i]n 1835 . . . told a government inquiry that: ‘I have heard again and again people say that they [the Aborigines] were nothing better than dogs, and that it was no more harm to shoot them than it would be to shoot a dog’” (Broome 34).

However, it is the comparison with farmed animals that is particularly often drawn on, either explicitly or implicitly, in relation to the treatment of Aborigines. The prologue to *Kadaitcha* signals the fundamental shift in animal practices, as well as the application of those practices to the Aboriginal people, as the “fair-skinned ones laid waste to the garden and the chosen people” and “the tribes were decimated, they lost their lands and they were herded into compounds like animals” (3). The idea that Aborigines were treated “like animals” is invoked by Broome, who uses the term “slaughter” for a “massacre of Aboriginal women, children and the aged” (46). Rose describes the “revulsion and disbelief” expressed by Aborigines, “that Europeans preferred to shoot rather than to converse, and that they held the lives of human beings to be of less value than those of cattle” (*Dingo* 2). Lines argues that in Queensland “[h]uman slaughter . . . liberated the country for sheep. In 1859 Queensland grazed 3 500 000 sheep; 21 700 000 depastured there in 1893. At least 200 000 Aborigines lived in Queensland in 1840; no more than 15 000 remained alive by the turn of

the century” (109). By qualifying the term “slaughter,” Lines highlights that in a cynical reversal, people have been killed “like animals,” so that animals can live (at least temporarily).

The term “slaughter” derives from the Old Norse and Icelandic word *slátr*, meaning “butcher-meat.” It is also related to the Norwegian dialect word *slaater*, meaning “cattle for killing.” Thus, the first definition of “slaughter” is “[t]he killing of cattle, sheep or other animals for food.” Only the second meaning is given as “[t]he killing or slaying of a person; murder, homicide, esp. of a brutal kind.” The association with the killing of animals when using the term “slaughter” for the killing of people is thus a very close one. Generally, using “slaughter” in connection with people takes on much more brutal, violent, and emotive connotations than the idea of slaughtering animals, which is, certainly in Western societies, by and large regarded as a fact of life, a necessity, and, in more sanitised terms, a routine practice that does not require much contemplation. However, in connection with the racist animalisation of Aborigines, the link and crossover signified by the related terms “slaughter” and “butchering” is especially significant.

Carol Adams comments on the processes that render nonhuman animals “absent referents” and discusses the linguistic mechanisms inherent in such comparisons with animals. She argues: “The animals have become absent referents, whose fate is transmuted into a metaphor for someone else’s existence or fate. Metaphorically, the absent referent can be anything whose original meaning is undercut as it is absorbed into a different hierarchy of meaning; in this case the original meaning of animals’ fates is absorbed into a human-centred hierarchy” (53). Whilst Adams speaks, in this instance, of the comparison between the slaughter of animals—their transformation into meat products—with sexual violence against women, in more general terms her concept of the absent referent is particularly pertinent in relation to *Kadaitcha*. She writes: “While animals are the absent objects, their fate is

continually summoned through the metaphor of butchering” (69). Accordingly, the dead metaphors of “butchering” and “slaughtering” are not only commonly invoked, but also, to varying degrees, re-associated with their referent, the killing of animals, in the context of Australian colonisation. Yet, as Adams points out, the absent referent is ultimately “both there and not there. It is there through inference, but its meaningfulness reflects only upon what it refers to because the originating, literal, experience that contributes the meaning is not there. We fail to accord this absent referent its own existence” (53). Indeed, rather than simply illuminating the connection, Watson makes a particular point, paradoxically, of shedding light on this fact that the absent referents, the victims and processes of industrialised butchering and slaughtering, remain in the dark.

Accordingly, the close link between Aboriginal characters and cattle in *Kadaitcha* is strikingly illustrated by the naming of “Poddy” and “Bulley Macow.” Poddy, a little boy from the mission, represents the youngest generation, dispossessed and ignorant of their native language and culture:

Tommy felt immensely saddened by the boy. The tribes had always measured their wealth in the health and abundance of the next generation, who were the guardians and warriors of tomorrow. Yet children like Poddy had never walked upon their own land and they spoke English too fluently. Their own language was beginning to fade and they knew nothing of their own Dreaming. (261)

The fact that Poddy, who likes “them cowboy mob” from Western movies (260), is himself a “cow/boy” illuminates the sheer scale of his confusion and loss of identity, and the pervasive influence of the cattle barons’ reign. Perceptively and ironically, Poddy describes the cowboys as “real deadly,” as they “belt the piss out of them Indian buggers” (260). Watson draws parallels between indigenous experiences of colonisation as Tommy points out to

Poddy that he is “backing the wrong mob there. Those same Indians now, well they our country men and we the same blood as that mob. Them cowboy fullahs the same breed as the night riders up north. They bad news mate. You want to back those red fullahs up, boy” (260).

Poddy’s name, moreover, signifies his place in the postcolonial order of power, as it conjures up the imagery of the rodeo, the re-enactment of North American frontier conquest,¹³⁸ yet with a distinctly Australian flavour: “poddy,” after all, is the Australian term for a small calf used in “poddy riding” by young rodeo cowboys. This denotes a position of complete powerlessness, as the rodeo employs coercive measures to control animals, such as sticks and electric cattle prods; the animals are also at risk of bullying and abuse by cowboys and handlers.¹³⁹

Whilst the rodeo, a form of postcolonial entertainment evolved within and from the cattle industry, is thus an allegory for present-day postcolonial power-structures, Watson does not depict the hierarchies in place simply as a battle between black and white. Accordingly, a sympathetic white barkeeper and “mate” of Tommy is called “Bronco” (279). By definition, bucking broncos are rodeo horses who “naturally” want to get rid of the weight of the cowboy of their backs (R. Clark, “How Do They Make Bareback Horses Buck?”).¹⁴⁰ The allegorical connection with a class of white people oppressed by the structures of empire is signalled by the fact that Bronco’s pub known as “the Queen’s Hole” is a popular meeting place for “anti-royalists” (*Kadaitcha* 278).

Significantly, Bronco is not associated with cattle, denoting his essential difference in status and circumstances. Cattle imagery remains associated with Aboriginality, as the pained cry of cattle rings throughout the narrative. Thus, “a roar of thunder bellow[s]” when Booka hears the news of the new Kadaitcha (*Kadaitcha* 68), and as Tommy dives into the sea to prepare for the final battle, “his flesh bellow[s] out for relief” (295). Furthermore,

Tommy's aunt Darpil (298), children gruesomely killed by the NMP in a massacre (15), Boonger (195, 210), Booka (304) and the Bunyatt (309) all "bellow" as well. The cattle imagery reflects the reality that Aborigines ". . . were taken here and there; sometimes we went voluntarily; other times we were like cattle rounded up, slaughtered and bought and sold" (Mudrooroo, *Us Mob* vi).

Indeed, indigenous communities were also seen as pests on the land. Tatz reports on the situation in nineteenth-century Queensland: "White settlers killed some 10,000 blacks in Queensland between 1824 and 1908. Considered 'wild animals', 'vermin', 'scarcely human', 'hideous to humanity', 'loathsome', and a 'nuisance', they were fair game for white 'sportsmen.'" He cites Arthur Hamilton Gordon, British High Commissioner, in 1883, who "wrote privately to his friend William Gladstone[,] Prime Minister of England":

The habit of regarding the natives as vermin, to be cleared off the face of the earth, has given the average Queenslander a tone of brutality and cruelty in dealing with 'blacks' which it is very difficult to anyone who does not know it, as I do, to realise. I have heard men of culture and refinement, of the greatest humanity and kindness to their fellow whites . . . talk, not only of the wholesale butchery (for the iniquity of that may sometimes be disguised from themselves) but of the *individual* murder of natives, exactly as they would talk of a day's sport, or having to kill some troublesome animal. (qtd. in Tatz, original italics)

Dingle, who focuses on the expansion of the wool industry, describes the attitude that saw Aborigines as parasites: "The justification for the European occupation of the land (used then and since) was that pastoralists and farmers could make the soil productive in a way that the Aborigines—who survived merely by harvesting nature's bounty and were therefore claimed to be essentially parasitic—were unable to do" (59). Using the absence of a pastoral

economy as the criterion to judge that Aborigines are animals strengthened the *terra nullius* doctrine, the idea that “the growing inflow of immigrants, the development of farming, the search for a staple export and the eventual emergence of the wool industry . . . filled a vacuum” (Dingle 59). The fact that the land was inhabited by human beings was an inconvenient contradiction of the *terra nullius* doctrine and therefore generally of no consequence in the pursuit of profit.¹⁴¹

At the same time as police and pastoralists decimated Aboriginal communities, Rose writes, “[t]hey were equally engaged in assuring that word of their actions not be made public, for by the 1880s there had developed behind the frontier, in the southern colonies, a society of settled citizens who protested against the gross ill-treatment of blacks” (*Dingo* 9). Accordingly, one of Booka’s white officers complains about public opinion turning against the NMP: “I mean them city bastards like their cheap beef; but they don’t fuckin’ know what chances the cow-cookies take. . . . This could be a real white man’s country if only those big mouths would just give us a go. Have a look at how friggin’ quiet Tasmania is now you and Roth and all the rest shot out the niggers” (*Kadaitcha* 13). Put in the spotlight by obtrusively vulgar language here is the link between the mass production of meat, the decimation, exploitation and dispossession of Aborigines, and the implicit complicity of those removed from the slaughter, the city dwellers, who, albeit opposed to the decimation of Aborigines, enjoy the benefits of the process (“cheap beef”). Watson draws direct parallels between the production, commodification and consumption of meat and the historical processes that have objectified and dehumanised Aborigines, obscured the origins and details of their exploitation, and thus disconnected those implicated from any notion of responsibility. Rose points out that “European sources are not completely silent; particularly in the early years it was accepted that killing was essential. To quote Ernestine Hill, a journalist who interviewed many of the early settlers: ‘The business of establishing a cattle empire depended upon

killing. . . .” (*Dingo* 10). The “cattle empire,” after all, was not only an empire over cows, but also the reign over people treated like cattle.

“A Couple of Choice Courses”: The Meat of the Story

As the act of butchering blurs the boundary between humans and animals in *Kadaitcha*, the conceptual distinction between human “flesh” and animal “meat” is also dissolved.¹⁴² In Watson’s novel, meat literally and metaphorically forms the connective tissue, so to speak, between “conceptual othering,”¹⁴³ commodification and physical persecution. Meat is employed both as a metaphor as well as a material, embodied entity. The reader is constantly reminded that the human body ultimately consists of meat. Thus, Ningi warns Booka: “If you do not sharpen your skills you will be nothing but rotting meat, left in the dust for the dingo and the black goanna” (219); the NMP burns “the rotting remains” of Aboriginal people whom they have ‘butchered’ (43); the cemetery, where all meat is rather bloodless, is cast in an “almost anaemic light” (161); and Tommy implicitly points to the common link between humans and animals, when he tells Ningi that death “is the way of all flesh” (225).

However, the connection between human and animal flesh is made particularly explicit when the “naked body of Tea-Pot,” an Aboriginal tracker who betrayed his people to Booka, is left “hanging from a meat hook” in Booka’s headquarters: “The top of the hook was jammed into the ceiling and Tea-pot had been lifted onto it, so it pierced his lower jaw” (244). Furthermore, the ironically named Bulley Macow literally slaughters a white policeman who had raped and murdered his sister: “Trained as a knife hand at a meatworks, Bulley Macow was good with a blade and the white man died a slow and very painful death” (57). Ironically, or aptly, Tommy and Finlay hope (in vain) for “a verdict of manslaughter” for Bulley (73). Thus, the ultimate revenge in *Kadaitcha* is to literally make meat of those who butcher others.

Furthermore, “meat” is an intensely sexualised metaphor in *Kadaitcha*. Adams points out that “[m]eat becomes a term to express women’s oppression, used equally by patriarchy and feminists, who say that women are ‘pieces of meat’” (59). Correspondingly, alongside the various references to butchering, the representation of women as “pieces of meat” in the narrative is particularly striking and disturbing. Whilst the idea of “pieces of meat” in a sexualised context is not restricted to women, this particular comparison is most prevalent, and the various ways of consuming meat, whether literally or in more metaphorical senses, are closely connected in *Kadaitcha*.¹⁴⁴ Accordingly, the first instance of “meat” used as a sexualised metaphor is when Booka and Sambo encounter what appears to be a prostitute, a “heavily painted white woman”: “Her dress was soaked and her body offered itself obscenely. . . . Roth waved the woman off. She stepped back and jabbed an upright finger at them. ‘Yeah! Fuck you too sweetie,’ Sambo chuckled. ‘I’m going to chew your pink meat later.’” (*Kadaitcha* 44) Immediately, the idea of “meat” is connected not only with sexual commodification,¹⁴⁵ but it is also explicitly tied to a metaphor connected to eating. Likewise, prostitution in Coontown takes place in an environment “run by shifting alliances of lower white criminals and black street gangs. Its pubs and bars stayed open all hours, providing a stream of cashed-up human fodder for the diseased brothels” (45).

Throughout the narrative, it becomes increasingly clear that sexualised meat metaphors, such as “prime meat” (116), “young black meat” (91), “human fodder,” and “pink meat” are more than simply figures of speech, but that their meanings are very sinister and literal. For example, immediately after the encounter with the prostitute, Booka and Sambo hunt the town for meat. In the immediate context, and also because at this point it is not clear who the “servant” is, the reader still automatically assumes that Booka and Sambo are speaking in sexual metaphors: “‘What sort of meat we need tonight, boss?’ [Sambo] asked. ‘A youngish, clean sort of woman. Our servant is developing strange appetites, but we’ll see

what we can come up with” (46). However, a short while later, Booka obscurely remarks that he is going to be able to offer his “friend a couple of choice courses” (53). It transpires that Booka and Sambo are, in fact, feeding corpses to the Bunyatt, the monster guarding the heart of Biameet. Booka comments that Chambers and Hinds, the police officers killed by Jonjurrie and Worimi, “made a tasty enough meal” (68)

Throughout the novel, the re-introduced referents and the sexual metaphors derived from them remain intimately connected, as “Booka Roth and his migloo mates” treat the bars of Coontown like the meat counter of a butchershop, where they make their “blatant selection” for “young black meat” to supply their parties (283). At these parties, it emerges, Booka entertains influential men, such as politicians and judges, and the “young black meat” denotes their choice of victims of grave sexual abuse: “The Roth mansion was again hosting an evening of enjoyment for some of Queensland’s most powerful men Booka, who well knew of the twisted tastes of his betters, had provided them with three fine young gins” (205). In particular, the cattle baron Justice Jones, evidently one of Booka’s regular guests, embodies the fusion of metaphorical and literal butchering, and the consumption of meat.¹⁴⁶ Booka’s initial comment that his “servant is developing strange appetites” is therefore ambiguous, possibly referring to Justice Jones as much as the Bunyatt, as, most disturbingly, the judge rapes and murders Booka’s prey first, before their corpses are fed to the monster. In this way, “[t]he naked and bloodied body of Florence,” who died while Jones was raping her, “lay in the corner like a discarded bag of rubbish, ready to be served to the Bunyatt, to appease its awful appetite” (237). The process through which Booka and Justice Jones turn Florence into a piece of meat, or “an empty envelope of flesh” (222), is described by Adams, who argues:

Consumption is the fulfillment of oppression, the annihilation of will, of separate identity. So too with language: a subject first is viewed, or

objectified, through metaphor. Through fragmentation the object is severed from its ontological meaning. Finally, consumed, it exists only through what it represents. The consumption of the referent reiterates its annihilation as a subject of importance itself. (58)

Accordingly, Florence is nameless to Jones, for whom she is not a human being but a “gin,” interchangeable, replaceable and disposable: “‘Are there any more gins available?’ Jones asked as he completed his dressing. He asked the question as casually as another man would ask for a second beer” (*Kadaitcha* 223).

The cattle baron’s abuse of Florence reflects the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women on cattle stations (see Broome 101), which was grounded in a perception of them as no different from farmed animals, commodified, readily accessible for use (against their will), units rather than humans, as “[s]ome cattle owners boasted that they could breed all their future labour from Aboriginal women” (Broome 138). Yet, because of his graphic portrayal of sex and sexual abuse, Watson has been charged with depicting women in an exploitative fashion (see Griffiths, “Representing Difference” 481; Lever 110), and criticised for deliberately attempting to “draw in a popular readership seeking the prurient” (Griffiths, “Representing Difference” 481; see also Gelder and Jacobs 111).¹⁴⁷ However, such statements suggest that critics have not looked beyond the lurid veneer. Indeed, Watson has made an emphatic statement attesting to “the strength of the black woman” as the “most enduring asset of aboriginal people since white settlement” (qtd. in Dean). This, he says, “has been our strongest spear and our greatest shield in the black community. It has been the strength, vision and courage of black women that have carried us through. This fact[,] unfortunately, has not been recognised fully by black men. I think it will take a black man to write of it” (qtd. in Dean). *Kadaitcha*’s female characters are instrumental in trapping Booka and hunting him down, and are thus—arguably and to a degree at least—re-empowered.¹⁴⁸

Instead, such explicit scenes fulfil another, more subtle function, as Watson—deliberately, I propose—puts the (white) reader into the position of voyeur and, accordingly, “meat” consumer.¹⁴⁹ In this context, the subtitle of the novel, *A Seductive Tale of Sorcery, Eroticism and Corruption*, is a very candid description of how the narrative functions in relation to the reader, who is (potentially) seduced and corrupted by the seemingly gratuitous scenes and thus implicated as *Mitläufer*,¹⁵⁰ unless they read the novel beyond entertainment and consider their own position. And this position, conversely, entails potentially being “made meat of” themselves, as human-animal boundaries are blurred beyond the narrative and the reader, too, is animalised.

In a general sense, the animalisation of the reader is a reflection of the Dreaming, whereby humans and animals are “simply one,” as the omnipresence of Purnung, the Dingo Dreaming, spills over and out of the narrative to encompass and include the reader. Thus, not only are fictional characters imbued with dog qualities, but as the reader is following the plot, that is, participating in Tommy’s and Purnung’s hunt for Booka and his “dogs,” the reader is dogging—chasing—Tommy’s adversaries, as much as being dogged, along with Tommy, by them in return. Moreover, Tommy finally demands “a terrible retribution from the new settlers” (310), which means that, ironically, white readers are dogged at the same time by the Kadaitcha man and his curse, as Tommy seeks to bring white settlers to justice. He arranges that “[f]or every one hundred migloo, there had to be one that would know depthless tragedy and sorrow” (310), and declares: “And I say this to you migloo: you will be doomed to the end of time to wear the blood of my people” (311).

Watson explains the role of the Kadaitcha man:

I wanted to base the book on a foundation of black strength and black power, and the most powerful figure within traditional Australian society was the tribal Kadaitcha. The Kadaitcha man is the tribal executioner, tribal sheriff,

tribal bounty hunter, who would take up your cause for you and pay back, visit revenge upon your enemies. So it had to be a Kadaitcha man. (“I Say This” 590)

As a result of joining Tommy’s and Purnung’s hunt, readers are confronted with the looming threat of being tracked down and becoming “dog meat,” so to speak, themselves—though less in the novel’s ominous and physical sense, but in terms of having to answer for their position. Ultimately, the ubiquity of the great hunter, the Dingo Dreaming, confounds the reader’s ability to distinguish who is a hunting “dog” or hunting with “dogs,” and who is hunting “dogs” or hunted by “dogs,” who is dogging and who is dogged. Purnung thus represents the “trickster character,” who, as Mudrooroo writes, “keep[s] the boundaries fluid” (*Indigenous Literature* 207).

Hall considers “[m]agical realism . . . the hybrid literary mode par excellence,” which “by actively and intentionally dismantling borders and boundaries, . . . demonstrates the arbitrary nature of their construction, and illuminates inequalities in the power structures that constitute the desire for borders and boundaries” (116). Watson’s representations of animals and conflicting animal practices, his blurring of human-animal boundaries, the essential and spiritual notion that humans and animals are “one” all serve to illuminate historic and contemporary inequalities and unveil the power structures and processes that perpetuate and produce them. In this context, the barbecue scene at Stephen’s house is crucial, as Watson employs body language and silence to elucidate cultural differences and conflicts, as well as the arbitrariness, even absurdity, of borders and boundaries instituted by Western science and cultural tastes, in a setting often considered a quintessentially Australian affair.

“That Last Chop”: The Story of Meat

Boonger’s clubbing and cooking of a possum at Stephen’s barbecue (*Kadaitcha* 209-13) brings the white guests’ repressed prejudices, culturally ingrained attitudes and double standards to the surface and spotlights cultural blindspots, areas which remain hidden not so much because they are in fact invisible, but rather because society at large chooses to ignore them. The ensuing argument revolves around the idea of what kind of meat consumption is acceptable and supposedly civilised, and what kind is not. The row divides the idea of meat into two distinctive categories. As Boonger tries to explain that the possum is in fact “my tucker,” “my meat” (210), for which he hunts on a regular basis, one of the women amongst Stephen’s guests speaks up indignantly: “If you wanted to eat you could have shared our food” (211). In this case, “our food” consists of a large meat tray Stephen had won previously in a darts competition. Since both the barbecue meat on the tray and the possum meat are animal flesh, and both are edible, the question arises as to what may be the reason for the “the shocked faces” and “the wall of revulsion” (210) shown by Stephen’s white guests.

Their comments suggest that the possum cannot be eaten because it is both “cute” (209) and endangered. And yet, the cuteness of the possum cannot be the real reason for his or her assumed inedibility, because animals generally described as “cute,” such as lambs, rabbits or young calves, are consumed in their thousands every day by mainstream Western society. Furthermore, the woman’s accusation that Boonger is a “brute” (211) because he has killed a member of an endangered species is not convincing, either. She charges: “Don’t you realize how rare those little creatures are becoming? It’s vandals like you who will kill them into extinction . . .” (211). However, it is not Aboriginal hunting practices that have caused possums to be endangered. As Lines points out, “Aborigines had successfully managed the Australian environment for tens of thousands of years” (82). On the other hand, modern

pastoral and industrialised farming practices play a large part in the destruction of native habitat, yet Stephen's guests make no connection between their own barbecue meat and environmental degradation.¹⁵¹

So as neither the environmental argument nor the cuteness of the possum provide an adequate explanation for the white woman's and the other guests' anger, there is evidently another factor at play that renders Boonger a savage brute in their eyes: It is significant, for example, that the white woman sets up the "your food—our food" binary in racial, or rather, racist, terms. As Boonger's concept of what he calls "my tucker" intrinsically embraces not the idea of ownership but the idea of generous sharing as he offers some of his possum meat to the other guests, the white woman's offer of food in turn constitutes not only a rejection of Boonger's possum meat, but also an element of charity of the patronising kind.

What Stephen's white guests miss completely is the possum's spiritual connection with the Dreaming; a fact Watson illuminates through Jelda's kinship with the Black Possum (71, 301, 310). Boonger practises his own connection to country and Dreaming through his hunt, whilst modern industrialised animal practices, represented by the barbecue meat tray, are essentially disconnected from it. Indeed, Watson uses suggestive slaughterhouse imagery to discuss the disconnection of Aborigines from the Dreaming through the processes of colonisation. He comments on "that boundary, the barriers that have been built up, the barriers in the mind, placed there by the sheer horror of the daily existence of the racism, of having to work within this enormous abattoir that the Migloos created on our land" (Davies and Watson 211). The possum and Boonger's hunt bring the novel's competing systems of representation and ways of looking to a point; the seemingly incidental barbecue scene is thus central to Watson's maban realist universe, where different animal, spiritual and cultural practices, as well as different histories and politics, intersect in the body of a single dead animal.

In *Kadaitcha*, the controversy over who can eat what and where opens up fundamental questions about belonging, identity, power structures and “race” relations in contemporary Australian society, as the cattle empire continues to shape the inter-relations of Aboriginal Australians and Australians of European origin. Thus, as the heated debate unfolds, Tommy, who had spoken up to support Boonger, is told by the woman’s husband: “You just keep your place! You had no right to talk to my wife like that. She’s sent a clothes parcel to your people every Christmas. You should learn to hold your tongue” (211). Tommy responds with a question: “Just what is my place? Do tell me, boy!” (211). The exchange, set against the backdrop of the smouldering possum and the barbecue meat tray, is an expression and continuation of the colonial view that the question of whose place Australia is ties intimately to the idea of whose animal practices are supposedly civilised and productive. Watson thus presents the idea of pastoralism as the ultimate mark of landownership, and of hunting and gathering as an invalid claim over land, as culturally ingrained and contemporary. Boonger’s choice of meat becomes an excuse for the white woman to reveal her inherent, yet hitherto latent, racism, when she not only calls him a “brute,” but likens all Aboriginal Australians to animals. Thus she proceeds to complain about what she perceives as Aboriginal ingratitude and says, “I’ve done so many things for you people and that is all we get. Insults! I really thought that you people deserved our support, but you just don’t. You just keep on biting the hand that feeds you” (212).

Glen Elder, Jennifer Wolch and Jody Emel describe the process at work here and write,

Specific human-animal interactions that are legitimized and rationalized over time, become accepted as civilized behavior. Those who do not stay within this repertoire, however, fall over the human-animal boundary into the

netherworld of savagery. If practices are viewed as too far over the line, they can even be likened to cannibalism. (195)

They describe the human-animal boundary as “a shifting, metaphorical line, built up on the basis of human-animal interaction patterns, ideas about hierarchies of living things, and the symbolic roles played by specific animals in society” (184). The assumed inedibility of possums rests thus in part on their special, revered status in white Australian society, as “[c]ertain sorts of animals (such as apes, companion animals, or other revered species) become positioned on the human side of this metaphorical line, rendering some practices unacceptable” (Elder, Wolch and Emel 184). Correspondingly, whilst Boonger and Tommy are regarded as “animals,” the possum, described by Stephen as “one of my guests” (211), is humanised. Eating possum, or, especially, this particular possum, is thus tantamount to cannibalism.

However, Elder, Wolch and Emel also stress the importance of place, “the site of harm” as they call it. They write that this is “perhaps the most crucial aspect of context in determining the legitimacy of an animal practice: Was an animal killed in a slaughterhouse, or in the backyard barbecue pit?” (197). Elder, Wolch and Emel argue that “[a]lthough in traditional societies, killing animals is a quotidian experience, keeping violence toward animals out of sight is required to legitimize animal suffering on the vast scale required to accomodate [sic] modern mass market demand for food, medicine, and clothing” (197). Boonger hits a raw nerve when he kills the possum in view of everybody. As Watson writes, “The whites shook their heads dumbly. Theirs was a cloistered world, removed from the harshness of everyday life. They had never before been so . . . so confronted by such direct violence” (*Kadaitcha* 210, original ellipsis). Accordingly, Watson’s barbecue scene illuminates the phenomenon that acts of brutality are only considered so-called animal behaviour when they are visible. Unseen brutality, however, is part and parcel of everyday

practices in Western animal economies. As Elder, Wolch and Emel write, “. . . harmful practices are normalized to reduce the guilt or ambivalence associated with inflicting animal pain or death and justify such actions as defensible” (184).

I propose, therefore, that in *Kadaitcha*, more than anything, it is not the killing that upsets Stephen’s white guests, but the visibility of it. Significantly, Stephen’s house, where the barbecue takes place, is the gatekeeper’s cottage of a cemetery, a fact that “unsettled many of his visitors, but he scoffed at them. The smell of so many dead was the truest perfume in the universe, he told them” (170). Accordingly, the reader needs to keep in mind that the smell of death defines and pervades the setting of the barbecue. Therefore, when the woman, walking away from the scene of the argument, comments, “That dreadful stink is making me quite ill” (212), this appears to refer in the first instance to the smell of the smouldering possum, in the second instance it may be perceived as a racial slur against Tommy and Boonger, but ultimately it also points to the smell from the cemetery, the unsettling reminder of death, which the woman finds intolerable.

The red blood dripping from the possum’s carcass, the singeing hair and the tightening limbs of the animal in the fire (210) confront Stephen’s guests directly with the material realities of death. Additionally, a detailed description of a wallaby hunt starkly contrasts with the “cloistered world” of Stephen’s white guests. From the wallaby grazing in the bush, via Tommy’s stalking, his prayer before the kill, his spearing of the wallaby, his preparation and dismembering of the carcass, the careful disposal of minimal, biodegradable waste, to the description of the final product, his aunt Darpil’s “superb wallaby stew” (263), Watson presents, so to speak, the history of a bush meat dish. Significantly, after skinning and disembowelling the animal, Tommy hangs the carcass up in a tree at the mission, visible to everyone, whilst the barbecue meat at Stephen’s party is quietly juxtaposed, its precise origins unknown, its history untold. The high visibility and graphic descriptions of the

possum's and wallaby's deaths thus emphasise, by contrast, the invisibility of the lives and deaths of the individual animals processed into barbecue meat. In this manner, Watson amplifies the silence surrounding the story of meat.

However, Watson's use of meat in *Kadaitcha* is as much metaphorical as it is literal. A significant moment in the novel, when Tommy and his mother "embrace as mother and son for the first time," is interrupted: "Below them, a train zoomed past, carrying its load of tired, cold white meat" (176). This moment of reconciliation between black and white is thus disrupted by the ghostly presence of either literally refrigerated meat, or, metaphorically, cold-hearted white passengers. The disruption is a chilling reminder that before black and white can reconcile, there is unfinished business to attend to. Correspondingly, as Stephen, a stereotypical parody of a white colonial Englishman, chooses the meat tray as his "trophy" over whisky, this symbolic act signifies the inextricable connection between the colonisation of Australia and the production of meat: Australia itself, once producer of abundant meat for British dinner tables and now the world's largest meat exporter,¹⁵² is the Englishman's "prize" (186).

By using meat, butchering, and slaughtering as allegories and dead metaphors, and by making meat and butchering very literal and tangible concerns throughout the narrative, Watson renders the absent referent not so absent; he re-embodies these supposedly dead metaphors by shifting the emphasis back to the metaphor's referent, so that figure of speech and figure of flesh (so to speak) hold equal balance. In this way, Watson textualises previously non-verbal, Aboriginal modes of communication, on which he comments: "Of course, we excel at using body language and silence as a means of communication and thought. Though how one gets into print through silence . . . Silence is of course a very powerful tool" (qtd. in Dean," original ellipsis). Watson's metaphorical use of meat reinstates the language of the body, or body language, as it were, alongside silence as a tool

of communication, to the text. By shifting human-animal boundaries, Watson emphasises the very real connection between Australian animal industries and the exploitation and decimation of Aborigines. Thus, the story of meat is in fact the meat of the story, as Watson draws direct parallels between the production, commodification and consumption of meat and the historical processes that have objectified and dehumanised Aborigines, obscured the origins and details of their exploitation, and thus disconnected those implicated, to whatever degree, from any notion of responsibility.

In this context, Watson makes use of a distinction set up by Mudrooroo in *Ghost Dreaming*, whereby supposedly wholesome bush meat, such as “the sweetest” and “most tender” roasted possum (*Ghost Dreaming* 28), is contrasted with indigestible colonial fare, such as salt pork and mutton, which even Fada and Mada find “abominable” (48-9). In an allegory of colonial experience, Mudrooroo describes Fada’s and Mada’s unappetising evening meal, consisting of “a row of very lean mutton chops and some withered potatoes [which] lay congealing in a lumpy gravy,” as “a period of social disharmony and tough meat” (96), a circumstance of which Sonny, representative of the first settler generation born in Australia, seems blissfully oblivious. Fada’s and Mada’s son, “blessed with youth, a cast-iron stomach and a palate which had never known anything but rough colonial fare,” actually “enjoy[s] the food” (96). He is preoccupied with “that last chop” (96-97), which he hopes his father will leave to him. However, the sheep meat, “the toughness of the evening’s meal” (116), turns out to be hard to digest, “as his stomach gave a long low growl of discomfort. He settled back. It was the last chop that had done it” (121). Significantly, the image of “that last chop” frames Ludjee’s memory of her slaughtered community: “The cool night air reeked with the odour of rotting flesh [. . .]. Ludjee shuddered. Her mind filled with images of the skeletons of her butchered community erected and on display as if, as if . . .” (100; original ellipsis). Again, Mudrooroo literalises and re-embodies a dead metaphor, as the

memory of butchered communities is hard to stomach, as it were; a metaphor Broome, for instance, employs: “Indeed, far more Aboriginal women and children were killed than European, although this was partly because there were so few European families on the frontier. The list of massacres and slaughter could go on if one could stomach it” (Broome 47).

A similar contrast, with similar connotations, can be found in *Kadaitcha*, whereby Bulley Macow complains, “I bin eat migloo shit food far too long mate. I need my own tucker, I need my own land!” (*Kadaitcha* 59). Additionally, after Tommy criticises his white girlfriend Mary’s completely burnt steaks, she tells him, “You eat too much meat that’s only half-cooked. At least my food is well done” (160). The fact that Mary suggests they watch tennis whilst eating the steaks only highlights the connection between overcooked meat and English culture. In contrast, Boonger declares to the repulsed white guests at the barbecue that he cooks his possum “only . . . a little bit” and professes his “love” for “bush blood” (210).

In *Kadaitcha*, cooked meat (“post-Cook,” so to speak) re-embodies the saying “Cooking up a story” in relation to Australian colonial history. The allegory rests on the phenomenon that, in terms of meat, Westerners are not generally keen to make a connection between picturesque cows in a field and the juicy steak on their dinner plate. After all, by the time the animals in the fields have become chunks of meat packed in plastic on the supermarket shelves, we no longer think of them as sentient beings. We deal swiftly with any reminders that may not have been eliminated by processing: blood dripped onto the kitchen bench is quickly wiped away with disinfectant, and the idea of raw, pink flesh and muscle, the image of a distinctive body part, dissolves during the cooking process. And like Boonger, most Westerners, too, eat blood, except that most of the time we ensure it is cooked beyond recognition.¹⁵³ Cooking thus distorts memories, and “Cooking up a story” firmly separates

uncomfortable facts and events in the past from the benefits enjoyed in present. One of the questions Watson's novel poses, certainly for his white Western readership, is this: if we cannot even face where our lunch comes from, how do we deal with the atrocities committed in the course of colonisation, as well as its prevailing injustices?

The crucial point Watson makes is thus not so much concerned with industrialised meat consumption, but with the cultural mechanisms that blank out any reminder or suggestion of personal or societal responsibility, possibly even guilt, for "harmful practices" (to use Elder, Wolch and Elder's term) committed against others. *Kadaitcha* thus directly addresses the process W.E.H. Stanner famously called "The Great Australian Silence" in the 1968 Boyer Lectures. Robert Manne explains that "[w]hat Stanner meant was that both scholars and citizens had, thus far, failed to integrate the story of the Aboriginal dispossession and its aftermath into their understanding of the course of Australian history, reducing the whole tragic and complex story to what one historian had called 'a melancholy footnote' . . ."

(1). *Kadaitcha*'s narrator, accordingly, tells how "[t]he mass murders of the NMP reminded the rest of Australia that colonisation in the north had been a vicious and bloody process. The new political order wanted to phase out the black-clad riders and relegate the great native wars and subsequent dispersals to the past. New settlers wanted to get on with the business of prosperity" (40-1).

Whilst "the Great Australian Silence was shattered," as Manne points out, by "hundreds of books and articles on the dispossession by dozens of scholars" since the late 1960s (2), the "structural matter" of the Great Australian Silence, which Stanner described as "a view from a window which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape" (qtd. in Manne 1), still persists.¹⁵⁴ Rose, commenting on Australia's bicentennial year in 1988, observes that "Australian history is not so much a set of events or social relations as an arena of self-definition, and that the strategy of denial is not confined to the

past” (*Dingo* 2). Officially, this denial has taken forms such as not counting Aborigines in “official censuses” until 1967 (Rose, *Dingo* 17), whilst, in terms of writing history and the creation of a national myth, Rose explains:

Aboriginal deaths are rarely counted; black deaths, like black lives, are most frequently acknowledged only to be consigned to the backdrop of historical pageantry. While European settlers, police, and travellers shot or poisoned nameless and countless blacks, Aboriginal people experienced the traumatic loss of fathers, mothers, spouses, and children, as well as lands and livelihoods. The silence with which whites have surrounded their actions, and their depictions of Aborigines as anonymous victims, has facilitated the outback myth of an empty, lonely, heartless country. (*Dingo* 13)

Broome argues that as a result of this silence, Australia has had “two frontier histories,” and reports that “[t]he Aboriginal resistance was relegated to a casual remark about ‘treacherous’ Aborigines being simply one more obstacle that the gallant European pioneers overcame. Indeed, the Aborigines were eventually written out of frontier history, and the misdeeds of the Europeans whitewashed” (55).

Accordingly, *Kadaitcha* was written in a climate of denial. It addresses the failure of successive Australian governments to offer an official and unreserved apology to Australia’s Aboriginal population, which, in recent times, was perhaps most notable in the previous Prime Minister John Howard’s stance that such an apology was unnecessary, and his conspicuous absence when the apology was finally delivered by current Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. *Kadaitcha*’s message, however, is not now obsolete with the delivery of the official apology. The Socialist Alliance, for whom Watson was the South Brisbane candidate in the most recent state elections,¹⁵⁵ takes a cautious approach:

The apology given by Kevin Rudd to the Stolen Generation was an important and necessary symbolic step forward—if long overdue. However, it does not mean that official racism is dead. Without compensation for the Stolen Generations and immediate action to overcome the inequality suffered by indigenous Australians, the apology will become just more hollow words from white Australia. (Socialist Alliance)

Moreover, Gillian Cowlishaw and Barry Morris' statement, that "there is a remarkable silence concerning any personal involvement in Australia's racist past," is still valid (269n4). The fact that wages of Aboriginal cattle station workers were withheld in Queensland until 1972, for instance, shows that individuals, company representatives and government officials are alive today who are personally responsible. Corporate bodies and individuals have yet to address their own part in that history.

Against this cultural and historical background, Watson's literal and figurative use of meat suggests that "Cooking history" is *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, the coming to terms with the past, Australian style. Whilst a crucial symbolic act in *Kadaitcha* is Tommy's tearing down the "wall of blood" so that the heart of Biamee can be restored to the land (307), its key message is that reconciliation cannot be achieved without proper and full acknowledgement of the past. As Watson says:

In much the same way that Jimmy Cook and his minions invaded the land of the Murri tribes, I wanted to get out there into those brick houses, those living rooms and explode into people's minds. I wanted to put a black boy into a white neighbourhood and point a black finger of accusation. I wanted to say this is what has happened in Australia and this is who is responsible. So be aware of it because somewhere down the track, answers will have to be given. (qtd. in Dean)

Thus, the bone of contention is ultimately the question of whether individuals need to share a communal responsibility even in the absence of personal guilt and, indeed, whether there is any communal responsibility at all when contemporary society, be it recent immigrants or descendants of early settlers, deems itself detached from historical events and processes.

Watson has expressed his opinion in this regard very clearly:

[C]oming to a table that is already prepared and loaded with food and drink and wealth and bounty, if they are going to take from the table, if they are to take from the tree, they need to recognize and identify the roots. They can't totally divorce themselves from the history of the country. If they are going straight across the waters and bang straight into Brisbane then they have to pay tribute to the entire bloodied history of Brisbane. ("I Say This" 590-1)

In this context, Stephen's reaction, his "stomach beg[inning] to churn" at the sight of the fresh possum blood dripping onto the cement, is striking, as well as in keeping with the ambivalence of his character (*Kadaitcha* 210-11). Stephen is ultimately one of the most reconciliatory characters in the novel, and his discomfort at seeing the possum's blood is not, like his white guests', an act of avoidance and denial, but an uncomfortable instance of recognition. The possum, after all, is indigenous to Australia, and the animal's blood is spilled at "his," Stephen's, place, where all the natives, human or animal, are only "guests" The legitimacy of white, European place ownership and occupancy (whether established or recent) is called into question, and the symbolism is further consolidated by the fact that Stephen rents, but does not own, "his" place. It is significant that Stephen is the host and cook (or 'Cook') of the barbecue, where he is "holding court" (197), as Watson has commented on the difficulty of bringing white people to the "Treaty table" (qtd. in Dean, "An Interview"). That the table would be a barbecue (a miniature version, perhaps, of the "Great Australian BBQ" held on Australia Day and, in any case, a popular event seen as a

celebration of Australian culture)¹⁵⁶ is fitting for a mode of writing that seeks to be political as well as entertaining.

Thus, whilst the invitation to his version of the great Australian barbecue comes with a challenge, Watson makes his message palatable by packaging it into a paperback novel. He says:

I wanted to present a package or product that would seep into white suburbia and sneak into people's consciousness and say, this is what the fuck you've done to my land and my people. But I wanted to do it in a way that still gave people the opportunity to draw back without feeling too confronted. I thought that the most effective medium would be the medium of fiction. ("I Say This" 589-90).

Watson's novel is thus located at the intersection of leisure and survival. Watson recuperates Aboriginal narrative strategies and animal practices by infusing them into the Western genre of the novel. At the same time, he suggests that cultural survival and physical survival in view of Aboriginal deaths in custody and low life-expectancies amongst Aboriginal people, physical survival is only possible when all those implicated in or benefiting from historical, recent and contemporary injustices are held accountable. As Broome writes, "Equity and justice for all Australians, and an end to the corrupting relations of dominance and subordination, can only be achieved when Australians are honest about their past" (8).

Watson's silently pointing finger of accusation is thus not only a powerful challenge for readers to tell their story, to give their account in turn, but also a means of showing the way forward. Post-apology, *Kadaitcha* continues to challenge complacency and points at outstanding questions of accountability and reparation, such as fair compensation for Stolen Wages, stolen children, and stolen land. Today as much as ever, maban realism has its place in illuminating "country" as an other, valid way of seeing and being that needs to be

acknowledged and respected in a changing climate—political, cultural and environmental. Observing a basic courtesy of country and asking permission to set up camp—in the form of a treaty perhaps, rather than having to be dragged to the negotiating table—may be a good start.¹⁵⁷ That, after all, always has to be done.

Conclusion

Shoemaker comments that whilst the “Dreaming sequences” in *Ghost Dreaming* are representative of magic realism, “reminiscent of the literary metamorphoses of other authors, particularly Hesse, Marquez and D.M. Thomas,” he observes that “Mudrooroo’s treatment is still very much his own” (*Mudrooroo* 74-5). Indeed, both Mudrooroo’s and Watson’s representations of animals illustrate that maban realism is not simply magic realism with an Aboriginal flavour, so to speak. In terms of its intrinsic characteristics, maban realism has much in common with magic realism and may therefore be productively discussed within that framework; yet, some of its narrative strategies and its spiritual underpinnings are distinctively maban realist and have not been fully addressed by critics of magic realism or maban realism thus far.

Accordingly, Slemon’s observation that magic realism’s “separate narrative modes never manage to arrange themselves into any kind of hierarchy” (410) in essence still applies, but this goes beyond a “binary opposition between the representational code of realism and that, roughly, of fantasy” (409), the contrast between “magic” and “real,” or natural science versus spiritual concepts. Watson and Mudrooroo add another dimension to the mode, whereby “body language” holds equal balance with written textual speech. Thus, Faris’ argument that “the material world is present in all its detailed and concrete variety as it is in realism” and that “[t]his materiality extends to word-objects as metaphors” whereby “the weight of their verbal reality more than equals that of their referential function”

(“Scheherazade’s Children” 170-1), is relevant. However, rather than an arbitrary, frivolous or carnivalesque reviving of dead metaphors, maban realism specifically employs metaphors which, in general parlance, have lost their original meaning, and which, more importantly, are connected in their origin, in some way, to animals. These metaphors, such as Mudrooroo’s “sheep” or Watson’s “meat,” are then reliteralised; the corporeal reality of their absent referents, the experience of the body, is inscribed into the text. The inextricable connection of language to the body is a crucial characteristic of *Ghost Dreaming*’s and *Kadaitcha*’s maban realism.

This narrative strategy is suggestive of processes such as a traditional Aranda practice described by Muecke, of combining “words, bodies and acts of inscriptions—on bodies—which mark instances of cultural reproduction. These are the conditions under which traditions are reproduced, and can often take the form of mechanisms by which bodies and words are articulated together” (37).¹⁵⁸ Archer-Lean’s concept of magic realism as an “‘incorporative’” mode thus gains a new, literal and added oxymoronic dimension, as the maban realist narrative is ‘incorporate’ in both contradictory meanings of the term. It includes the body at the same time as the text is a disembodied verbal construction; the incorporeal and the corporeal exist in one and the same space. Notwithstanding Muecke’s comments that “[i]n the ‘transformation’ from spoken word and song to written genres, from body to book; from Aboriginal to European ceremony; there are many things that change the whole sense of the events involved” and that “[i]t would be extremely difficult to establish any sort of continuity between traditional Aboriginal ‘literature’ and work by contemporary Aboriginal writers” (38), maban realist “body language” can be seen as part of a wider recuperative strategy: when bodies, through loss of culture and loss of those whose bodies might be transformed, are no longer the medium for the text, the text becomes the medium for the body. The incorporation of body language thus grounds Aboriginal fiction within storytelling

traditions, yet it also renders it a unique expression of contemporary Aboriginal culture at the same time.

Furthermore, including “body language” that re-introduces the absent animal referents is a recognition of the historical processes and discourses that have animalised Aborigines and considered them “objects to be studied, observed and spoken about” (Suzanne Baker, “Binarisms and Duality” 86). Animals in mainstream Western culture are conventionally designated to the realm of the symbolic, functional and representational, their bodies transformed into something altogether detached from the individual animals themselves. Correspondingly, as Rose writes, “Europeans most frequently construct Aborigines as emblems: persons are envisaged as signs which signify European-defined Aboriginality. Their art, their archaeological remains, their concepts of the sacred, and their physical presence are appropriated to fuel images of national identity” (*Dingo*, 2). In a context where “[u]ntil comparatively recently, Aboriginal people were almost invisible or the subject of misinformation in the schooling system” (RCIADIC, *Final Report Part F*), it is significant that maban realism accords animals (both human and non-human) a material presence they are otherwise often denied. Whilst words can be silenced, distorted, or discounted as having no substance, the presence of the body, after all, cannot be easily ignored.

Whilst Mudrooroo has set the maban realist framework in terms of identifying animal practices as indicators for conflicting cultural, spiritual and material values, Watson has developed these elements more strongly in *Kadaitcha*. Mudrooroo himself acknowledges Watson’s effective implementation of maban realism: “I advocated a flight from natural scientific reality into the Dreaming, which is the field of creation for all our creative endeavour. It was after this that Sam Watson’s book was published, to some acclaim, and to date perhaps this is the best example of how maban reality can be used to create an original work” (*Indigenous Literature* 97). Thus, especially Watson’s representations of animal

practices such as consuming meat or hunting—a cultural oxymoron at the intersection of leisure and survival—illuminate cultural conflict, inherent contradictions within hegemonic discourses and hidden structures of oppression and denial. They foreground what Hall calls “the (often uneasy) dialogue between differing cultural identities and histories,” as, she argues, “these hybrid texts unsettle the monologic discourses of white Australian historiography and narratives of nation” (111). By blurring the distinction between human and animal bodies, Watson illuminates what Adams calls the “interlocking oppressions” that lie at the heart of “[m]etaphoric borrowing” (72) and elicits what Mudrooroo calls an “intuitive . . . response” (Narogin 170). I suggest that this strategy provides for a gut reaction, so to speak, to the scenes of violence, which potentially heightens the reader’s awareness of the parallel processes that allow the transformation of an animal practice into a verbal representation of human experience.

In this way, Watson calls into question cultural ingrained or sanctioned ways of consumption, whether of historical narratives, the land’s resources or Aboriginal labour and bodies, and highlights the need for acknowledgement and the assumption of responsibility for Australia’s violent past. He counterbalances the whitewash of history with lurid colour and detail, so to speak, the intensity of which serves to shine through and penetrate the veil of secrecy and “ignorance,” which “is the product of an historical context which treated Aboriginal people, either not as citizens at all, or as second class citizens” (RCIADIC, *Final Report Part F*). Watson’s book of wrath (Booka Roth’s name, I suggest, is not incidental) conveys the anger and frustration caused by current social, political and economic disadvantages and by historical injustices not officially acknowledged until very recently and only reluctantly or controversially addressed to this day.¹⁵⁹ Yet, as Mudrooroo points out, “[a]ctivist literature is being replaced by a literature of understanding, a literature not committed to educating individuals as to their place in Indigenous society, but to explaining

Indigenous individuals to a predominantly white readership” (*Indigenous Literature* 16).

This sentiment is reflected by Watson, who says:

We can't attach direct blame to white people who are walking the streets of Australia today for what happened back in 1788 but we do expect the people who share in the prosperity and the wealth of the land that has been generated by the events of colonisation to shoulder their part of the responsibility as well. . . . We don't feel bitterness, we don't feel we are owed anything particularly by individuals but the people who dominate the capitalist economy and share in the wealth creating area should at least share the responsibility of ensuring that aboriginal people are compensated. (qtd. in Dean)

Finally, whilst maban realism shares with magic realism the blurring of human-animal boundaries in resistance to colonial discourse and natural science, the animality of humans and the simultaneous humanity and animality of Dreamings are inherently spiritual, determined by the oneness of humans, animals and Dreamings as “part of the web of life.” It is this perceived ambivalence that “allows for the opening of the doors of perception through language and imagination” (Mudrooroo, *Indigenous Literature* 98). As Mudrooroo says, “[a]n Indigenous writer simply presents a world which is different from what natural scientific reality once presented as the only reality. I should say that this world, this reality, may be familiar as well as strange Thus the reader is led to question what he or she once accepted as ‘true’ and ‘real’” (*Indigenous Literature* 98). Accordingly, maban realism draws its readers into other ways of being, which may lead to the recognition that we ourselves are, after all, strange beasts and part of a larger universe—left, however, with the deliberately unsettling notion that, as Tommy's hangman sits down to enjoy the benefits of his lifestyle

and eat “handsomely of fresh bacon and eggs” (*Kadaitcha* 312), we are all due for a good grilling sometime, somewhere down the track.

Chapter Four

Categorically Tricky:

Useful Pests, Cowboy Circuses, and Convergence in *Green Grass, Running*

Water and Kiss of the Fur Queen

The preceding chapters have identified some of the roles animals and animality play in magical realist fiction, traced the influence of Latin American magical realist animals on magic and maban realism from Australia, and examined maban realism as a variation of magical realism. Mudrooroo's alternative label "maban realism" to signal a variation of magical realism illuminates another problem: the question of how to define magical realism and distinguish it from its variations and, indeed, from other literary genres. Conversely, this raises the question of which particular works of fiction can be legitimately labelled magical realism and which cannot, especially given the sheer volume of critical discussing devoted to these distinctions. The use of circensian spaces has already been identified as a marker of the mode, but not only was the circus itself as an introduced European entertainment form of little or no relevance to the maban realist novels discussed in the preceding chapter, there is also no reason to assume that circensian spaces are necessarily exclusive to magical realism.

However the contemporary trickster narratives *Green Grass, Running Water* by Thomas King and *Kiss of the Fur Queen* by Tomson Highway certainly do make use of circensian spaces. *Green Grass, Running Water* weaves together snapshots of the lives of several inhabitants and former inhabitants of the Blossom reserve in Alberta. It features characters such as former academic Eli Stands Alone, whose refusal to give up his property is holding up a dam development on Native land; Eli's nephew Lionel Red Dog, who due to a mixture of bad luck and lack of motivation is unsure of his future; Lionel's sister Latisha, who runs the Dead Dog Café on the reserve; and Alberta, Lionel's girlfriend. They all

converge on the Sun Dance, where they connect and reconnect with their community.¹⁶⁰ The narrative, constantly disrupted by the trickster Coyote, is infused with elements of Native mythology, satirical representations of the supposed discovery of America by Columbus, and episodes of the history of conquest, such as the incarceration and exhibition of Natives at Fort Marion and the exploits of Buffalo Bill. The story also traces the journey of four mysterious, very old Indians of indeterminate gender, who appear to be real-life incarnations of mythological characters and who may be versions of Coyote.¹⁶¹ Escapees from a hospital, they are followed by Dr. J. Hovaugh, who tries to take them back to the institution, and Babo, a hospital employee. The Indians' stated goal is to fix the world from a mess they have made (see *Green Grass* 136-37), and, while they are it, they fix Lionel's life as well as the storyline of some old Western movies.

Kiss of the Fur Queen by Tomson Highway, in turn, follows the lives of the brothers Champion and Ooneemeetoo Okimasis from their childhood as nomadic Cree hunters in Manitoba, their incarceration at the Birch Lake Indian Residential School, where the boys are renamed Jeremiah and Gabriel respectively and suffer physical and sexual abuse from the priests, to their adult quest for identity and belonging, and their struggle to survive—Champion/Jeremiah as a pianist and Ooneemeetoo/Gabriel as a ballet dancer—in a hostile urban environment. Despite the brothers' traumatic experiences, the novel is interwoven with irreverent humour at the expense of Catholicism and the brothers' own Cree community, as well as the boundary-crossing presence of Weesageechak, the trickster, often represented as an arctic fox or as a subarctic beauty queen—the Fur Queen wearing an arctic fox cape. First appearing as a beauty pageant contestant, the Fur Queen is then transformed into a guardian spirit, who watches over the Okimasis brothers throughout the story.

Though both novels overtly address the processes and effects of colonisation, it is worth interrogating some basic assumptions about their role as fiction produced in

postcolonial contexts. Arun Mukherjee criticises postcolonial approaches to literature on the basis of what she considers homogenising and assimilationist trends that emphasise resistance to and subversion of the imperialist centre. Such approaches, she argues, start with the assumption “that we do nothing but search for or mourn the loss of our authentic pre-colonial identities or continuously resist the encroachments of the colonizers in our cultural space” (6). Mukherjee stresses that “our cultural productions are created in response to our own needs and we have many more needs than constantly to ‘parody’ the imperialists” (6). King himself takes issue with the term “postcolonial” and warns against assumptions that may come with it. He finds the term ethnocentric due to its focus on the arrival of Europeans in North America and writes that “it will not do to describe Native literature” (“Godzilla” 12). He argues that the “worst” problem is that “the idea of post-colonial writing effectively cuts us off from our traditions, traditions that were in place before colonialism ever became a question, traditions which have come down to us through our cultures in spite of colonization, and it supposes that contemporary Native writing is largely a construct of oppression” (“Godzilla” 11-2).

Moreover, there is also a difference in the reception of narratives which are outside of, or counter to, Western realism. As Mukherjee writes, “for those of us who never experienced realism as a dominant form, the ‘denaturalizing’ of metafiction does not affect us in the same way” (6), and warns of misconstruing non-Euro-American texts as postmodern, for example, because of “formal similarities” between genres (5). Correspondingly, fiction written from and for cultures with different understandings of what constitutes reality, such as *Green Grass*, *Running Water* and *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, may function primarily to serve that particular community’s needs rather than be aimed at dismantling Western realism. The representation of trickster animals within these novels, for example, may be designed to keep traditional beliefs alive in a contemporary medium, rather than being deliberately employed

to undermine Cartesian boundaries. The latter may just be an inevitable side-effect.

However, whilst these aims are not mutually exclusive, there is indeed a danger that “magic realism”—like “postcolonialism,” as King and Mukherjee argue—may in some instances become an imposed, homogenising and exoticising label when it is applied to any kind of literature that is anti-realist or outside of conventional literary realism in some way.

Taking these issues into account, this chapter examines the fact that, in ways similar to those of the maban realist novels discussed, both King and Highway portray the discrepancy between the traditional and spiritual animal practices of First Nations hunter-gatherers, and the pastoral and consumerist use of animals in the course of (neo-)colonial expansion. *Green Grass, Running Water* especially illustrates the resulting exoticisation and commodification of First Nations peoples and their animal practices within the mythic structures of the Wild West narrative of conquest and its enactment in the form of Wild West Shows. Accordingly, this chapter examines whether it is appropriate to place King’s Coyote and Highway’s Weesageechak into a framework of circensian spaces and thus under the overarching term “magic realism,” and how their tricksters relate to these frameworks by looking at the trickster animals’ role in disrupting narratives of settlement, domestication and taxonomic ordering.

Coyote Circus and Manitoba Magic

A review of Native North American author Thomas King’s *Green Grass, Running Water*, cited in the front matter of its paperback edition, enthusiastically proclaims King’s “deft use of magical realism” (*St. Paul Pioneer Press* qtd. in King, *Green Grass* n.p.). However, when King is asked whether he considers himself a magic realist, he replies with some hesitation that he is not sure about that label, which he does not fully understand and which to his mind applies primarily to South American literature. He expresses his admiration for magic realist

fiction and “the idea that you can move beyond reality in a way that doesn’t make the novel seem eccentric or fantastic”; an idea which he says he adapts for his own fiction (King qtd. in Andrews 179). Further on, King comments on the fact that traditional Native stories are not determined by realism and illustrates this by citing Coyote narratives. He then expresses his admiration for García Márquez’ “The Very Old Man with Enormous Wings,” which he considers to have similar qualities (qtd. in Andrews 184). Elsewhere, King remarks that the oral storytelling which influenced his writing provided him with the freedom to create “a fantastic universe in which anything can happen.” He finds this element of oral storytelling comparable to magic realism or surrealism, yet does not suggest here that these terms apply to his novel (qtd. in Rooke 100). King concedes, however, that “*maybe* I am a magic realist” (qtd. in Andrews 179, emphasis added).

Certainly, King’s Coyote displays all the characteristics shared by and inherent to the magical realist animals discussed so far. Various critics of *Green Grass* have commented on Coyote’s ability to subvert and cross boundaries (Fee and Flick 136), blur the human-animal divide (Flick 152; Fee and Flick 136), disrupt Western linear structure (Chester 54) and literary conventions (Wyile 116), undermine monologic authority (see Ridington 343) and biblical narratives (see Goldman 30; Flick 164; Fee and Flick 136). Indeed, in relation to the latter, King comments that *Green Grass*’s premise, which propelled the writing process, was the idea that “the real story is the Native story and the Christian story is the secondary story” (qtd. in Andrews 180). At the heart of King’s “Christian story” is of course the suggestion that Coyote had something to do with Mary’s conception of Jesus Christ (*Green Grass* 456), adding a whole different dimension to the idea of Nativity, as it were, and reflecting the role of Coyote that John Sandlos describes as “subversive counterforce to Western colonialism” (109).¹⁶² Margery Fee and Jane Flick name a number of borders crossed by Coyote, including disciplinary, literary, and Northern American political boundaries (136).

At the same time, Coyote serves to fulfil one of the functions of traditional trickster narratives, that is, to instruct the audience (see Moses 110; Fee and Flick 138; Sandlos 102-3). Fee and Flick consider the border “between white ignorance and red knowledge” to be the “most important” (136), and this is indeed a boundary that King’s Coyote frequently crosses, asking many questions on the one hand, and knowing exactly his role in the universe, by dancing the Sun Dance, for example, on the other. King comments that he employs his Coyote primarily as a creator of turmoil, a “sacred clown” who “could point out the fallacies in situations and arguments and who made sure that nothing stayed done” (qtd. in Rooke 100). His reference to a clown seems to further reinforce a circensian image of Coyote, perceived, moreover, by Eli and Lionel as a dancing “yellow dog” (*Green Grass* 308, 320). His dancing, in addition to his hilarious interjections as “sacred clown,” reflects another purpose of the traditional trickster, which, as Daniel David Moses informs, is “to entertain” (110), and Marlene Goldman points out King’s Coyote’s preference of “the circle and performance” over “the linear trajectory of Western culture” (33). These traits certainly suggest that the circensian spaces of magical realist narratives are an ideal Coyote habitat, so to speak, but the question is whether the circus is borrowed for the purpose of a trickster tale, or whether the trickster is borrowed for a magical realist text.

The same can be asked about Highway’s novel, which also shows several elements that can be considered circensian, not least the fact that its very first word, “*Mush!*” (*Fur Queen* 3, original italics), is a command addressed to a dog called “Tiger-Tiger” by a man wielding a whip. The man in question is dog-sled racer Abraham Okimasis, father of Champion/Jeremiah and Gabriel/Ooneemeetoo, who subsequently becomes the central attraction of a noisy media circus, where “a man like a white balloon” announces Abraham Okimasis’ dog derby win in a “roiling rumble” (*Fur Queen* 6).¹⁶³ In addition, Highway’s Weesageechak, one of the many names of the trickster, certainly displays similar

characteristics to King's Coyote, similarly calling Western binaries and hierarchies into question. As guardian spirit, the Fur Queen is an ambiguous figure, both protective and terrifying, and human, animal and spirit all at once. Most strongly associated with women and arctic foxes, the Fur Queen appears to Champion/Jeremiah Okimasis during a near-death experience as a foxy Las Vegas-style singer. She introduces herself as "Miss Maggie Sees. Miss Maggie-Weesageechak-Nanabush-Coyote-Raven-Glooscap-oh-you-should-hear-the-things-they-call-me-honeypot-sees, weaver of dreams, sparker of magic, showgirl from hell" (*Fur Queen* 233-4), crossing not only human-animal, but also other interspecies boundaries, being able to "assume any guise he chooses" (Highway, "Note on the Trickster" n.p.). Cynthia Sugars sees her as a "transcultural cross-dresser," who is neither "'Native' nor 'White,'" or who is both at the same time (74), whilst Highway makes a point of explaining that Weesageechak has no gender or is both male and female simultaneously ("Note on the Trickster" n.p.; Highway qtd. in Conlogue 216).¹⁶⁴ This undermines patriarchal hierarchies, male/female binaries predominant in Western culture and Christian ideas of God as male (see Highway qtd. in Carlyle n.p.), and indeed, Weesageechak even appears as Jesus "on the wall above the piano" and winks at Jeremiah (*Fur Queen* 133).

Highway further relates that the trickster is an intermediary between the human and the spirit world (Shackleton and Lutz 76; Conlogue 215), and a connection to God (see Highway qtd. in Conlogue 215), or even God her-himself (see Highway qtd. in Enright 226). This spiritual dimension provides comfort during the boys' experiences of the terrible reality of residential school, and during their feelings of alienation in both the city and within their home community of Eemanapiteepitat. Weesageechak takes her place as an everyday presence in the boys' lives, sparking her magic in places as mundane as a shopping mall in the form of a "mannequin in white fox fur" (*Fur Queen* 117), thus suggesting a magical realist universe where magic is an inextricable part of everyday life. As such, the Fur Queen

also fulfils the trickster's other functions listed by Moses, which are "to educate" and ultimately, though never fully achieved in the narrative, "to heal" (110).

Accordingly, an encounter with the Fur Queen whilst being lost in a shopping mall unsettles Champion/Jeremiah, and prompts him to reconnect with and recall, albeit fleetingly, his Cree mythology and heritage, which had been violently suppressed at residential school (*Fur Queen* 117-18). In an attempt to "disarm such occult phenomena" as the "the Cree-whispering mannequin," Champion/Jeremiah reminds his brother about the story of "the weasel's new fur coat." In the story, Weesageechak, disguised as a weasel, tries to eat and kill the Weetigo, an anthropophagus monster,¹⁶⁵ from the inside out, and ends up expelled from the monster's body through the "bumhole," drenched in faeces. The story causes Champion/Jeremiah to laugh, "in spite of himself," and relish the unique traits of the Cree language (*Fur Queen* 118) in what Sugars describes as "a feeling of transgression" (79).

However, Weesageechak reveals herself to be much more complicated even in her role as guardian spirit, as her constant ambiguity in terms of species, culture, origin, mythology, gender, and so on makes Highway's trickster a heterotopic creature, "impossible to think," to borrow Foucault's words once more. As Sugars says, for example, the Okimasis brothers represent the trickster Weasel, at the same time as they are also Weetigo (80). The Weetigo, an embodiment of greed, pervades the narrative as much as the trickster, as its nature as anthropophagus, the antithesis to and destroyer of culture, represents the destructive forces of colonisation, such as Christianity, patriarchy, and sexual abuse in residential schools, as well as the after-effects of colonisation, such as poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, the spread of HIV amongst Native Canadians, and ultimately the destruction of Native Canadian cultures from within, "the ways members of a culture can be induced to turn on their own people" (Sugars 74).

It is disturbing, then, that the Okimasis brothers' guardian spirit, the Fur Queen, frequently takes on the appearance of the Weetigo herself. In this form, the Fur Queen is neither human nor animal, but "nonhuman" (Brightman 142). As Robert A. Brightman writes, "the witiko is surrounded by associations with frozenness: the northern and eastern directions from which the coldest winds blow, winter, and ice" (153).¹⁶⁶ Accordingly, the Fur Queen exhales "jet[s] of ice-cold vapour" (*Fur Queen* 11, cf. 228), and she is "so fair her skin look[s] chiselled out of arctic frost, her teeth pearls of ice" (10, 305). The lips are represented as "streaks of blood" (10, 305), suggesting a recent cannibalistic feast. She appears in this form right at the start of the narrative, when the brothers' father Abraham Okimasis wins the dog derby trophy, and then again at Abraham's death, whilst the priest places the body of Christ into the dying man's mouth. The fact that the Weetigo also carries off Gabriel, dying of AIDS in the final scene, seems like an especially cruel joke of the trickster, who, like God, can be "absolutely horrifying," as capable of "diabolic cruelty and evil as are human beings," at the same time as embodying "beauty and incredible love and ecstasy," as Highway explains (qtd. in Enright 226).

However, paradoxically, the "showgirl from hell" also plays the role of victim to the Weetigo, when she becomes eye candy, so to speak, as a beauty contestant, and is "sized up," "prodded, poked," "felt, watched, paraded around the town," her body exhibited "for the *delectation* of audiences from . . . far afield" (*Fur Queen* 7, emphasis added). At the same time the prizes in "the dreaded Weetigo look-alike contest" are given out by the Fur Queen and her own look-alikes (7). Not only do these resemblances make any attempt to capture the essence of the Fur Queen increasingly complicated and difficult, but her occasional yet significant resemblance to the dreaded Weetigo looks suspiciously like another trickster trick: after all, compared to the traditional Weetigo, who Brightman points out is typically "dirty,

naked, ungroomed, unornamented” (157), the Fur Queen makes an extraordinarily classy Weetigo indeed.

Her fur coat is of particular importance in this respect, as Mariesis Okimasis, the brothers’ mother, points out that whilst “[t]he Fur Queen will watch over you,” it is in fact “[t]he *white fox on her cape* [who] will protect [the brothers] from evil men” (*Fur Queen* 74, emphasis added). The winking Fox on the Fur Queen’s cape offers reassurance, protection, and a sense of humour in the novel’s final moment. However, the split in the final scene of the narrative between the Fur Queen’s humanoid Weetigo or Weetigo look-alike form, and the arctic fox fur cape, which also represents her vulpine shape, complicates the ending that appears so hopeful on first reading. The trickster thus offers both hope and warning, both humour and terror, but does not provide easy answers.

The literary or legendary animal’s association with real animals, arctic foxes, further reinforces the difficulty of containing Highway’s trickster within any system of order. Weesageechak’s close association with and appearance as an arctic fox reflects the nature of foxes, a species Martin Wallen describes as “an animal that refuses to be domesticated (121)” He points out that “[a]lthough some species of fox are eaten by people, and some are sold as pets, the fox generally resists culturation” (121).¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, Weesageechak’s ambivalent oscillation between guardian spirit and Weetigo look-alike mirrors the scientific labelling of foxes, which reflects deeply ingrained cultural traditions that see foxes as “incomplete, false,” “ambiguous” or “bad creature[s]” (Wallen 7), and her ever-changing, species-crossing names correspond with the difficulty of assigning a definite label to foxes (see Wallen 24-32). The scientific name of arctic foxes in particular, *Alopex lagopus*, not only distinguishes them from other foxes who are designated as *Vulpes* and with whom they cannot interbreed, but it also curiously suggests that arctic foxes have “a hare’s foot” (Wallen

26). Thus, Weesageechak's disruption of scientific classifications combined with human-animal-nonhuman boundary blurring and showgirl glamour appears distinctly magical realist.

However, approaching both *Fur Queen* and *Green Grass* as magical realist texts—and the trickster as part of a magical realist fauna—is highly problematic. After all, Weesageechak has always been there, whilst magical realism is a relatively recent arrival on the North American continent. In the context of oral narrative interpretation, George L. Cornell warns of “literary imperialism” that re-labels traditional narratives with “convenient and familiar titles,” and stresses the importance of cultural context (175-6). Indeed, both authors tell their stories from their own Cree or pan-Indian perspectives respectively, which determine the dominant mode of narration. Fee and Flick argue that King's “overall strategy . . . subsumes European culture and history into an aboriginal framework” (136), and Ridington writes that “King presents a Native American perspective on the American literary and cultural canon” (343). Likewise, Blanca Chester and Herb Wyile argue that *Green Grass* emphasises Native perspectives (Chester 46; Wyile 117) and creates “Native reality” (Chester 59). King himself points out that white readers are not his target audience. He comments: “I really don't care about the white audience They don't have an understanding of the intricacies of Native life, and I don't think they're much interested in it, quite frankly” (qtd. in Weaver 57). He explains further that, “[w]hen I do my Native material, I'm writing particularly for a Native community. That doesn't mean that I've got a specific community in mind” (qtd. in Rooke 84). More specifically, *Green Grass* is meant to focus on a larger Native community as “a kind of pan-Indian novel” (King qtd. in Gzowski 66).

Indeed, critical attempts to class *Green Grass* as magical realism have been unconvincing thus far. Ibis Gómez-Vega for example, discusses those events in *Green Grass* that cannot be explained from a Western point of view in terms of either “magic” or “magic realism,” in an analysis that attempts to separate apparently magical from supposedly realist

strands of the story. The suggestion is that there is a “‘real’ story woven into the magical narratives,” but this approach is immediately hampered by the fact that the four Indians of the “‘real’ story” are both seemingly “over four hundred years old” and simultaneously look like women and men (Gómez-Vega 15). Flick, too, suggests that there is a discernable realist narrative strand, when she refers to Alberta as “[t]he principal female character in the realist story” (144). Notwithstanding the evident futility of attempting to ascertain a clear-cut separation between realist and magical narrative strands, worlds, or spaces, which tends to be impossible due to the mode’s oxymoronic nature, the more pressing issue here is who judges what is “magic” to begin with. Labelling these narratives “magic realist” may amount to the imposition of a Western positivist view that judges those phenomena to be “magic” or “impossible” that cannot be upheld by empirical observation. However, calling either *Green Grass* or *Kiss of the Fur Queen* “magical realist” may not be tenable when these novels are considered in relation to their own cultural context, and such categorisations and labelling shift. The authors themselves emphasise, after all, the contribution they make towards their own communities.

This focus on community corresponds with the fact that *Fur Queen*, like King’s novel, is determined by a Cree cultural universe, and is thus populated by those animals who are important to the Cree community in the narrative. Highway’s novel is characterised by what Highway describes in an interview with Heather Hodgson as “the Cree way of thinking: not hierarchical but communal . . . and simultaneous” (qtd. in Hodgson, original ellipsis). Hodgson’s mother (identified only as “Mom”) highlights this point, which Highway, in response, strongly agrees with. She says:

Kiss of the Fur Queen is the closest thing to Cree that I’ve ever read in English. You’ve included in it the spirit world, Weesakeechak the Trickster, and many peoples’ stories, all of which eventually connect at some point. You

also present time as we do in Cree time: as something that works in a circular way because the past and present inform each other. These things make the novel so very Cree to me. (qtd. in Hodgson, "Survival Cree")

Accordingly, traits in *Fur Queen* that may look like magic realism to an outsider are, in fact, "so very Cree" instead. Apart from the elusive trickster, polyphony and a circularity of time, this also includes the blurring of human-animal boundaries, interspecies communication, the relevance of dreams as part of everyday experience, and the everyday magic, so to speak, of nomadic life in the Manitoban landscape, for instance.

Highway manages to convey the magical element of the Manitoban landscape through vivid descriptions of its beauty, which renders ordinary events into extraordinary experiences. He achieves this even without the frequent transition into myth and dreams, for instance. Yet, more than that, when Highway speaks of "that faith, that magic, that wonder," he relates the quotidian experience of a lifestyle guided by traditional Cree beliefs. "Magic" is therefore not simply a metaphor when Highway describes the "first six years of my life" as "magic." His account illustrates that an inextricable part of that magical experience, besides the security of growing up in a close-knit family shaped by the "love, dignity, and respect" of his parents, is the identification with the nomadic lifestyle of Cree hunters, and the human-animal relationships it entails. Highway's childhood was magical because he "had the trapline, the dog sleds, the caribou" (qtd. in Methot).

Accordingly, *Fur Queen* portrays the animal practices of nomadic Cree with enthusiasm, such as the "trout that were the fattest in the world" (88-9), or the mushers and dogs who manage to withstand extraordinary conditions, "a hundred and fifty miles of freezing temperatures and freezing winds" for days without break (4). This enthusiasm also includes native animal products, such as a "caribou-hide jacket sparkling magically" (69). Throughout the narrative, the primary identification of the Okimasis family is as an

“illustrious caribou-hunting family” (31), principally through the figure of Abraham Okimasis, who is frequently referred to as “hunter” and “caribou hunter,” but also as “fisherman” and “musher.” These animal practices, however, involve elements that Western readers would consider supernatural and unreal, whereby the human-animal relationships depicted in *Fur Queen* reflect to a significant extent the interaction with, and conceptualisation of, animals by Rock Cree, as described by Brightman.

Brightman makes the case that Algonquian conceptions of animals blur the boundary between technical, productive animal practices and religious practices. Spiritual and practical concerns, including those that involve animals, are intimately linked (see Brightman 2-3). As Brightman writes, hunting and religious practice are “conceptually distinct categories of human practice, but the animal as reactive other figures in both spheres” (3). Accordingly, animals offer themselves to the hunter, when the hunter is in need, or, conversely, obstruct hunters by their own volition. Hunting and trapping are thus “social interactions” with “reactive social others” (Brightman 2). In *Fur Queen*, Champion’s song, “*Ateek, ateek, astum, astum, yoah, ho-ho!*” (23), is a successful request to the caribou to offer themselves, which, furthermore, reflects what Brightman describes as “hunting medicine” (Brightman 191). Likewise, when Ooneemeetoo dances to Champion’s tune, impersonating a young caribou, the sudden inexplicable appearance of a whole herd of caribou (see *Fur Queen* 41-47) suggests that the children unwittingly performed an “operatio[n] employing imitative magic” (Brightman 191).

Moreover, the caribou, traditional prey animals for Cree, continue to pervade the dreams of the boys throughout their lives, even when they live in the city, such as when Champion/Jeremiah dreams “of playing concerts to vast herds of caribou” (*Fur Queen* 79), or when Ooneemeetoo/Gabriel is so enchanted by the Royal Winnipeg Ballet dancers’ performance that he imagines them as “a sea of moving antlers” (145). The brothers’

translation of animal practices into art reflects what Highway describes as the creative influence of Weesageechak, whose arrival in Toronto he calls “a magical moment for the Native arts community” (qtd. in Hodgson, “Survival Cree”). Significantly, Weesageechak is present in the city at all times, overseeing the brothers’ inspirational moments, and guiding and influencing their dreams of art and caribou.

The significance of dreams for the hunting society of the Rock Cree, and the occurrence of animals in their dreams, is extensively discussed by Brightman. The “*pawākan*, or dream guardian,” whom some Cree identify as “an individual animal” (Brightman 170), appears to the dreamer in order to assist with hunting and trapping, decision making, predicting future events—sometimes even causing them—and understanding the past, to help with health issues, and generally to provide knowledge. Highway explains: “Our spirituality comes from our dreamworld . . . We’re very connected to everything else in that way. We acknowledge that the spirits of our ancestors are still with us, that they still walk this land, and are a very active part of our lives and our imaginations” (qtd. in Hodgson, “Survival Cree”). He stresses the fact that “[o]ur dream visions affect our day-to-day lives and, certainly for North American Indian culture, our dream life is every bit as important as our physical, conscious life” (qtd. in Enright 224).

Accordingly, the way the “showgirl” appears to Champion/Jeremiah in a dream is consistent with Cree beliefs, and Champion/Jeremiah’s ignorance of who the “Cree chanteuse” is (*Fur Queen* 234) fits the typical dream patterns described by Brightman. Her alternation between a human shape and her animal appearance as an arctic fox reflects the *pawākan*’s repeated changing “between the human form and another with which the dreamer is familiar” in response to the dreamer’s ignorance of the spirit guardian’s identity. Furthermore, Brightman remarks that, “[i]n addition to appearing human physically, animals in such dreams may speak Cree, wear clothing, smoke tobacco, and live in houses” (170).

Thus, even Weesageechak's cigarette-smoking is not an instance of a realistic element included to ground the extraordinary in the ordinary, such as Remedios the Beauty's "flapping sheets" as she ascends into heaven (García Márquez, *Solitude* 221), but merely a detail within an overall Cree realist scene, so to speak. Equally, Weesageechak's suggestion that she is merely a hallucination induced by alcohol grounds the phenomenon in the "real" as understood by Western readers and makes it plausible for them; however, the very fact that she herself proposes to be a drunken delusion, especially whilst drinking Champion/Jeremiah's whisky, makes a mockery out of the assertion. Rather than an explanation, it is a tongue-in-cheek comment on Champion/Jeremiah's disbelief at seeing "a fox that could talk" (*Fur Queen* 232).

This disbelief illustrates the degree to which Champion/Jeremiah is alienated from his culture. Whilst opinions are divided as to the circumstances, the species, the kind of communication, or the historical period,¹⁶⁸ talking animals as such, especially in those circumstances, would not be particularly surprising to Cree, as Brightman's interviewees indicate (see Brightman 161).¹⁶⁹ Thus, it is a humorous exaggeration but not too far-fetched that Abraham Okimasis and Tiger-Tiger "had learned, over the seven years of Tiger-Tiger's eventful life, to communicate both with and without words. This was fortunate because Tiger-Tiger's Cree vocabulary was limited, though he had learned to ask for 'black coffee'¹⁷⁰ on blizzardy Tuesday mornings" (*Fur Queen* 27-8).¹⁷¹ Similarly, the verbal battle between Oneemeetoo/Gabriel's terrier Kiputz and a squirrel (see *Fur Queen* 94-5) would be entirely plausible to those Cree who believe that animals "[t]alk among themselves but not like people" (Brightman 161). The fact that Champion/Jeremiah unquestioningly accepts some of the—for Westerners—extraordinary or unbelievable qualities of animals at least to some degree shows, however, that he is at all times, and despite the odds, the "caribou hunter's son" (*Fur Queen* 31, 59, 64). As Brightman explains, "American Indian foragers ascribe to

their animal quarry intellectual, emotional, and spiritual characteristics paralleling in some respects those of human selves and persons” (2). Correspondingly, the extraordinary abilities of “the remarkably intelligent Suitcase Okimasis,” his sister Chichilia’s dog, for example, who “sniffed around his neck for a trace of broken vertebrae” after a fall (*Fur Queen* 26), are taken for granted by the siblings.¹⁷²

In contrast to Western scientific categorisations, Cree concepts of humans and animals cannot, as Brightman argues, “readily be arrayed as discretely bounded categories in sets of logically interrelated propositions” (35). Indeed, Brightman’s description of “Cree representations of the human-animal relationship” as “profoundly and perhaps necessarily chaotic and disordered” (3) matches Foucault’s depiction of the heteroclitite (discussed in Chapters One and Two). Correspondingly, Brightman explains that “[t]he Cree human-animal relationship is disordered both in the instability of the two categories and in the irreconcilable propositions about their interactions” (36), and that “[t]he human and animal categories are themselves continuous rather than discrete, and their interpenetration seems to preclude stable representations of causality or sociality in hunter-prey interactions” (3).¹⁷³ Such disorder is impossible to grasp from a Western perspective, yet, importantly, as Brightman proposes, it is not “a historically engendered chaos arising from the confrontation of the magic animals of Cree *manitōkīwin* with their mute and soulless counterparts in Western biology and scripture” (36). Rather, he sees the origin of Cree concepts of humans and animals in prehistoric times, resulting from the variety of interactions between foragers and their prey, as well as in the belief that the earliest protoanimals possessed linguistic abilities and cultural attributes before humans even existed (41).

Likewise, representations of animals, especially the trickster, in *Fur Queen* are not developed in contrast to Western concepts; rather, they were always already opposed. This distinguishes them from carnivalesque inversions, which evolved as a response to social,

political, and ecclesiastical (usually Catholic) hierarchies on the European continent.

Accordingly, when Kiputz thoroughly subverts what was an already subversive re-enactment of a Catholic mass by the Okimasis brothers, he does so not because of carnivalesque humour, for instance, that transfers authority from the priest to a dog. Instead, Kiputz's agency and his non-compliance within the imposed hierarchy rest on the fact that he is "as Cree a dog as ever there was" (*Fur Queen* 94).

Kiputz' Creeness is a further sign of the conceptually different understanding of what it means to be human or animal. Brightman suggests that "the animal bodies men and women kill and eat are merely transient forms of beings whose continuing and unseen essence more closely approximates *nihidawīwin* Cree-ness" (176), a state he describes as "the human state" (137). Kiputz, in turn, brings Champion/Jeremiah's Creeness back to the surface after the boy has been coerced to suppress and forget Cree at the residential school and is unable to communicate with his family:

Fortunately, before the week was out, Champion/Jeremiah experienced an epiphany. At their fish camp on Mamaskatch Island one stormy evening, inside the tent, he tripped over Kiputz, causing him to burst out in a torrent of Cree expletives that shocked his mother. From that moment, he chattered with such blinding speed that people could barely understand him. (*Fur Queen* 67)

Creeness thus forms an unseen connection between humans and "the animal," whom Cree, Brightman proposes, understand as "different from me, and yet it is like me, as much like me as its ancestors were in the earliest time of the world" (36).

Whilst this appears as disorder from a Western perspective, it is all part of a comprehensive, whole universe that makes sense from Cree perspectives. Highway illuminates this position, "with a note of exasperation," as Suzanne Methot observes, and explains: "English is so hierarchical. In Cree, we don't have animate-inanimate comparisons

between things. Animals have souls that are equal to ours. Rocks have souls, trees have souls. Trees are ‘who,’ not ‘what’” (Highway qtd. in Methot). Animism, rather than magic realism, thus accounts for the living fur coats in *Fur Queen*, such as the “little white fox” on the collar of the Fur Queen’s cape, who winks at Champion/Jeremiah (306), the “gorgeous pelt of arctic fox” whose “extremities remained so defiantly intact that its tail twitched” (193-4), or the “litter of otters” on the shoulder of a “chunky matron” in front of the Okimasis brothers at the Winnipeg Royal Ballet performance, whose “cute little faces smiled at the boys, as though in recognition” (143).

The matron’s “steel-trap glare” (143), moreover, reconnects her fur coat with Cree fur hunters and trappers, who, indeed, might have been the Okimasis brothers themselves during one of their summer holidays with their family, as the animals’ recognition suggests. As Brightman explains, Cree believe that a trapped animal’s “soul survives the killing to be reborn or regenerated” (187). He relates, for example, how a Cree hunter killing a fox recognised the animal as “the same animal he had killed earlier the same winter,” and that “[f]reshly plucked porcupine quills were identified as ‘not dead yet’” (24). Brightman considers these instances “[e]vidence for persisting and very basic disparities between Cree and Western orientations toward animals” (24).

“But I can be Very Useful”:

Wild West Pests and Pastoralisation

These disparities come to light further in regard to divergent concepts of the value of animals. As Methot writes, “Cree cosmology is at once complicated yet very simple. Everything is in balance, everything connects to something else, and nothing is without value.” The question of value, and especially of use-value, is important here, as the Cree concept of animals,

described by Brightman as the “paradoxical status of the animal—that of a person who is also a use-value” (192), is markedly different from the Western capitalist view of “useful animals” as objects rather than subjects.¹⁷⁴ James Serpell argues that in Western economies, a process of detachment is necessary for those involved in the slaughter of animals; that is, a physical distancing and a mechanisation of the process, which reduces the animal to “a mere cipher, a unit of production, abstracted out of existence in the pursuit of higher yields” (*Company of Animals* 192).

The reason for this, Serpell suggests, is the generation of “feelings of guilt and remorse” on the part of the farmer (*Company of Animals* 187) if animals were considered “as subjects rather than objects; as persons rather than things” (*Company of Animals* 192-3). From a Cree point of view, no such objectification and de-valuing is necessary, but not because, as Serpell suggests, hunters already are detached from their prey with whom they never developed a social relationship and attachment over time (*Company of Animals* 187), but because the hunt is a reciprocal arrangement between hunter and prey animal. Brightman explains, “the roles of human and animal are complementary, for each gives life to the other,” and the animal, who infinitely regenerates, “does not fear or resent the death” (Brightman 187). Thus, there is no moral dilemma in using the flesh and fur of an “animal person.”

Such a difference between a view of animals as persons and of animals as production units is also reflected in *Green Grass*, where Ahab rejects Moby Jane as a “whale person” and is only interested in her as a useful animal. As such, he considers her a resource for the production of oil and perfume, and to supply “a big market in dog food” (219). Ahab explains that “[w]e only kill things that are useful or things we don’t like” (219), a circumstance that alarms Coyote. Coyote realises that he is a pest animal in a “world . . . full of Coyotes” (302), and as such readily replaceable like a “thing,” after he witnesses A.A. Gabriel’s attitude towards women: “There are lots of Marys in the world, shouts A. A.

Gabriel as Thought Woman floats away. We can always find another one, you know” (301). Throughout the narrative, Coyote rather anxiously tries to assert his value as an individual, and his usefulness as a Coyote, since the right to existence of so-called pest animals is denied on the basis of having no intrinsic value—even having a negative value—in a consumer capitalist society. Therefore, he variously interjects: “But Coyotes are very useful” (219); “But I am very useful” (250); “I can be very helpful” (253), for example, and ironically misses the point entirely that being useful also means death when you are an animal—even a sacred animal, as Sandlos illustrates (see Sandlos 101).

Sandlos’ insightful exploration of Coyote’s function in postcolonial narratives echoes these characteristics, but he goes beyond the predominant critical approach of discussing Coyote as a literary trickster figure only. Sandlos sets the trickster qualities of Coyote firmly in the context of human-coyote relationships and, in contemporary terms, of the coyote as a pest animal. He relates how Coyote has become an emblematic figure for North American writers (102, 108-15) and for artists relating to the North American context such as Joseph Beuys (166-7). However, this relationship does not translate to settler-Coyote relationships outside of literature and art, where Coyote is considered a “garbage animal,” unsuitable for eating, and a “persistent ‘pest’” in the eyes of livestock owners, as Sandlos writes (101). There are exceptions, such as a Canadian Wildlife Service document that admires the ability of coyotes not only to survive, but also to spread and multiply throughout North America and into urban landscapes, despite human efforts to contain and exterminate the species. The document goes so far as to describe the coyote as “mocking” human attempts to dispose of the species (Canadian Wildlife Service qtd. in Sandlos 101).¹⁷⁵ Sandlos convincingly argues for a clear correlation between coyotes, who transgress the spatial, social and other conceptual boundaries humans try to impose upon them, and Coyote as rule-breaking trickster.

Sandlos' description of "the coyote" as both biological and literary "pest animal" who resists domestication matches the characteristics of the magical realist animals discussed in preceding chapters. As I have argued, their connection to, and reflection of, the real animals they represent provides these literary beasts with an agency that invigorates and animates magical realist narratives and resists Western concepts of order. In relation to Coyote, Sandlos draws a direct parallel between settler livestock farmers and their view of coyotes as pests, and the relationship between Coyote and European pastoral poetry, and argues that the adoption of a trickster view of the world constitutes a rejection of "notions of harmony" projected by pastoral poetry and contrived by "pastoral/agricultural societies intent on homogenizing and controlling 'their' immediate environment" (107).

This idea is at odds with Horne's argument that King's Coyote in *Green Grass* is "aligned with settlers and their discourse" (Horne n.p.), albeit in order to satirise and critique settler discourse. Horne's suggestion is a misconception which arises from the dialogue between "I" and Coyote. For instance, "I" frequently instructs Coyote to "pay attention" (*Green Grass* 38, 107, 112, 218, 323), an utterance also directed at the reader, but it is, in addition, an attempt to call the chaotic trickster to order. Whilst Coyote sometimes appears to be aligned with the reader,¹⁷⁶ this, too, is a kind of trick. In fact, Coyote manipulates and controls much of the sequence of events and storylines through his frequent interruptions and digressions. The instances of his crossing over to side with the reader, so to speak, are only another example of Coyote's ambivalent role that calls definite boundaries into question. Besides, clear or exclusive alignment with settler discourse is ruled out by the fact that Coyote is also responsible for destroying the dam and the settlement at Parliament Lake, for example.

Coyote's disruptions thus reflect the magical and maban realist subversions of Master texts, of authoritative control based on Cartesian subjectivity, and of pastoralism as a nation-

building Myth of settlement. The latter is perhaps nowhere more conspicuous than in King's representation of Alberta (the province, not the character). His portrayal of the heavily farmed province is, as will be seen in the next chapter, markedly different from Robert Kroetsch's Alberta, for example, a landscape depicted as virtually reeking of cow farming. Also, Highway calls the province the "ranch land of Alberta" in his list of typical Canadian landscapes ("My Canada" 4). Yet, if King describes the very same locale, then where, in *Green Grass*, are all those cows? Indeed, *Green Grass* takes place in a landscape where the pastoral economy seems to have almost entirely vanished. Whilst buffalo are, for example, part of the creation stories in *Green Grass* (38), mentioned as traditional Blackfoot food (60), and their almost complete extinction is hinted at when the rangers in First Woman's story "gallop off, looking for Indians and buffalo and poor people and other good things to kill" (76), King's landscape shows no trace of the introduction of European domestic cattle to Canada. Cows are granted only minor entries in the novel, though not as an omnipresent, typical, and supposedly natural feature of the landscape, but they are an implied presence in the "large steak" Lionel wants to order at a hotel (66) and in Remington's steak house, a symbol for settlement and the Wild West myth.¹⁷⁷ They—and their offspring—are visible only as meat products.

The pastoral—both as an ideal and as a process representative of settlement, as well as a primary motive for colonial conquest—is rejected here, as cows (the living, grass-eating variety) are relegated to the pages of the phone book, where they are listed under "artificial insemination" (*Green Grass* 195). Paradoxically, Alberta (the person embodying the province) is the character looking up the entry, and both she and her mother Ada represent the only other "cows" in the narrative. Thus, Alberta's father Amos repeatedly calls Alberta's mother a "cow" (94-5), and Alberta imagines herself in a cow's position when she ponders what artificial insemination might be like, a process she remembers as "mechanical"

from observing the vet using the procedure on cows in her childhood (195). Coyote's rejection of the pastoral thus manifests itself in his replacing the artificial insemination of the "cow" Alberta with a more miraculous method. Furthermore, both Ada and Alberta, as "cows," represent motherly, protective and nurturing qualities, in contrast to a view of cows as production units, artificially reproduced for profit. King's human and animal "cows" contrast community with capitalist economy, whereby community is the core that determines the narrative.

In *Fur Queen*, similarly, the pastoral economy is only a minor concern, whereby the only cattle, apparently, are either white people at the ballet, whose "lowing" is comically imitated by the Okimasis brothers' "rumble" and polite mooing (*Fur Queen* 143), or the disneyfied, bellowing Indians at the party of Alodius Clear Sky, such as "Clarabelle Cow St. Pierre," who confuse white culture with their own, and show bigotry and racism towards Champion/Jeremiah and, ironically, white culture (256). Thus, Highway aligns introduced animals with introduced people, so to speak, and introduced culture. Here, as in maban realism, for instance, the clash of animal practices is a marker for cultural difference and, moreover, for conflicting concepts of nature and how it is to be used or inhabited.

Fur in particular illuminates the difference between subsistence practices and consumerism, revealed in the contrasting understanding of what use value means. Highway's novel illustrates that animal products, such as goose down and fur, are necessary for survival for Cree trappers such as the Okimasis family, by describing the bitterly cold winters marked by "icy winds that blind and kill, through temperatures that freeze to brittle hardness human flesh exposed for fifty seconds" (*Fur Queen* 103). Fur especially is "the sole winter source of life-sustaining income for the northern Cree" (103-4). Highway contrasts these uses with fur as a luxury item, a decorative commodity to enhance the prestige of rich matrons with their "pearls, pink cashmere, and white fox stoles" (99), the destination for the pelts of the animals

trapped by Cree. This frivolous use is juxtaposed with the “white, yellowed with age, polyester fur” coat of urban Natives (105), who, deprived of land and traditional lifestyle, are neither able to produce their own fur coats nor can they afford them as the consumerist status symbols they have become.

Although traditional Cree beliefs in the “infinitely renewable bodies” of useful animals (Brightman 165) have, as part of the fur trade, tragically fed into a capitalist economy with vastly detrimental effects on various animal species,¹⁷⁸ capitalist concepts of animals, value, and usefulness are essentially in direct opposition to Creeness. Indeed, in some instances, completely in contradiction to capitalist theories, Cree would deliver *fewer* pelts when they were paid more for them, because they focused on covering their needs rather than making profits (see Brightman 251-2). Highway’s use of the Weetigo to explain the mechanisms, or rather, the character, so to speak, of consumerism, further illustrates this opposition, because the greedy Weetigo’s traits, Brightman writes, “comprise a systematic oppositional inversion of traits Crees understand as . . . the state of *nihidawīwin* ‘Cree-ness’” (137). Whilst the shopping mall and its consumers are manifestations of the Weetigo, Champion/Jeremiah and Ooneemetoog/Gabriel thus paradoxically not only resist the consumer capitalist culture it represents by being associated with Weesageechak who eats the Weetigo’s insides, but they also show Weetigo tendencies themselves by the very same act, that is, excessive eating inside the mall’s food court, where they join the “many people shovelling food in and chewing and swallowing and burping and shovelling and chewing and swallowing and burping, as at some apocalyptic communion” (*Fur Queen* 119-20).¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, consumerism is represented here as a kind of spiritual starvation that turns “mall-nourished” people (Hodgson) into “nonhuman” monsters.

The Greatest Dog and Pony Show on Earth:

Consumerism, Cowboys, and Conquering Circuses

King, too, uses the mall as the epitome of consumerist culture, especially as he chooses not just any mall, but the West Edmonton Mall. It is not only “Alberta’s most identifiable and controversial symbol” (Flick 151), but it has also achieved fame as the (erstwhile) “largest shopping center in the world” (*Guinness Book of World Records* qtd. in West Edmonton Mall, “WEM Trivia”; see also Flick 151). However, when Charlie Looking Bear is “intrigued by the stunning three-bedroom condo in the West Edmonton Mall” (*Green Grass* 431),¹⁸⁰ King does not only alert us to the mall as the “ultimate postmodern simulacrum, a world of commodified goods completely detached from the materials, modes of production, and waste that support it,” as Lousley observes. He also constructs a connection between consumerism, circus entertainment, and the exoticisation of “Indians,” as the West Edmonton Mall is in fact known as “The Greatest Indoor Show on Earth,” as their logo reveals (West Edmonton Mall, “Homepage”). This is both an explicit reference to the Calgary Stampede, marketed as “The Greatest *Outdoor* Show on Earth,” and an allusion to the circus, the origin of the rodeo, and the famous slogan used by Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey, “The Greatest Show on Earth.”

Living inside the world’s largest shopping mall, surrounded, as those readers familiar with the mall would recognise, by fun fair rides, sea lion performances and penguin, reptile and sea life shows (West Edmonton Mall, “More Attractions”), thus becomes a signifier, in King’s novel, for inhabiting a space that is conceptualised not only in terms of excessive consumerism, but also in terms of circus entertainment. The question arises as to what extent human inhabitants of the mall become sideshow or zoo exhibits themselves. Moreover, the fact that the (actual, non-fictional) West Edmonton Mall curiously but proudly promoted

itself (as late as 2007) with an explicit allusion to British Imperial expansion—“It’s true, the sun never sets on West Edmonton Mall!” (“More Attractions”)—reinforces the colonising, exoticising elements of the circensian living space portrayed in *Green Grass*.¹⁸¹ Whether the West Edmonton Mall’s assertion was meant to be tongue-in-cheek or not, this context strengthens King’s reference to the condominium in the mall as an allegory for the North American experience of “Indians in general,” because, as King explains, “[s]omewhere along the way, we ceased being people and somehow became performers in an Aboriginal minstrel show for White North America” (*Truth about Stories* 68).

The “show” that takes place in *Green Grass*, however, is not quite circus and not quite rodeo; the circensian space in King’s novel is most closely and explicitly aligned with a kind of entertainment that formed, historically, the transition between the two: the Wild West show.¹⁸² Thus, when Sergeant Cereno declares “Enough of this dog and pony show” (*Green Grass* 57), this is in fact exactly what he gets. Significantly referred to as “Buffalo Bill Bursum” (44), Blossom’s owner of Bill Bursum’s Home Entertainment Barn epitomises the view of North America as an imaginary, circensian space populated by stereotypical “cowboys and Indians.” His arrangement of television screens into the shape of North America, “The Map,” which he chooses especially for playing Westerns (293), presents a contemporary, cinematic version of the iconic “Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World” show of Buffalo Bill Cody in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. His shows featured “classic ‘western’ scenes, most of which entailed major roles for guns and large animals” (Grossman 2). Along with hundreds of cheap novels and stories about his life (mostly imaginary rather than actual accounts),¹⁸³ Buffalo Bill’s show, with its displays of “yelling Indians” on pinto horses (“Cody, William F.”),¹⁸⁴ significantly helped cement an image of the North American continent as the mythical Wild West, satirically branded as a pony show by King, in the North American and European imagination.¹⁸⁵

Larry McMurtry explains that “[s]omehow Cody succeeded in taking a very few elements of Western life—Indians, buffalo, stagecoach, and his own superbly mounted self—and creating an illusion that successfully stood for a reality that had been almost wholly different” (138). In fact, audiences accepted Cody’s shows as an accurate re-enactment of history so much that one journalist, representative of many others, testified that “[i]t’s not a show. It is a resurrection, or rather an importation of the honest features of wild Western life and pioneer incidents to the East,” which represents “a most absorbing educational realism” (Pomeroy qtd. in McMurtry 138). Likewise, the *Montreal Gazette* proclaimed: “The whole thing is real” (qtd. in McMurtry 138).¹⁸⁶ In the simulated reality of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, Indians mounted on pinto ponies wore full feather headdresses and beaded jackets, attacked the pony express or stage coaches and abducted innocent white women, who were then rescued by dashing cowboys or a valiant cavalry. Sam D. Gill points out that “[t]he show was a major influence in spreading the Plains costume and war-bonneted images that are still familiar” (122).

Of course, this is not to say that horses, eagle feathers and other animals and animal products were and are not a significant part of Native cultural life. King makes this clear in *Green Grass*, as, in their childhood, Eli, Norma and Camelot “would ride horses and chase each other across the prairies, their freedom interrupted only by the ceremonies” at the Sun Dance (49), and Portland Looking Bear, a Hollywood actor type-cast into stereotypical Indian roles, returns to the reservation to show “his son and the rest of the kids how to mount a horse without a saddle, how to ride bareback using just the mane and your hands, how to drop to the side of the horse so you couldn’t be seen. How to fall off” (202). Alberta Frank teaches her university class about the importance of horses for survival of the southern Plains tribes in 1874, as the US Army “systematically went from village to village burning houses, killing horses, and destroying food supplies” in order to “forc[e] the southern Plains tribes onto

reservations. . . . Starvation and freezing conditions finally forced the tribes to surrender” (*Green Grass* 15). Gill, moreover, points out the spiritual significance of horses in Sioux culture, for example, in economic, political and spiritual terms (120).

However, a “pony show” with trick riding is all that is left visible of this culture and history to “Western” audiences.¹⁸⁷ Accordingly, Buffalo Bill Bursum, watching a John Wayne western on *The Map*, sees a “spectacle of men and horses and weapons,” as the cavalry charges down the ridge to aid the besieged cowboys under attack from horse-mounted Indians (*Green Grass* 244). At the same time, Dr. Hovaugh, watching the same western on his TV, admires the “perfect symmetry of man and animal” as an Indian chief “spin[s] his horse around and around in the water” (246). Part of the process by which Indian life, cultural practices and human-animal relationships are rendered into a commercialised spectacle (in the main for somebody else’s profit) is highlighted by McMurtry’s comment that the Indians in Buffalo Bill’s shows were “much more gloriously feathered than they could have afforded to be back at the Red Cloud agency, or even in pre-Custer times” (139).¹⁸⁸

Thus, culturally and spiritually meaningful ceremonies, objects and clothing have become circensian commodities, not much more than circus costumes and performances, in the eyes of Western spectators, regardless of whether they are actually set within an entertainment context or not. This is brought to light when Alberta’s father Amos Frank deals with US border guards, who confiscate his family’s ceremonial dance outfits because they incorporate eagle feathers. Finally allowed to pick up the dance outfits, Amos finds that they have been carelessly stuffed in “garbage bags,” damaged, and soiled by dirty boot prints. The patronising border official, however, appears completely oblivious of the significance of the ceremonial outfits or the sacredness of eagle feathers,¹⁸⁹ and views Native ceremonies as nothing but entertainment: “‘I’ve been to a couple of powwows,’ said the man. ‘At the

Calgary Stampede. Very colorful” (*Green Grass* 312-4). The border official’s emphasis on colour rather than meaning or human interactions reveals his view of Indians as pintoesque, so to speak, that is, as a two-dimensional and cinematic spectacle that just happens to be off-screen sometimes.

Accordingly, Indians, animals and animal products have become exotic, emblematic actors and props in the performance and production of a myth scripted by the invader culture, which, furthermore, still holds an astonishing currency.¹⁹⁰ King comments that “the kind of Indian” people would “like to have” even today is “some 19th-century Native on a pinto pony in a teepee” (qtd. in Weaver 56), an expectation expressed by Clifford Sifton, who does not think that “real” Indians “drive cars, watch television, go to hockey games,” are university professors or “speak . . . good English” (*Green Grass* 156), and embodied by George Morningstar and his search for a “real Indian” (*Green Grass* 145). It is also satirised by the Dead Dog Café’s “ambience,” created by a menu of supposed dog meat and stereotypical Indian clothing that are nothing to do with Blackfoot cuisine or dress (*Green Grass* 116-7). These instances reflect the image created by Wild West shows and the accompanying novels which King calls “the literary Indian, the dying Indian, the imaginative construct” (*Truth about Stories* 34).

King poses the question of how the myth of “the Indian” can have more currency than the real people, “Indians,” and argues that the imaginative construct is created and perpetuated by a wealth of commodities—such as brand names, sports mascots, western novels and movies—amongst which he specifically lists “the Calgary Stampede” and “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show” (*Truth about Stories* 54). It is paradoxical, then, that Buffalo Bill’s Wild West “served even to teach Native Americans how they were supposed to dress and act in conformance with their growing awareness of being Indians” (Gill 122). Gill points out that one of the survival mechanisms for Plains Indian peoples was “to encourage

pan-Indian identity as much as possible and to develop traditions that were Indian in character. Numerous political organizations and ceremonial practices like the powwow arose as a result” (123). He argues that Buffalo Bill’s Wild West also provided, at the same time, a space where “members of many cultures that had been enemies came together and found a common bond in their Indianness” (Gill 122). Similarly, since its beginning, the Calgary Stampede has fulfilled the ambiguous role of providing a space for Native Canadians to keep their traditions alive whilst presenting them as part of the overall entertainment in the process.¹⁹¹

Thus, ironically, pan-Indian identity developed both as resistance to colonisation as well as in response to and by incorporating imposed Wild West representations. In *Fur Queen*, this results in Champion/Jeremiah’s confusion about the kind of event taking place when he walks into a pow wow: “Had he just walked into a Buffalo Bill Wild West extravaganza? A John Wayne movie? Where were the horses, the tired pioneers, the circle of dusty chuckwagons?” (171). He can no longer separate stereotype and entertainment from meaningful cultural practice, and comments: “Disney Indians . . . Hollywood Indians dress like that” (173). In *The Truth about Stories*, King comments on the experience of always being regarded as entertainment, and writes: “But maybe being entertainment isn’t so bad. Maybe it’s what you’re left with when the only defence you have is a good story. Maybe entertainment is the story of survival” (89). However, it does not appear as though North American Natives, on the whole, have had much choice in the matter of becoming entertainment in amongst the ponies for Western audiences.¹⁹²

Accordingly, there is a sense in *Green Grass* whereby the Blackfoot characters simply cannot escape being entertainment. For example, Lionel (“the lion,” as it happens) appears to be trapped in Bursum’s Home Entertainment Barn, both through unfortunate circumstances and through his own indecision in regard to returning to university. As his cousin Charlie

Looking Bear comments, “Lionel’s never going to get out” (44). Charlie himself, whose career as a highly paid lawyer only depends on the fact that he is a token Indian employed to deal with a sensitive case, is depicted as riding a battered old Pinto car instead of a pinto horse. As the butt of a postmodern joke that plays on the commodification of Indian imagery, Charlie thus simulates the stereotypical Indian on a pinto pony as well as a stereotypical lawyer riding an expensive car, both of which are roles he can never quite fulfil. Circensian roles, moreover, are doubly imposed upon Charlie’s father Portland Looking Bear, who, as an actor, is already part of the entertainment industry. However, since he does not look Indian enough for the movie directors, he is asked to wear a rubber nose to make him look more authentic. Portland, in response, feels it would turn him into a clown, as clowns are “the only professionals he knew who wore rubber noses” (168).

Portland’s experience, like every other Indian character’s experience in *Green Grass*, reflects the process at play in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, where, as Richard White explains, “[t]he show and lived historical reality constantly imitated each other” (29). By re-enacting “white versions of events” in which they had actually taken part, the Native members of Buffalo Bill’s troupe, “actual Indians . . . now inhabited their own representations” (White 35). White comments that “[t]his was the most complicated kind of mimesis. Indians were imitating imitations of themselves” (35). Karen, Eli’s white partner, expresses the effect of this complicated intermingling of reality and representation in her first reaction to seeing the Sun Dance circle in the distance. She says: “That’s beautiful. It’s like it’s right out of a movie” (*Green Grass* 227).

However, it would be a mistake to think that Coyote, who lends a paw in fixing the world by dancing a little and singing a little (see *Green Grass* 450-51, 455-56), performs on those terms, as King adds another layer to such Wild West realism and, in turn, presents an Indian version of Indian imitations of white versions of events in which Indians have actually

taken part. Accordingly, the show is presented entirely on Native terms, as Coyote takes control of the imposed Wild West circus and turns the pinto pony spectacular into the subversive *dog* and pony show Cereno is concerned about.¹⁹³ In fact, Cereno's comment comes shortly after Coyote's first appearance as a "yellow dog . . . sniffing at the rear tire" of Babo's Pinto (20). The supposed dog's intervention animates the car, a consumer commodity with a Wild West name, to become a magical agent throughout the narrative. Moreover, Coyote's dancing gives meaning to several characters' searches for their Indian/Blackfoot identity beyond imposed representations and expectations. Cheryl Lousley comments that Coyote's part as a subversive dancer in *Green Grass* is a recognition of "the agency of the oppressed," that is, the "agency of marginalized people, nonhuman animals and supernatural events/beings/places."

Goldman argues that King's focus on the circular represents a replication of "the structure and rhythms of the Sun Dance" rather than a postmodern manoeuvre (35). Thus, the Sun Dance provides the vital underlying framework, whereas the circus arena's insidious influence on Native Americans' lives is mocked, the ridiculousness of its portrayal of "the Indian" as exotic entertainment exposed, and its frivolity is turned against itself under the influence of trickster humour. At the same time as Coyote determines much of the course of the narrative, or causes some of its diversions and unexpected turns, the four old Indians—the other tricksters or trickster, or other shape of the trickster (one can never be sure)—"fix" the world by changing the predictable plot of the western played on TV and Bursum's Map. Thus, part of the horse act, so to speak, is simply dismissed as the cavalry mysteriously vanishes "[j]ust like that" (*Green Grass* 357), causing John Wayne's and Richard Widmark's characters to lose the battle to the Indians.

Furthermore, King indicates that the other "dog," namely Lionel Red Dog, will take matters into his own hands eventually (hands rather than paws here). Accordingly, Lionel

shows first signs of becoming the ringmaster of the dog and pony show, rather than remaining the exotic lion/dancing dog, or perhaps even the “well-read dog,”¹⁹⁴ trapped in Bursum’s Home Entertainment Barn forever. Still looking “like a goose at full gallop” on his way to Bursum’s shop (*Green Grass* 308), Lionel is comically clueless of the fact that, on the day of his fortieth birthday, he is indeed closely aligned with, if not curiously the same as, Coyote. In fact, his “gold blazer had turned brown” like a dog’s coat, and he “smelled like a wet dog” upon his arrival at the Home Entertainment Barn (327). Like the supposed yellow dog at the beginning, Lionel, too, is “making a puddle” (328), albeit (thankfully) by different means. Coyote’s sulky comment, “I’m fine That’s how I am” (329), echoes Lionel’s earlier impression that he is not taken seriously and his equally sulky response to Norma, “Doing just fine” (186). Moreover, Coyote is “also wet” like Lionel, who is “dripping water on the floor” of the shop, and who is worried by “the disturbing feeling that if he moved, things would begin to unravel” (330), just as Coyote’s dancing unravels the order of things.

As this scene is intertwined with a conversation about relatedness and relations, Lionel’s connectedness, or relatedness, with Coyote and indeed all of creation is further reinforced by the Lone Ranger’s response to Lionel’s assertion that the four old Indians are “not really relations”: “Everyone’s related, grandson” (*Green Grass* 330), the Lone Ranger replies. After all, not only are Lionel and Coyote evidently “family” through Lionel’s family name, the phrase “all my relations” or “all my relatives,” alluded to several times throughout the narrative, is spiritually significant in certain rituals and refers to the inter-connectedness of humans with the rest of the cosmos, including animals.¹⁹⁵ It is through Coyote that Lionel will eventually gain the strength to take control, which is foreshadowed when Lionel re-examines his life and looks in the mirror on the morning of his fortieth birthday: “It hurt his eyes, but mostly he did not want to look at what he had become—middle aged, overweight, unsuccessful. But today he flicked out a hand like a whip and snapped the light on. The

effect was startling and much worse than he imagined” (263-4). Lionel wields the ringmaster’s whip in order to turn on the light, a significant reference again to Coyote, who does the same later on (see 256-7), but his surprised response indicates that he is not yet ready to accept the responsibility. At the end of the novel, Lionel is still undecided, and the reader remains unconvinced that he will ever take charge of his own life.

However, in another comic twist, readers of *Green Grass, Running Water*’s sequel, *Truth and Bright Water*, find out that Lionel does more than that, as Blossom then features “Lionel’s Home Entertainment Barn,” owned by “an Indian guy who looks sort of like John Wayne, only not as heavy.” As the protagonist’s father explains dryly, “Indian guy owns this White guy went bankrupt a few years back and had to sell it. Now that’s funny. . . . Not many times you see that happen” (King, *Truth and Bright Water* 87). Lionel’s success signifies a subversion of conquest in a wider sense, whereby Indians manage to get rid of Buffalo Bill and the Myths he stands for, and take over the “show” entirely. Western entertainment, the enactment of the taming and domestication of the Wild West, is turned upside-down and used to mock itself. Thus, as Buffalo Bill (Bursum) is the one who loses out in the end, Native community, characters and cosmology are not marginalised at all; instead, it is the Western—or rather the Wild Western—world view that is pushed to the margin.

Categorising Trickiness:

Magical Realism or Contemporary Trickster Narrative?

Ultimately, the apparent alternation, cross-over and borrowing between magical realism and trickster narrative in both *Fur Queen* and *Green Grass* does not shed light on whether these novels should be classed as one or the other. Shawna Thorp argues for a “distinctive genre”

she calls “enactment narratives” (147), in which “the rules of operation are not those defined by the colonizers, but by specific Native belief systems” (149). *Fur Queen* certainly matches Thorp’s description of the genre.¹⁹⁶ Discussing *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko and *Nightland* by Louis Owens, Thorp argues that this is a distinct category of Native writing characterised by a “convergence of present and mythic time” (152). Thorp uses the term “myth” as a narrative “situated within a particular belief system,” the reality of which is reaffirmed “as lived experience” through enactment narratives (148).¹⁹⁷ In this way, characters enact the myths of their specific culture to such an extent that “they merge and become identical” with their “mythic predecessors,” or else, they find themselves in similar situations (Thorp 148).

Accordingly, the Okimasis brothers enact the myths of the “Weasel’s new Fur Coat” and the “Son of Ayash,” which Sam McKegney considers “the Cree tale forming the novel’s spiritual backdrop” (“From Trickster Poetics to Transgressive Politics” 93). The latter strings its way through the narrative, not only as stage performance of Champion/Jeremiah’s play, for example, but also in day-to-day life, as Mariesis Okimasis, in mending Ooneemeetoo/Gabriel’s “*ballee sleeper*” and “quash[ing] a pig snort” (*Fur Queen* 194), represents an animal like those who fix Ayash’s “damaged moccasins” (Brightman 38-9).¹⁹⁸ However, myth, in *Fur Queen*, means not only “ancient stories” that define “contemporary space” and “overlay present experiences” (Thorp 148). Abraham Okimasis’ legendary dog sled race win is not an ancient story, but an event still remembered by those who witnessed it. It becomes legendary by its transformation into a contemporary myth, which is then corroborated by his sons, as each son enacts the myth in his own way (see *Fur Queen* 213-4, 303-6).¹⁹⁹

Thorp points out that the choice between “scientific and culturally based explanations” in enactment narratives “might also suggest an alliance with magical realism”

(163). She argues emphatically against such a designation, however, and maintains that the privileging of specific tribal perspectives “transcend[s] the conventions of that form” (163). By contrasting enactment narratives directly with Slemon’s approach to magical realism, she proposes that enactment narratives “do legitimize one system over the other”; there is, she says, “no battle” between “Euro-American and Native American epistemologies” (164). Therefore, according to Thorp, enactment narratives make “a clean break with the genre of magical realism” and “create a world in which the beliefs of the colonizer are invalid and have no effect” (162). The Okimasis brothers’ rejection of Catholicism in favour of Native spirituality in the final scene of the novel certainly suggests this. Thorp stresses, moreover, the importance of “audience and reception,” as “enactment narratives displace readers who approach such texts from outside the tribal perspective” (164). However, although Highway’s overarching cosmology is distinctly Cree, this does not mean that other systems of representation, meaningful to non-Cree, do not come into play.

Indeed, Highway borrows significantly from European systems of representation, such as Greek myth and classical music. The division of the different parts of the novel in terms of musical tempi gives prominence to European classical music, a genre that Highway, a trained classical musician and composer, deliberately transforms into fiction (see Shackleton and Lutz 82-4). This European influence, however, is intermingled with the sounds of the Manitoba landscape:

Across the lake, a lone wolf raised its howl, the string of notes arcing in a seamless, infinitely slow, infinitely sad glissando, then fading into silence, leaving the hearts of its listeners motionless with awe. Then two wolves joined the first in song. One of Abraham’s dogs, tethered to trees behind the tent, answered, then a second dog, and a third, until a chorus of weeping souls,

as if mourning for one irretrievably lost, filled the night air (*Fur Queen* 31)

This is accompanied by Mariesis sighing “like the cooing of a ptarmigan” (35) and a dog called “Cha-La-La” (25), for example, and interjected by discordant sounds such as “the ticking of watches, the buzzing of incandescent lights, the hum of loudspeakers” (9), the “English dirge” of the cannibal-like priest (227) and “this queer new language [English] that sounded like the *putt-putt-putt* of Happy Doll Magipom’s pathetic three-horsepower outboard motor” (52). Highway thus uses humans, animals and technology as his musical instruments to create a piece that incorporates Native and non-Native elements, which all constitute significant parts of the composition overall.

Furthermore, the “Odyssean sirens” (*Fur Queen* 117), or “Ulysses’ sirens” (121), that provide the background music in the shopping mall indicate the inclusion of Greek mythology within an overarching Cree context. Thus, Champion/Jeremiah encounters a “Cyclops” on his way to “a palace afloat on a nighttime sea” (105), and, like Odysseus pretending to be “no-one” (“*mē-tis*” in Greek) in order to escape the man-eating Cyclops Polyphemus (see Barnouw, 58), Champion/Jeremiah tries to turn himself into a nobody, as it were, by “will[ing] his body dead” (*Fur Queen* 205) and denying his Cree roots to avoid being consumed by the Weetigo. More overtly, though, Champion/Jeremiah’s play “Ulysses Thunderchild” is about the ‘Son of Ayash’, the “[c]losest thing the Cree have to their own Ulysses,” as he tells his brother (277).

Highway also cunningly connects Greek mythology and the trickster Fox, ironically through cunning, “*mētis*” in Greek, itself: Zeus’ first wife Mētis, a cunning shapeshifter (see Wallen 43-4) and mother of Athena, the patroness of Odysseus, is eaten by Zeus (see Tiles 387), while the fox in “Greek consciousness” has *mētis* (Tiles 387).²⁰⁰ Champion/Jeremiah’s reflection of Odysseus’ pun on *mē-tis*, “nobody,” used to trick the Cyclops, thus alludes to his

transformation towards either becoming a victim of the cannibalistic monster, or embodying the Fox's cunning. The pun on "Métis," the First Nation incorporating European ancestry, moreover, ultimately enables the incorporation of the Greek cannibalistic myth and the cunning Fox of European traditions into Highway's contemporary trickster narrative. The connection is strengthened further by the close association of *mētis* with the knowledge needed for hunting and fishing (Detienne and Vernant 44-47). *Mētis*, moreover, is by nature "multiple" and "shifting," as "[i]t bears on fluid situations which are constantly changing and which at every moment combine contrary features and forces that are opposed to each other" (Detienne and Vernant 20), which suggests an intriguing compatibility with both magical realism and the North American trickster.

Accordingly, whilst the access of non-Native readers is certainly limited, they are, however, not excluded. Highway comments: "I think I've studied enough Western and other art to have achieved a level of sophistication where I write beyond the specifics of my aboriginal background and get to the universal human condition" (qtd. in Enright 223). Correspondingly, Wylie points out that *Green Grass* "speaks to non-Native readers as well as Native readers" (121). Indeed, Louis Owens finds that hybridisation is a general feature of contemporary Native American novels, which privilege "the comparatively small audience" of Native readers (14). This hybridisation, he argues, is a response to the circumstance that, "[w]hile writing for the Indian reader, the Indian novelist who desires publication must also write for the non-Indian" (14). Thus, the resulting "richly hybridized dialogue" is "aimed at those few with privileged knowledge—the traditionally educated Indian reader—as well as those with claims to a privileged discourse—the Eurocentric reader" (Owens 14). I propose that magical realism is part of this hybridisation process in *Fur Queen* and *Green Grass*. As such, it is incorporated into the polyphony of the contemporary trickster narrative as one of

“many people’s stories,” or rather, as one of many ways of telling stories, “all of which eventually connect” (to use the words of Hodgson’s mother again).

Convergence

Accordingly, although the circus, an imposed, colonial form of entertainment in the shape of the Wild West show, is critiqued in both novels, the carnivalesque spirit of circensian spaces converges with the trickster in a way that appears effortless and natural, as it were.

“Convergence,” in a biological sense, is “[t]he tendency in diverse or allied animals or plants to assume similar characteristics under like conditions of environment.” These conditions and characteristics are captured by Larry Ellis, who describes the trickster as “[s]traddling the juncture of two worlds [in such a way that] he belongs to neither and yet to both, and if his behavior confounds us, it is because we see in him the apparent confusion that characterizes the marginal/liminal landscape” (56). Both Coyote/Weesageechak and magical realist animals inhabit liminal landscapes, albeit of different cultural origins.

These landscapes are literally polyphonic in *Fur Queen*, which resounds with the music of human and animal voices, and Owens, who finds Bakhtin’s theories “ubiquitously useful,” observes the pertinence of the “dialogic process” to Native American narratives (6). Correspondingly, Carlton Smith argues that *Green Grass* engages the reader in a “collaboration” akin to Bakhtin’s concept of “heteroglossia,” which encourages readers “to become members of a community engaged in telling, hearing, retelling, contradicting, and reweaving, rather than in simply receiving” (Smith 531). I suggest that one of the most important elements shared between King’s and Highway’s novels and their respective readers of Native and non-Native backgrounds is subversive laughter, springing from both trickster subversions and carnivalesque elements, and although Native cultural contexts may not be understood by Western readers, subversive laughter as such is universal and, to a large extent

at least, recognisable to all. By appropriating the carnivalesque for their purposes, King and Highway enable us to laugh, however painfully at times, at ourselves. Owens finds that Bakhtin's description of laughter, which "demolishes fear and piety before an object, before a world, making of it an object of familiar [sic] contact and thus clearing the ground for an absolutely free investigation of it" (Bakhtin qtd. in Owens 226), is "a precise definition of the humor and method of the Native American trickster" and "a remarkably accurate description of a raven examining and dissecting an object of interest" (Owens 226).

Animality is often at the heart of such subversive humour, specifically the transgression of human-animal boundaries, and the foregrounding of the animality of humans on the level of sexuality, scatology, and the body more generally. Accordingly, the trickster and the carnivalesque share certain types of humour based on overtly sexual references and irreverent, even blasphemous jokes otherwise unacceptable under normal circumstances, such as Coyote's impregnation of Alberta in allusion to the Virgin Birth, his comment on bestiality (see *Green Grass* 160), and the suggestion of a lesbian relationship between Changing Woman and Moby-Jane (see 248-9).²⁰¹ Furthermore, as Fee and Flick point out in relation to *Green Grass*, scatology is "part of Native subversive humour" (137). Indeed, in *Fur Queen*, carnivalesque humour responds to the "very visceral, physical . . . instinctual language" of Cree, the "laughing language," as Highway describes it (qtd. in Hodgson). In Highway's novel, the scatological and irreverent instances of humour are thus recognisable, and recognisably subversive, to Western readers, too, albeit from a different perspective. The funniness of these instances may therefore arise either from a carnivalesque or a Cree world view, or in some cases, from an indigenised version of the carnivalesque.

For example, Eemanapiteepitat, at the arrival of the Okimasis brothers (*Fur Queen* 186-191), represents such a liminal space where carnivalesque excesses, Cree humour and Creeness intermingle, and trickster and circensian animals converge. Accordingly,

Eemanapiteepitat includes, for instance, inhabitants who “fight like Tasmanian devils,” “tricycles and bicycles . . . with four, five, twenty-one children balanced circus-like on their seats, backs, handlebars,” “the inhumanly tall Magimay Cutthroat,” an aircraft landing “in flawless Cree,” a “crowd . . . like mosquitoes,” “ants” and “bees,” and a leaking colostomy bag. The small procession of the brothers, friends and family parodies a Catholic procession with Champion/Jeremiah leading the way. He is imagined to wear a cassock, “one of those long black skirts,” accompanied by “a chorus of yowling mongrels,” and contemplating the lionising of a singing nun. Moreover, carnivalesque irreverence, circensian human-animal boundary blurring, subversion of church hierarchies, scatological humour, the visceral humour of the Cree language, and postcolonial resistance to the oppressive Weetigo priests are united in Father Bouchard’s “bell-like poot.” The portrayal of the “nether-region sotto voce,” accompanied by Annie Moostoos’ curse of Kookoos Cook (“you fuckin’ goddam bleedin’ caribou arsehole”), and emerging from a “club sandwich of humans” which leaves “the learned, elevated cleric” at the bottom of the pile (189), represents a scene that, from whichever cultural background it is understood, always leaves the priest as the butt of the joke.

On the level of the carnivalesque, at least, the ridiculing of church authorities—such as the Okimasis brothers’ enactments of Catholic rituals, which are frequently undermined by Creeness, the interjection of the Cree language, or animals—is also instantly recognisable to those familiar with carnival in other predominantly Catholic regions of the world.²⁰² An example are the mock funerals held all over the Rhineland on the last day of the carnival and before repentance on Ash Wednesday, when the *Nubbel*, an effigy of a man, is burnt as a scapegoat for the sins of the past few days of revelry. These carnival ceremonies, too, combine the irreverent with the scatological. Recalling, for instance, the blessing of the mourners at the *Nubbel*’s funeral with supposed holy water, sprayed onto the congregation by

a toiletbrush-wielding priest, I can relate to the kind of humour depicted by the Okimasis brothers' celebration of mock Mass. King and Highway create hybrid narrative spaces where stories of this kind converge, and are incorporated, shared and indigenised.

The process at play is described by Owens, who writes: “[T]he writer is appropriating an essentially ‘other’ language and thus entering into dialogue with the language itself. The result of this exquisite balancing act is a matrix of incredible heteroglossia and linguistic torsions and an intensely political situation” (15). Through the appropriation of convergent, formally similar elements, it becomes impossible to tell whether a phenomenon such as the animated Pinto is an instance of magical realism, as Goldman suggests (32), or a result of animism, or both. Non-Native readers, at least, are thus put into a position of having to constantly question their ways of looking, their preconceptions and stereotypes, and their relationship to the narrative. Interrogating the way we look at animals goes some way towards addressing these issues; however, because of the convergence of confusingly similar liminal fauna, these remain ultimately irresolvable.

Conclusion

Like magical realism, the trickster is inherently oxymoronic, and Sandlos' conceptualisation of “the Trickster-paradox” as “disharmonized harmony,” “both a pattern and an anti-pattern; a rigid code and an expression of imaginative possibility” (106) might just as well be a description of the magical realist mode. Highway's and King's tricksters fit the description of the trickster by Kimberley Blaeser, who writes that she-he is “[n]ot a composite, which is made up of distinct and recognizable parts, but a complex, which is one unit whose makeup is intricate and interwoven” (Blaeser qtd. in Wyile 111). Though Sandlos warns that Coyote's “contradictory nature and locally-colored personality resists universalizing academic interpretations” (102), I suggest that this in itself is approaching a definition, albeit a

contradictory one. Gill's comment, that "[i]t seems that the only dependable characteristic for the trickster is that he defies clear definition" (19), reveals a further remarkable similarity to magic realism as a whole, which I propose is defined by its indefinability and its inherent resistance to classification; at best, a definition of the mode can only be approximated.

For example, magical realism's essentially oxymoronic character whereby two or more systems of representation hold equal balance is not necessarily absolutely unique to the mode. Conversely, texts that can be regarded as "magical realism" frequently can be, and are, classed under a different name, such as "postmodern," "postcolonial," "surreal" and so on and vice versa, to state the most obvious and frequent choices. The contentious issue of what constitutes "magic" complicates the matter even more, leaving the mode open to re-interpretation from other cultural perspectives. King and Highway negotiate their readers' different points of view, shaped by different cultural lenses, as well as the cross-cultural influences of contemporary Canada, through the convergence of trickster narrative with the carnivalesque, and of the trickster with magical realist animals. At the same time, Coyote's appropriation of the circus on Native terms reminds readers that these circensian spaces are, to borrow Hodgson's expression, firmly planted "in Native soil." In this way, King's and Highway's contemporary trickster narratives create a space where stories and subversive laughter can be shared without trivialising the content, whilst Weesageechak remains elusive to capture as much as magical realist animals do.

Moreover, due to their boundary-crossing nature and in the context of animism, these feral texts themselves appear to behave like tricksters and play with literary critics who cannot domesticate them, so to speak, under one single paradigm. Instead, feral narratives seem to continue to breed even more monsters—popular and attractive ones, nonetheless. The impression of being mocked in the attempt of defining genres and categorising particular narratives, such as *Green Grass* and *Fur Queen*, arises, I propose, directly and deliberately

out of the material itself.²⁰³ Magical realism, or a version thereof, or something that looks a lot like it, appears at its most animated here due to its feral spirit. Accordingly, I propose that “Magical Realism?” is a feasible label for *Green Grass* and *Fur Queen* with, however, an indispensable question mark (which looks suspiciously like a Coyote hair). I concede that this term may be rejected as much as embraced, but maintain that it makes sense in the context of the role that animals play in the arena of international book fairs—even if only there. And if such a conclusion appears ludicrous, I blame the trickster. Coyote really is very useful sometimes.²⁰⁴

Chapter Five

Dances with Cows:

Domestication and Settlement in *What the Crow Said*, *The Invention of the World* and *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*

So far, the analysis of material animal practices and human-animal relationships has shown that magical realism, borrowed from Latin America and employed in the context of British settlement, is inherently subversive of European Enlightenment concepts of what it means to be human. The notion that humans and animals are separate beings, divided by taxonomic categories, is thoroughly ridiculed—through animist trickster narratives and carnivalesque mockery, for example. Likewise, the supreme position of a white, male, European subject, the “ordering” of the natural world through Eurocentric science, and the idea of improving the land by pastoral settlement are questioned and exposed as ideological constructs. Settlement has been thoroughly unsettled by feral narratives that make use of, appropriate, interrogate and undermine what Belsey calls the “hierarchy of discourses of classic realism” (92).

The previous chapter featured the transgressive Native Canadian trickster, whose convergence with magical realist ferality exposed the difficulty, if not impossibility, of classifying magical realist narratives with certainty. Disruptive of pastoral settlement and ideals, the trickster brings not only the ordering of nature into disarray, but he also confounds the nature of ordering, so to speak: feral texts cannot be domesticated by applying a universally valid system, it appears. Classification and domestication of narratives is also a concern in three Canadian novels by two authors from a European settler background: Robert Kroetsch’s *What the Crow Said*, and Jack Hodgins’ *The Invention of the World* and *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*. These novels include elements familiar from Latin

American magical realism and prominently feature representations of animals and animality alongside unusual events and characters. *What the Crow Said* begins with the impregnation of Vera Lang by a swarm of bees, who, subsequently, are blamed for the many extraordinary occurrences that follow. These include the arrival of a speaking crow in the town of Big Indian after the birth of JG, Tiddy Lang's silent son; the seemingly supernatural connection between JG and the crow; frost and snow in summer; an almost endless game of cards; the appearance of Vera's pig-Latin speaking son, who was raised by coyotes; the Indian Joe Lightning's flight with a giant eagle and his resulting fall from the sky. The enigmatic "War against the Sky" is fought by Gus Liebhaber, the printer of the local newspaper, who fires bees at the sky with a circus cannon, in order to win the love of Vera's mother Tiddy.

Hodgins' *The Invention of the World* follows the events surrounding Donal Keneally's cult in British Columbia, founded with followers from the Irish village Carrighoun, where he grew up. He reigns with absolute power over his colony, manipulating and controlling his disciples with cheap magic tricks and by instilling fear. Ultimately, his rule is challenged, and Keneally dies in a collapsed tunnel. His ashes are finally returned to his birthplace in Ireland by Maggie Kyle, who, years after Keneally's death, runs a trailer park in the same place as the former colony. For Maggie, the journey to Ireland becomes a spiritual journey that illuminates her path in life, and her sense of belonging and identity. Keneally, as the embodiment of evil, however, is vanquished.

Hodgins' second novel, *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne* recounts the events between the flooding of the small town Port Annie by a tidal wave, and its destruction by a landslide. A beached whale is said to have transformed into Fat Annie Fartenburg, the founder of the town, and an old man, Joseph Bourne, is brought back from death by a woman from a Peruvian freighter washed up by the tidal wave.

Geert Lernout points out García Márquez' particular influence on both authors: "Kroetsch and Jack Hodgins read *Cien años* while they were working on *What the Crow Said* and *The Invention of the World* respectively" (52). Indeed, Robert Kroetsch once explained that what he admires about García Márquez is that "[h]e nips at the heels of realism and makes the old cow dance" (qtd. in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 132). This image inadvertently connects magic realist writing with animal entertainment, agriculture and domestication. This chapter explores the ways in which pastoral settlement influences Kroetsch's and Hodgins' animal imagery and the classification of their respective novels as "magical realism." Both authors, I suggest, harness magical realism and domesticate ferality to naturalise settlement and recover enlightenment ideas of what it means to be human from the posthuman animality of circensian spaces.

Local Flavour, Global Appeal: Canadian Mythologies and Multicultural Magic

Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said* and Jack Hodgins' *The Invention of the World* are considered magical realist by a number of critics. Stephen Slemon, for example, discusses both *The Invention of the World* and *What the Crow Said* in an attempt to clarify the "concept of magic realism in a postcolonial context" (409); Stanley E. McMullin rates *What the Crow Said* as "the best example of prairie magic realism" (19); Robert Lecker associates Kroetsch's novel with "the kind of 'magic realism' that is frequently identified with contemporary South American fiction" (*Robert Kroetsch* 97); and Robert Rawdon Wilson discusses the relevance of this mode usually associated with Latin American writing to the Albertan setting of *What the Crow Said* (see "On the Boundary"; "Metamorphoses"). J'nan Morse Sellery states that Kroetsch "exploit[s] myth and magic realism" (21), and Martin Kuester calls *What the Crow Said* "Robert Kroetsch's flirt with magic realism" (148). Geoff Hancock closely links Canadian "magic realists" such as Kroetsch and Hodgins with Latin American writers, and

enthusiastically compares García Márquez' Macondo with Hodgins' Vancouver Island ("Magic or Realism" 44). Suzanne Baker regards both Kroetsch and Hodgins as "prime examples" of what she identifies as "a significant body of magic realist writing" in Canada ("Binarisms" 83).

Jeffrey concedes the "evident indebtedness of *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne* to Gabriel García Márquez" (198), and Jeanne Delbaere-Garant suggests that "[t]he obvious echoes of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The Autumn of the Patriarch* throughout Hodgins' novel *The Invention of the World* probably explain why this novel was hailed as magic realist in the first place" (254). She points out:

Hodgins has never made a secret of his admiration for the Latin American novelists; he humorously acknowledges his debt to them by making the giant wave that invades Vancouver Island in *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne* leave all sorts of Peruvian marvels behind. These include a godlike Peruvian sailor thrown naked on the soaked yellow daisies of Angela Turner's sheets and the beautiful Raimy, the 'walking miracle' who turns the little town upside down. (Delbaere-Garant 254)

The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne certainly echoes Latin American magical realist imagery throughout. Images of human-animal hybridity, elements of the carnivalesque, allusions to the circus, and, not least, Joseph Bourne's travels, which take him to the Gulf of Mexico, Venezuela, and Brazil, suggest the Latin American influence. Many of the human-animal images, however, are comparisons with animals, rather than representations of human animality, human-animal hybridity, although there are some descriptions of town inhabitants as, not like, animals. The Chamber-Potts children, for example, "promised more entertainment. And delivered. When they walked in that front door those crazy animals of kids were going wild, acting like a zoo" (*Resurrection* 85). Ian McCarthy is repeatedly

referred to as a “sea otter” (30, 139, 204), Slim Potts has a “rat’s face” (84, 87), ‘Preserved Crabbe’ is a “big ape of a Squatter” (120), Joseph Bourne is frequently called an “old goat” (7,29,30,63,95,96,100), and Mayor Weins suggests that Joseph Bourne does not “act human” (30). Additionally, Raimey is ‘the Seabird’ throughout: “She was the girl who came in from the sea, or . . . ‘that cormorant with the cheeky behind’. ‘A seabird is what she is, but that rear end of hers thinks she’s the Queen of Sheba’” (1). Such images of human animality serve to paint Port Annie as an exotic, multicultural location, embodied in Dirty Della’s “brood of kids, a United Nations of colours and faces,” which “[s]he herded . . . ahead of her, like a flock of noisy geese” (10).

At the same time, the use of indigenous animals, particularly sea creatures, creates a distinctive sense of the local environment, as the inhabitants of the “the sea-washed town” (35) are compared to fish (15,58,89,90,100,127), “shrimp” (104) and crabs (the Crabbe brothers), for example. Correspondingly, Fat Annie, the legendary town founder, purportedly half whale, half human, spectacularly embodies the boundary between land and sea. Christie describes her as standing “right over there in the foyer, in her black silk funeral dress, . . . soaking wet and sticking to her body. Plastered all over like this town with bits of kelp and weeds and seedy yellow pods and chips of bark, with broken shells in her hair” (116-7). Much of her appearance suggests the figure of a sea nymph, or sea goddess, as she stands with “strips of seaweed glitter[ing] in her hair” (118), and as she “pulled her wet dress away from her breasts and released tiny black silver-eyed fish that fell to the floor and thrashed themselves to death on the carpet” (117). She also counts “half a dozen fish tanks” amongst her possessions (117).

Moreover, Mr Manku, new Canadian citizen and Indian immigrant, combines the local with the exotic and multicultural in a spectacle reminiscent of SeaWorld, an aquatic circus, when he decides that to truly become a citizen, he must “do something that these

westerners liked to do,” that is, he must learn to “swim like a fish” (104). He is the (ridiculed) central attraction, “the centre of everything” (135), in the local pool, as he “g[ives] a little wave and lower[s] his body, with the slow dignity of an elephant seal, to sit on the cement bottom of the pool” (79). A “bright light” is “streaming down on him” and he imagines “an enormous audience, holding its breath” (135). However, his audience are only the “Chamber-Potts kids, still horsing around,” who mock: “‘Look at the water rise when that elephant sits!’ They all screamed with laughter, and slapped at each other, and threw themselves around on the seats. ‘Everybody out of the pool, the rug-rider’s fleas’ll get you’” (79). Joseph Bourne, too, adds exotic appeal in a scene that has him resembling a member of the motley cast of a travelling circus:

The tidal wave of sea-gifts had left the lower town decorated with the underwater brilliance of a dream and filled the rainy air with the unfamiliar scent of a stirred-up sea, but the old man hurried away as if he thought there was a spell in it that he needed to escape. His stuck-forward head bobbed like a camel’s. The skirts of his tattered rain-soaked kimonos and robes beat in an uproar of colours around the tops of his high rubber boots. His primitive cape, made from a sheet of plastic snatched of someone’s backyard fence, rippled and flapped in the air behind him. (*Resurrection* 7)

Hodgins’ use of local ingredients, so to speak, to create the Port Annie landscape is reflected in Mayor Weins’ redecoration of the old church “with things dragged up off the beach, to give it a local flavour. Driftwood and dried starfish, fishnet draped across the end wall, hanging with cork floats and chunks of bark. Maybe even bring that hull [of a fishing boat] down out of the tree and drag it inside, fill it with dirt and plastic flowers” (*Resurrection* 210).

Hodgins locates *Resurrection* recognisably in the landscape of British Columbia by including a backdrop of ubiquitous jays, perceived as “a plague of too much life, too much colour and excitement and noise” (148). They not only serve to colour the setting, so to speak, but they also signify local identity: “Coloured a vibrant blue and black,” Steller’s jays are “found throughout the province” and are thus intimately associated with local uniqueness and pride (Province of British Columbia). In 1987, eight years after *Resurrection* was published, they became the “official” provincial bird, and, as the Province of British Columbia government website explains, “[t]his lively, smart and cheeky bird was voted most popular bird by the people of British Columbia.” The settler culture’s identification with emblematic animals, and the associated local pride, is an assertion of belonging to the land. As much as they are props to illustrate the setting of the narrative, Hodgins’ jays symbolise the formation of a new, “colourful,” multicultural nation, where all “Indians,” whether they are Native, like Christie, or settlers, like Mr Manku, can be at home.

In *What the Crow Said* and *The Invention of the World*, in turn, the magical dimensions are largely derived from, or grounded in, mythological narratives, such as Graeco-Roman, Native Canadian, or Biblical mythologies.²⁰⁵ *Invention of the World* combines Irish, biblical and classical European mythologies in particular:

Critics of the novel have noted the astonishing number of mythic and historical origins upon which the imagery of the text seems to be based. These range through classical origins (Taurus-Europa, Lycaon, Charon), Celtic origins (the *Táin bó Cúailnge*, the war between the Fomorians and the Tuatha de Danann), Christian origins (Genesis, Exodus), and historical origins (the Aquarian Foundation of Brother XII). (Slemon 417)²⁰⁶

Animal imagery plays a prominent role in the construction of Hodgins’ blend of mythologies. Keneally is a particularly striking mythical figure, who combines various “bestly” aspects.

Most striking is Keneally's association with the figure of a bulls. Thus, he is said to be fathered by "a monstrous black bull" (*Invention* 71) with "god-qualities" (105), and behaves like a bull in various instances. He "spring[s] up surprised from the mayor's bed, roaring like a bull" when he is found with the mayor's wife (95), and when someone insults a native couple, he rises "up to his feet roaring, his face the colour of blood, and his eyes bulging like an aroused bull" (199). One of the townspeople reports an incident, when in a "display of the legendary temper . . . one of his feet pawed the floor, pawed at the carpet, and his head went down, shaking like there was something on the top he wanted to get rid of. . . . Then he went across that room again, knocking people right and left, and with his shoulder drove the table and your father into the corner" (203).

Horner associates Keneally's apparent bull qualities as a possible allusion to "'Donnataurus,' the name of the dun-coloured, prize bull in the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*" of Irish mythology, as well as the moon of "Celtic legend" who is "a horned creature, a bull-headed god named Buair-ainech and like Keneally, Balor, the god of Night is born from the bull-headed god" (10). Furthermore, as Horner says, Keneally's "self-deceiving notions of his god-like origins and his god-given rights are closely tied to his sexual potency and prowess" (13). Beryl Rowland, in her study of animal symbolism, points out the significance generally associated with bulls: "The bull seems to have been worshipped almost universally from prehistoric times both for its powerful fighting ability and for the exceptional amount of fertilizing power" (44). Correspondingly, bull imagery provides the connection between Keneally's ostensible god-like qualities and his fertility, as he is supposed to have "the enormous scrotum of an adult bull" (*Invention* 73). The merging of bull and man results in a "messiah monster" making "inhuman demands" (*Invention* 120-1). Horner associates Keneally with Lucifer (12), and calls him "a manifestation of the archetype of death, darkness

and evil” (11). Keneally certainly resembles, or is at least involved with, the beast of the apocalypse, especially at the moment of his death (see *Invention* 285).

Interwoven with the representation of Keneally as an apparent human-bull hybrid and the embodiment of evil is his symbolic association with dogs. Thus, he likens himself to Cúchulain (“Culain’s dog”), a hero of Irish mythology, yet this connection takes on negative connotations. Ned O’Mahony and Dervit O’Connell, two of his followers, ridicule this notion, for example (*Invention* 112). His association with Culain’s dog takes on a literal and evil meaning when Keneally fights an English bailiff, who has come to collect the rent. Keneally “twisted his arm until it came out of its socket, crunching like a bone bitten through by a dog, and came away from the body altogether” (*Invention* 88). He is also known for “pawing” at women (*Invention* 209, 210). Moreover, Rowland points out that “[i]n medieval times the dog was the Devil, the hound of hell” (60), and Hodgins makes use of that association. Thus, while Keneally digs his tunnel, Lily, his third and last wife, hears a voice, saying: “*Turn, hellhound, turn. A voice like a beating drum. Turn hellhound, turn*” (*Invention* 285, original emphasis). Black dogs, especially, as Rowland explains, “denoted evil, and in the Middle Ages they were frequently seen in the company of witches and agents of the Devil” (61). Correspondingly, at least one of Keneally’s two dogs is black (*Invention* 272). In addition, Horner emphasises the association of Keneally’s dogs, who are both called “Thunderbird” (*Invention* 258), with Balor, the bull-god’s son, “sometimes referred to as god of the Thunderbolt” (Horner 10). Correspondingly, Keneally can “make the house tremble with the thundering sounds of his voice” (*Invention* 256). Horner suggests that Keneally’s dogs are “symbolic of his power and instrumental to the fear he arouses. At his greatest performance Keneally appears to call up a thunderstorm which reduces even the most sceptical witnesses to doglike servility” (Horner 10).

Peter Thomas does not assign the label “magic realism” to *What the Crow Said*, but he describes the “narrative presentation of this pseudo-myth” as “matter-of-fact, busy, and uninflated, insisting that while the event itself is not commonplace, it takes place firmly within the context of common experience” (“Robert Kroetsch” 285). He thus offers a description that echoes the definitions of magic realism such as that by Wendy B. Faris: “Very briefly defined, magical realism combines realism and the fantastic so that the marvelous seems to grow organically within the ordinary, blurring distinction between them”(*Ordinary Enchantments* 1).²⁰⁷ He connects the novel with the (de-)construction of myth: “[T]his novel does not imitate life as it is known through common sensory experience, but rather absorbs, deconstructs, and de-creates the forms of story. It is ‘about’ the consummation of the magical with the real” (P. Thomas, “Robert Kroetsch” 285).

The “pseudo-myth” Thomas refers to is, in fact, composed of a multitude of borrowings from, and resemblances to, a variety of mythologies. Kroetsch himself acknowledges his study of Greek and Blackfoot mythology, as well as the influence of the “Old and New Testaments” (qtd. in Kroetsch, Neuman and Wilson 97). Thus, Vera’s son, for example, who is labelled “a wolf in sheep’s clothing” (*What the Crow Said* 146), and who, “especially when the moon was full, . . . would disappear for a night” (139-40), is associated with the myth of Lykaon.²⁰⁸ The “animal roar . . . out of the dark earth itself” (*What the Crow Said* 112) strongly suggests the beast of the apocalypse, “coming up out of the earth” (Revelation 13:11). Wilson also identifies allusions to “the Biblical story of Noah,” and points out that “the eponymous crow itself alluded to North American Indian mythology, particularly to certain creation myths, and to the bird’s traditional symbolic function as a sower of discord and a representative of solitude” (“Boundary” 40). He adds that, as a result, “Kroetsch’s Alberta is undeniably fabulous and entirely marvellous” (“Boundary” 40).

The figure of the crow in particular lends itself to the projection of multiple, fragmented mythologies. As Boria Sax shows, crows, frequently used interchangeably with ravens and other corvids, are seen as portents, often of an ambiguous nature, in a variety of cultures. Partly, he argues, this is to do with the crows' diet, as "[t]he eating of carrion has caused crows to be closely associated with death in cultures throughout the world" (28). According to Sax, "attitudes towards death have always been complex and ambivalent. It brings at once terror and comfort. It can be viewed as extinction, or as the passing to another, perhaps more blessed, realm" (28). He suggests that this ambivalence towards death is extended to crows, and she points out that "[l]egends throughout much of the world make them instructors for the living and guides for the deceased" (28). In particular, the crows' "ability ... to survive on carrion" is both "feared and admired," which makes their appearance a significant feature of "the myths and legends of the far north," including those of Inuit and Siberians (90). Paradoxical attitudes towards crows are also represented in the Bible, where, as Sax writes, "no other creature appears in such varied contexts, or with such symbolic ambiguity, as the crow or raven" (31).

This "symbolic ambiguity" is reflected by Kroetsch's crow, who is simultaneously reviled and revered. The crow appears as "an authority" of general wisdom (*Crow* 152), a prophet of doom, seemingly predicting the "abnormal deaths" of some of the lazy Schmier players (129), or is perceived as an omen of death as Liebhaber, trapped under the hull of his boat, fears that the crow has "[c]ome to peck at his unseeing eyes" (162), at the same time as she/he²⁰⁹ raises hope of rescue. Kroetsch's crow is seen both as "friend" (147, 162) and as a traitor (165). It is not clear what role the crow plays in *The War Against the Sky*: a go-between who inhabits both the sky and the earth, the crow could be a divine messenger of fate, or sent as a kind of mediator, who speaks "on behalf of JG," as some believe (64), for example. The crow, or crows in general, could be under divine protection, from Isador

Heck's gun and nest raiding, for instance (78-9), or the crow could possibly even be a divinity, cursing the Schmier players and thus actually causing their "abnormal deaths." On the other hand, the crow's impressive command of profanities might rule out any association with the divine. These unresolved ambiguities suggest a trickster figure, "independent of moral structure and moral interpretation" (Kroetsch in Kroetsch, Neuman and Wilson 100)²¹⁰.

However, none of these examples provide an answer as to what the crow "actually" represents. The point here is that the crow is imbued with meaning, even though it is not clear *which* particular meaning that might be. The crow is a carrier of meaning, or multiple meanings, which, in Kroetsch's narrative, are fragmented and alluded to, but never explicit. As Peter Thomas writes, Kroetsch "boldly reinstates the fabulous; stretches the tale deliberately beyond expectation; plunders the storyteller's store of archetypes and other narrative models—and, finally, raises fundamental questions concerning the meaning of all narrative meaning, the limits of the tale" ("Robert Kroetsch" 286). The emphasis is deliberately on an absence of explanations and answers. This is highlighted by Liebhaber's association with Noah (*Crow* 185), for example. The message of Noah's raven, who "did not bring back news of land" (Sax 33), is, just like the crow's silence,²¹¹ one of absence: the raven returns only with the initial question, but not with an answer.

Susan Arlene Rudy Dorscht describes this phenomenon thus: "*What the Crow Said* is a book of traces, a collection of sayings, a narrative of absence, which can be made to represent, metonymically, the (w)hole from which they have come. The 'story' can be read as 'telling' that which it does not presume to know; it is simply, and enigmatically, 'what the crow said'" (79). Similarly, Lecker argues that "*What the Crow Said* is not about what the crow said. It is about our unfulfilled desire to find out what the crow said" (*Robert Kroetsch* 105). Kroetsch himself suggests that *What the Crow Said* centers around "the temptation of meaning" (qtd. in Kroetsch, Neuman and Wilson 15). He comments: "Some readers were so

compelled to impose on it a total explanation instead of allowing the . . . game to happen; I was just interested in temptation again But *What the Crow Said* is a new version of temptation” (qtd. in Kroetsch, Neuman and Wilson 15).

The unresolved “temptation of meaning” produced by the ambiguities traditionally associated with crows, from various cultural perspectives, suggests that the crow figure lends itself particularly well to occupying a central role in magical realist narratives. Folklore, myths and legends ensure that “the most ubiquitous of birds, . . . without being in the least exotic . . . manage to remain mysterious” (Sax 30). Moreover, the connection with, and accumulation of, multiple, multicultural meanings, make the crow a particularly suitable image for the Canadian context. With the absence of a central voice, message, or narrator comes the creation of new and endless possibilities. The crow is a borderline figure where different voices and cultures intersect. Linda Hutcheon regards borders and margins, such as those depicted in *What the Crow Said*, as “the postmodern space *par excellence*, the place where new possibilities exist” (4). She considers the postmodern challenge of “any notions of centrality in (and centralization of) culture” an “‘ex-centric’ position,” produced by the “paradox of underlining and undermining cultural ‘universals’ (of revealing their grounding in the ‘particular’),” and suggests that it is inherently Canadian (Hutcheon 3).

The creation of new mythologies through the fusion of multiple myths in *Invention of the World* and *What the Crow Said* reflects Michael Ondaatje’s comment that “myth breeds on itself no matter what the situation or landscape” (267). Jeanne Delbaere-Garant, with reference to Ondaatje, proposes that the term “mythic realism” provides a more appropriate model to characterise “New World” literature from “not just . . . the Canadian West but . . . all the countries that still possess ‘unconsumed space,’ where ‘magic’ images are borrowed from the physical environment itself, instead of being projected from the characters’ psyches,” and where “magic realism does . . . often display a deep connectedness between character and

place” (252-3). However, the mythologies incorporated into *Invention of the World* and *What the Crow Said* are predominantly European, transplanted to the “New World” and a reflection of settler heritage. Accordingly, these myths can only be “borrowed from the physical environment itself” if they are already anchored in the landscape, or ploughed into the soil, so to speak. Indeed, Hutcheon comments that “Kroetsch’s work is rooted very firmly in the geographical, historical, and cultural world of Alberta” (175).

Animals, such as the crow, who project magical or mythological meanings in *What the Crow Said*, are an inextricable part of the actual prairie landscape of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Accordingly, indigenous animals, such as wolves and coyotes are linked to the miraculous upbringing of Vera’s son, for example, and an eagle, albeit of mythic proportions’, flies off with Joe Lightning. However, introduced animals, and industries based on them, play an even greater part in Kroetsch’s Alberta. Accordingly, bees have a prominent presence in *What the Crow Said*. They are an important feature of the prairie economy, as Canada, a considerable player in the global honey production, concentrates seventy-five percent of its honey production in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba (see Agriculture and AgriFood Canada). Vera’s “pure love” for the bees (*Crow* 12) is clearly matched by the fact that honey production is a significant industry, as Vera purchases

packages of bees . . . that would restock [her] 576 empty hives, at twenty-four different locations throughout the Municipal District of Bigknife. All her 576 new queens were there, each queen in a tiny cage, the cage suspended by a wire inside the wood and screen package. In each package were something like seven thousand bees; millions and more millions of waiting bees were stored in the cool and the dark of the car shed: Vera Lang’s entire fortune and her life’s work too, her dedication, her passion. (*Crow* 179)

Likewise, “[t]he bull in the sky” (Kroetsch, *Crow* 42) observed by Liebhaber is not only, presumably, Taurus of the zodiac and of Greek mythology, but it also alludes to “the disappearance of the buffalo” (*Crow* 45), as well as the prominence of cattle in the prairie landscape. As Kroetsch reports, “Alberta has two cows per resident,” and Calgary, the largest city in the province, “is a masculine city. It dreams of cattle and oil, of money and women. Meat packers are the biggest employers here” (*Alberta* 173, 176). Accordingly, the “bull sound, ferocious, out of the dark earth itself, the sound of the darkness itself” (*Crow* 112) is also an indication of the omnipresence of cattle.

Immediately connected with cattle ranching, cowboys and rodeos, such as the Calgary Stampede, are horses. The apocalyptic horse-team of John Skandl, which is “trumpeting a perfection of despair” and associated with the infernal “animal roar” (*Crow* 112), as well as the “invisible horses” held by Martin Lang’s ghost (*Crow* 31), for example, are also matched by the ubiquitous presence of working horses in the prairie landscape. In *What the Crow Said*, this presence becomes, in fact, so overwhelming that “[t]he endlessly moving teams filled the valley below Tiddy’s house with the sounds of horses and men. The smell of horse shit and sweat filled the streets of the town, began to seep in through the closed windows of the newspaper office” (*Crow* 45). Kroetsch’s use of horses in the narrative arises out of his own immediate experience, as he himself grew up on an Alberta farm with “a lot of horses” (qtd. in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 130). It is this first-hand experience of the pastoral landscape (and the domesticated animals who are part of it) that gives rise to the magical, or mythical, dimension. Thus, working animals appear both as common, everyday creatures and as mythical beasts, and pastoral settlement is both naturalised and mythologised.

Moreover, by appropriating Native mythological animals and blending them with European mythologies, Kroetsch and Hodgins create new, multicultural and indigenised mythologies. In *Invention of the World*, Keneally’s dogs are the most significant allusion to

indigenous mythology. Both named “Thunderbird,” they signify an appropriation of indigenous culture by European settlers, which can be read, paradoxically, as either lending strength and power to Keneally’s guard dogs through the association with the myth of Thunderbird, or as a reduction of a native mythological creature to the name of a pet, or working animal. The dogs’ name both suggests a degree of assumed indigenisation on the part of Keneally, as well as adding local flavour to Hodgins’ novel. Here, it is the name “Thunderbird” that ties settler and indigenous mythologies together, and thus connects the settlers to the land. This tie is strengthened as one of Keneally’s dogs seemingly transforms into Thunderbird, appearing “[l]ike a great, black, jet-propelled bird” (*Invention* 272).

The polyphonic mythologies in *Invention of the World* and *What the Crow Said* reflect what Hutcheon calls, in a geographical and ethnic sense, “the multicultural mosaic” of Canada (3). The stories and mythologies evoked by the image of the crow, for example, alongside the other allusions to ancient mythologies in *What the Crow Said*, blur and melt together to create new, generative narratives. This is a reflection of Kroetsch’s assertion that “I have lived in Iowa, New York, and North Carolina; I would insist that Alberta is as much a melting pot as any one of those states might be. And for a number of reasons, the Alberta melting pot has pretty much melted” (*Alberta* 65). Kroetsch explains that he “was playing with that sense of multitudes of voices that become one voice” in *What the Crow Said*, and agrees with Robert Wilson, who suggests to him that “the idea of a communal or collective voice” was “really given to you to some extent by the literary model of magic realism” (Kroetsch, Neuman and Wilson 171).

Kroetsch comments that the result of creating a magical realist polyphony is an emphasis on the process of making stories, “how people talk toward a story” (qtd. in Kroetsch, Neuman and Wilson 171, emphasis omitted). He finds myths particularly useful in this context because “myths are the best stories” (qtd. in Kroetsch, Neuman and Wilson 193).

Kroetsch, however, dismantles and fragments existing mythologies, and reassembles the pieces in a postmodern pastiche, creating new narratives particular to, and typical of, the prairies. Discussing Grey Owl, the English impostor who claimed to be a Native Canadian, Kroetsch suggests that appropriating Native identities and stories is a way of becoming Canadian: “That English boy became a Canadian by going Indian. You see, he uninvents in order to invent. He does in a spectacular way what we have to do in lesser ways” (qtd in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 142). The crow-figure signifies this process of “uninvention,” the “melting pot” of the prairies and the endless possibilities of generative narratives that keep producing new meanings.

McMullin takes a similar approach. He sees magic realism as a mode particularly suited to what he calls the “hinterland,” regions such as British Columbia and the prairies, and suggests that the “Hinterland . . . is numinous and psychic rather than physical and psychological,” as opposed to the “Heartland,” which is “is always concerned with meaning, form and structure” (21). He argues that the central concern of “magic realist books in the west,” in British Columbia as well as the prairies, is the question of “where is here,” resulting in “an equally strong need to seek for roots” (20). These, he suggests, are to be found in the “oral history” of the prairies and British Columbia, which is “bound up in the mythology of the Haida, Kwakiutl, Salish and Tsimshian, or found in the diaries of explorers like Captain Vancouver” (20). In response to Hancock’s question why he is staying in Canada, Kroetsch replies: “Some days I like the idea that we’re finally telling our own story” (qtd. in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 131). Kroetsch’s crow figure is thus a signifier for the process of creating local identities through the narration of blended mythologies.

Hancock sees the marvellous element in magic realism as a reflection of indigenous mythologies and what he calls “primitive art,” and ties the processing of such art and

mythologies within contemporary Canadian settler writing to the process of nation-building and identity formation. He writes:

Magic realism and “primitive art” are connected. . . . Primitive art, painting, and magic realism all stress the importance of “painted” or “written” images. This enhances the memory of the shaman and his initiates. These images are more than hunting “magic” to capture game. They remind us how close we are to primitive thinking. Images are totemistic or metamorphic. They are the secret structures of our imagination. (Hancock, “Magic or Realism” 34)

Reflecting these images, which originate in “primitive thinking,” as Hancock suggests, are part of what he calls “a voyage of self-discovery” of European settlers in British Columbia (“Magic or Realism” 33). Hancock appears to suggest that it is through an appropriation of such supposedly “primitive” imagery that, as he says, “[w]e have to learn to recognize *our* mythology as well as *our* history. Magic realism reminds us that our memory is in a state of crisis. How do we preserve the past, especially when it depends upon spoken words or painted images?” (“Magic or Realism” 33; my emphasis). While Hancock is enthusiastic about what he calls “primitive” culture, the implication here is that the European writer picks up from where the indigenous oral story teller, shaman or cave painter left off.

The emphasis is on imagery, the surface appearance of cultural artefacts, rather than their spiritual, social or political significance within a wider cultural network. Those meanings, as Hancock points out, are difficult to access by non-indigenous Canadians: “The native mythology of the west is hard to recover because native myths were private property, fiercely guarded. It was a privilege to use song and dance, masks and images. They had to be handed on with proper ritual” (“Magic or Realism” 33). This inaccessibility is illustrated by Hodgins in *The Invention of the World*, as Julius Champney regards a totem pole in the park:

The totem . . . taller and straighter than any of the trees or shrubs that surrounded it, was a column of grumpy-looking Indians and bears, all resting their hands on the tops of their fat bellies as if feeling for a heartbeat that didn't exist. The expected thunderbird at the top was no thunderbird at all but more of a seagull. He didn't have the round white-ringed eyes of the thunderbird which would have registered something between alarm and fury, but rather looked upward out of human eyes, ignorant of life below, and clutched like the others at his own breast." (*Invention* 224).

The totem pole becomes a meaningless image for Julius Champney, a collection of "grumpy-looking" bears and Indians, with the wrong bird on the top, so to speak. It is subject to stereotypical expectations, as well as detached from "life below": the emphasis here lies on the physical image of the people and animals represented; the associated mythology is either distorted, or lost.

Both in Kroetsch and Hodgins' texts, the absence of indigenous peoples and cultures is striking, but for different reasons. "[T]he recuperation of silenced voices" (Slemon 420) and "the sustained dialogic engagement with the cognitive legacies of colonialist language and history" (Slemon 421) are not as prominent in Hodgins' two novels, for example, as Slemon asserts. While Madmother Thomas, "a direct victim of colonialism's violence through her childhood trauma under Keneally's patriarchal order" does indeed become "at last a sustaining presence in the community," the silenced voices of Native Canadians remain, largely, precisely that.

Delbaere-Garant comments: "It seems to me that Ondaatje's term [mythic realism] is a suitable one for Second World countries from which indigenous cultures have largely vanished, even though they remain hauntingly present in the place itself" (253). The sense of indigenous cultures as having "largely vanished" prevails in *The Invention of the World*

(though the indigenous inhabitants of Vancouver Island, such as the Kwakwaka'wakw, the Coast Salish, or the Nuu-Chah-Nulth, might not agree with being described, or having their cultures described, as “haunting presences”). Indeed, the idea of creating one multicultural, Canadian voice by incorporating Native beliefs and trickster figures into European mythologies, the indigenising of European settler culture, and the idea of “unconsumed space” gloss over the fact that European settlers were not invited, so to speak; Native land was not gifted to the newcomers, treaties were unjust, and Native nations did not willingly surrender authority over their land and affairs. “One voice” celebrating multiculturalism and diversity threatens to drown out Native voices.

Yet, Hodgins’ invention of new mythologies does not entail a denial of history: this is recognised, for example, in the ‘wedding gift’ of “[b]adly-treated Indians” (*Invention* 355) for Maggie and Wade. With their new beginning, the legacy of the past is, to some degree, acknowledged. A similar recognition of history lies in the account of the founding of the town from a small trading posts, which is described as an “uncontrolled chain of disasters” for the natives (*Invention* 93), as well as Julius Champney’s account of a trial of “two Indians,” innocently hanged for the murder of a shepherd (*Invention* 240). He tells a young man in the park: “Of course I’m from the prairies, . . . where one incident like that is hardly remembered. There were so many, and more dramatic too” (*Invention* 228). Yet at the same time, the conversation in the park in particular conveys a sense of history as events long gone, with little bearing on the present, as “[t]he young man looked up at the totem, frowning. Perhaps he thought those grumpy faces were blaming him for something” (*Invention* 228). Images of Native Canadians, along with mythological birds and bears, become vague, albeit slightly unsettling, reminders of a culture of the past that no longer, or hardly still, exists. History and mythology, here, are stories contained within the past; tricksters and animals on a totem pole become nothing more than exotic images.

In contrast, Slemon states that in the final wedding scene, Hodgins “summons into presence *all* those figures made absent from the text by the formal system of writing itself” (Slemon), but while “the Queen of England” is mentioned, and “the Prime Minister of Canada” is rumoured to be amongst the guests (*Invention* 346), both of whom are, generally, by no means marginalised figures, Native Canadians are not present, or specifically mentioned in this scene. Hancock once commented to Hodgins: “You don’t have the political sense of the Latin American writers. That you’re trying to improve society by removing certain masks and revealing certain realities. Your novels aren’t instruments for social change” (*Canadian Writers* 63). In response, Hodgins argued:

We don’t live in a climate where this is so important. Certainly in British Columbia we’re living in a situation that could be much improved, but that’s a temporary thing and we can go to the polls and do something about it if we want. That’s very different from living in South America where your neighbour is starving or being shot for saying the wrong thing. (Qtd. in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 63)

In this context it is striking that the “central victim” (Horner 16), Madmother Thomas, is, apparently, of European descent, at the same time as Hodgins’ comment clashes with the living conditions on reservations (in the nineteen-seventies and today) and the treatment of native children within the now abolished British Columbian Indian residential schools system, for example.

The Indian Residential Schools Survivors Society reports that, between 1863 and 1984, “[o]ver the years, all school-aged First Nations children in this province were targeted for removal from their homes” to the so-called ‘Indian Residential Schools’” (“B.C. Residential Schools”). They describe how “[c]hildren who went to residential school suffered a loss of culture, identity, language, family and more. ... Clothing, food and living

conditions were often sub-standard and screening of school staff was minimal, leaving the children vulnerable to many kinds of abuse and neglect” (“B.C. Residential Schools”) In the nineteen-nineties, “[t]he most prominent [sic] criminal action was taken against former Port Alberni Residential School supervisor, Arthur Henry Plint. He was sentenced to 11 years in prison after pleading guilty to 16 counts of indecent assault” (“Residential Schools”). Drew Hayden Taylor points out that the result of the Port Alberni abuses are, still, “high rates of alcoholism, sexual abuse (evidence has shown it is cyclical), suicide and a host of other equally tragic illnesses” (Taylor 111).

This residential school was still open whilst Hodgins lived in the neighbouring town of Nanaimo (from 1961) and worked as a senior secondary school teacher (Jeffrey 189). As for “starving neighbours,” even as late as the nineteen-nineties, Kevin D. Annett, then a minister at Port Alberni, ran a food bank that, according to his own information, was “feeding over 300 aboriginal families each month.” The question, to put Hodgins’ comment in context, is how much Vancouver Island people in the late nineteen-seventies knew, or made an effort to find out, about the living conditions of their neighbours on the reservations, or were aware about official government policy which forcibly took all British Columbian First Nations children to residential schools, whilst the Port Alberni crimes were perpetrated in secret. Hodgins’ comment, in any case, shows that his perspective is not so much regional and representative of Vancouver Island as such, but that it is a rather restricted point of view, shaped and framed by the living standards of European settlers.

Kroetsch, in contrast, and as Slemon points out, is more concerned with highlighting postcolonial history and contemporary issues by emphasising the absence of First Nation Canadians from his story. Slemon writes: “[T]he name of the town Big Indian resonates against the almost complete absence of native peoples from its site” (419). The short comment about “the disappearance of the buffalo” (*Crow* 45), the presence of “buffalo

beans” (*Crow* 218) and Old Lady Lang’s brief memory “of the nameless Cree buffalo hunter after whom the first settlement had been named” (*Crow* 195) may seem minor, but they open up a significant gap in the story, or history, of Big Indian. In a paradoxical statement, Kroetsch illustrates the discrepancy between the settler’s perception of the land at the time of their arrival and its history. He says:

In a few short years all the settlers arrived in a virgin and unpeopled land. ... [A]ll were coming into a vacuum created by the destruction of the buffalo and those who depended upon them, and each newcomer, instead of feeling he was being assimilated, felt instead that he was helping to create what Alberta was to become. People alive today remember clearly the creation of Alberta not as history but as experience. (*Alberta* 67-8)

This experience of “creation” and the “Alberta melting pot” is reflected in the fact that the settlers’ spirits haunt the land just as much as the buffalos, as the ghost of Martin Lang exemplifies. Moreover, pastoral settlement “created” the state out of a supposedly empty land, echoing ideas such as *terra nullius* in Australia.

Conversely, Joe Lightning’s fall and preventable death in “a ton of shit and piss and catalogue paper” because people wore their “Sunday clothes” (Kroetsch, *Crow* 160) is an image that evokes the experience of Native Canadians, allegorically, in a nutshell, and hints at a social and political situation that Hodgins, apparently, considers less of a concern and “a temporary thing.” An alternative point of view, which contradicts the idea of a passing inconvenience, is offered by Taylor, who writes, two decades after Hodgins’ remark: “In this era of unsettled land claims, government cutbacks, and the continuing unacceptable levels of unemployment and mortality, it’s no wonder Native people across Canada are sometimes viewed as, shall we say, pissed off at the world” (59). On Port Alberni specifically, Taylor comments on the apology offered by the United Church of Canada: “I liken it to putting a

simple bandage on a gushing open wound and kissing it for good measure. To quote a cliché, talk is cheap” (Taylor 111). These unresolved issues are, as Hancock indicates, not the topic of Hodgins’ novel *The Invention of the World*.

Faris points out that “a postcolonial agenda does not appear in all magical realist fictions, because they also exist outside postcolonial environments” (*Ordinary Enchantments* 28). However, Hodgins’ novel does exist in a “postcolonial environment,” yet his “agenda” is not so much a postcolonial as a moral one:

But still a writer anywhere is political in another sense, I suppose in a moral sense. A fiction writer is creating myth and societies live by myths. The myths that are important to society create the way that people in it treat each other. . . . I feel strongly that a writer has a responsibility to be aware of the moral implications of what he’s doing. Yes, in a way you are attempting to change the world. Though you cannot ask to change certain facts about the world, you can perhaps open up new ways of seeing it. Or just challenge old ways. Present modes of admirable behaviour. Suggest alternatives. (Hodgins qtd. in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 63-4)

The “postcolonial environment” is, of course, portrayed in the multicultural communities of his fiction, both in *The Invention of the World* and *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*. Hodgins’ focus here is on shaping the future by “a whole new breed of people like . . . Maggie and Wade” (*Invention* 352). While Hodgins writes mythologies that reflect the settlers’ cultural inheritance and perspective, they are very much in keeping with Abrams’ definition, who writes: “A mythology, we can say, is a religion in which we no longer believe” (111, 5th ed.). Seemingly in contradiction, Hodgins comments, in a discussion with Hancock: “To me myth is closer to reality than history. While history is a collection of the facts, myth is the soul that surrounds those facts” (qtd. in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 77).

However, Hodgins' novels propose that the true mythological heroes are not the Cúchulains, Finn MacCools or the Thunderbirds of past beliefs, but, instead, people like Maggie Kyle and Joseph Bourne.²¹²

Despite the strong sense of an island community, Hodgins' concern is not centred on Vancouver Island, but on a common humanity. In response to Hancock's question whether his stories are an "exploration of the search that people on the edge of society engage in," Hodgins declares: "But these people are not peculiar. I'm not aware of them as having special problems. They're just people" (qtd. in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 72). He concedes that "all writing has to be regional to start with. It has to come from somewhere, it has to take place somewhere," yet, he insists, "while I'm interested in what makes people on this side of the water different from people in other places, I'm much more concerned with finding out what makes people the same anywhere. . . . If I can get a person in Vancouver Island just right on paper, he's not too different from someone in Montreal or New York" (qtd. in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 58, 52). Hodgins' regionalism rests, as a result, largely in his descriptions of landscape, such as humpbacked whales, oyster shacks, the fishing and logging industry, as well as the multicultural island community, but it omits or marginalises significant issues affecting non-settler communities on the island in the nineteen-seventies. Accordingly, Hodgins' project is not primarily a thematising of "a kind of postcolonial discourse," as Slemon suggests (420, emphasis omitted), as the postcolonial realities and histories are more obscured than illuminated.

Domesticating Narratives: Fertility, Fables, and Figures of Speech

Settlement in both *Invention of the World* and *What the Crow Said* is presented as a "natural" process, whereby Native cultures are organically integrated into the multicultural and polyphonic (or multilingual) present of the Canadian nation. By appropriating magical

realism as a globally recognised (and successfully marketable) expression of local identities, both Kroetsch and Hodgins assert a particular Canadian identity, a multicultural identity belonging to a particular locale. They position themselves as both belonging to a common, global humanity, as well as an emphatically local, and settled, culture. However, magical realism is a mode that *unsettles*. In order to present a narrative of settled settlement, so to speak, as opposed to the dislocated settler narratives of Peter Carey and Richard Flanagan, for example, Kroetsch and Hodgins redomesticate realism gone feral and reclaim Cartesian humanist ideas of what it means to be human.

Delbaere-Garant explains her modification of the oxymoron “magic realism” to “mythic realism” by arguing that “the magic and the real do not have equal weight in First and Second World fiction in English” (261). At the heart of this imbalance, she suggests, is the contrast between the magic realism of Latin America and the pragmatism of First and Second World fiction, as she calls it. She writes: “Much as the Anglophone world wants to challenge traditional realism, it is not the Hispanic world. The pragmatic and puritanical Crusoe, not the well-balanced magic realist couple Sancho/Quixote, stands at the front door of its house of fiction” (261).²¹³ Delbaere-Garant’s evoking of Crusoe is apt. By rendering animals useful and establishing an agricultural base for his livelihood, Crusoe replicates what Armstrong calls “the economic structure of modernity,” and enacts “a form of enlightened humanity defined by its separation from and dominion over animality. . .” (*What Animals Mean* 31-32). This process is indeed reflected in Kroetsch and Hodgins’ pragmatic mythical realism: enlightenment humanism, called into question by magical realism’s feral animals, is reasserted through the use of, and separation from, animals.

As Gill and Anderson write:

More than a cultural *ideal* . . . settled cultivation materialised a specific humanist ontology of human distinction from the nonhuman world, according

to which cultivation would not only release the land's potential, but signal the passage of a universalised human out of a "state of nature" and ultimately into a space of civilised accommodation with other humans and nonhumans.

(Original emphasis)

Accordingly, *What the Crow Said* emphasises the necessity of being useful within the rural, animal economies. Vera Lang's notice in the *Big Indian Signal* that "men are a bunch of useless bastards" (*Crow* 14) foreshadows the Big Indian men's decline into animality: the Schmier players are at their lowest point whilst they are associated with animals and dirt, and especially when they inhabit "Isador Heck's tarpaper shack," which "was worse than a pigpen" (97). A sign of their degradation are the flies who fall into the pancake batter and whom Heck "flicked . . . against he greasy wall with a dirty finger" (97). The shack is the site of abject (human) animality:

The houseflies, all day, were so thick that sometimes the players had trouble seeing their cards. Night was little better: at night the millers and moths swarmed into the two-room shack as if to put out the men's eyes. The whole place had a sour smell. . . . Going outside was almost worse than staying in the shack. Heck had nailed rotting coyote hides and dead hawks to the walls. Gophers and snakes abounded, right up to the doorstep. The barn hadn't been cleaned in months and the manure was so deep that no one could enter there to relieve himself. Outside the barn, the carcass of a dead horse stank to high heaven. Sometimes, when the wind blew from the wrong direction, the stench of death spread through the shack itself; the men were barely able to continue the game, some days, some nights, against the impediments. (*Crow* 97-8)

However, while animals, such as pigs and flies, are associated with dirt and abjection, the neglect and death of animals such as horses, and the waste of rotting coyote hides, for

example, is, in turn, a sign of the Schmier players' moral debasement. Their laziness makes them "worse than animals," as the saying goes. The animals, after all, play their expected parts in nature and the rural economy.

Gus Liebhaber, in contrast, asserts his status as (white) male authority—in regard to language, "b-keeping" and in relation to Tiddy Lang—by wrangling with and finally gaining control over and restoring order to a feral landscape. *What the Crow Said* uses the dichotomy between domesticated versus untamed, free animality to reflect magical realist mockery of systems of order, as Liebhaber is confronted with the arbitrary, but rigid, sequence of the alphabet:

All the capital letters in his collection of wood type were set in neat rows, arranged alphabetically. He couldn't bear that either. In terror at the domestication of those free, beautiful letters—no, it was the absurdity of their recited order that afflicted him: ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ—he opened a twenty-six of rye and, with immense effort, tried to disentangle himself from the tyranny of rote. (*Crow* 69)

Bees whose hives are managed by humans are the ideal vehicle to convey this dichotomy, as they are never fully domesticated, but neither are they wild. Bees are on the border between nature and culture, and it is this in-betweenness that Kroetsch uses to convey an ambivalent attitude towards language and writing. Rudy Dorscht writes that Kroetsch's texts "speak of their own processes of production and in so speaking question themselves" (73), and his pun on B and bee, humorously alluded to by Vera's "worn copy of Root's *ABC and XYZ of Bee Culture*" (*Crow* 130), highlights this process. As Rudy Dorscht points out: "Vera—the name paradigmatically linked to 'verity,' to truth—[is] seduced by 'swarming' b's—a disseminating 'Lang?/language'" (75). The Bs also illustrate Kroetsch's tendency to link those "free, beautiful letters" directly to animals. Rudy Dorscht reveals Kroetsch's

fascination with beekeeping,²¹⁴ and connects Vera's seduction by "b/e/es" with the act of writing (75). Thus, she regards both Kroetsch and Vera as "beekeeper[s]" (Rudy Dorscht 75), or "B-keepers."

Liebhaber, too, considers himself a "B-keeper," as his role as referee in a hockey game illustrates. He initially fancies himself as "some kind of arbitrator, the civilizing man. He liked that. The civilizing man: at the center, and yet uninvolved. The dispassionate man at the passionate core, witnessing both jealousy and desire, separate from either" (*Crow* 72). Yet when the "swarming players," thus likened to bees, get out of control, he finds that he cannot remain uninvolved, as his attempt to restore order by writing down their names fails (72). Like bees, the players cannot be controlled through rules and language, but only by physically managing their environment. Thus, Liebhaber "walked over to a box on a post by the skating rink shack and turned out the lights. He was able, that night, single-handedly, to assert order" (73). The act of writing the narrative becomes a physical intervention, just as letters, such as the Bs, become a physical presence in the story.

The appearance of other animal, or animated, letters in "Kroetsch's book on b's" (Rudy Dorscht 75) coincides with Liebhaber's habit of either misplacing his types, or keeping them in an eccentric storage system, which is, however, no more eccentric than the random order of the alphabet: he leaves them "on the table," places them "on a windowsill," takes them "into his living room" (*Crow* 54), uses them to "[print] across the linoleum," finds them "in a shoebox under his bed" and keeps them "in rows on top of the tank of his toilet" (55). The reader finds that several of Liebhaber's letters have escaped, either from his eccentric order, or the "domesticated" alphabet, and gone astray. Thus, the sky is "filled with vees of geese" (153), and horse prints "a shiny reddish U" on Leo Weller's forehead (85). These are further symptoms of the disturbance caused by the Bs' seduction of Vera. Animality, or ferality, adds an unpredictable element to the narrative, beyond Liebhaber's immediate

control. The story, after all, gets out of control with the free flight of the Bs, who seduce Vera Lang/Language. As the reader is told, “[p]eople, years later, blamed everything on the bees” (7).

The narrative is thus generated by language and letters themselves, and it does not move towards the happy ending Liebhaber hopes for. The ongoing War against the Sky causes a prolonged drought, which prevents him from marrying Tiddy, who declares that she is “going to mourn until there is a cloudburst” (*Crow* 144). An author figure, Liebhaber is torn between the “terror” of order, such as the rigid, but random, order of the alphabet, and his own desire for control over the unfolding story. Christine Jackman comments:

“Liebhaber’s fear of and desire for domestication [of himself and the alphabet] parallel, or are part of, his fear of and desire for language,” and observes that “Liebhaber seems to court the domestication he tries to flee.” Thus, his initial desire to stay uninvolved changes into a desire for authority and control, and, in his frustration, he decides that he needs to assert physical control over (or domesticate) the Bs: “If it was war the sky wanted, then he would give it war” (*Crow* 179). Lecker writes that

the War Against the Sky . . . is fundamentally a war against the notion of direction from above, be it the direction issued by God, a god, the author as God, or any kind of systematizing, ‘omnipotent’ force. The War Against the Sky is a metaphor for Kroetsch’s struggle against the inevitability of narrative prgression [sic]: if you beat the sky you beat the unseen force that has controlled you. (Lecker, *Robert Kroetsch* 101-2)

The result is Liebhaber’s virtual rape of the sky and the Bs with Isador Heck’s circus cannon (*Crow* 182), in a scene juxtaposed to the initial seduction of Vera Lang by the Bs.

While the Bs can be seen as “fertiliz[ing] the barren sky,” they are not just the means by which Liebhaber “rapes” the sky, but they themselves are violated in an act suggesting revenge:

He took the bees. He pumped them into the sky itself, rammed them into the sky’s night, into the sky’s blue breaking. . . . He knocked them high, shot them into the one androgynous moment of heaven and earth. He spent the queens into their myriad selves; he, the first and final male, horny to die. The rainmaker, burning the night with the bees’ making. (*Crow* 216)

It is significant that Liebhaber first frees the Bs from their cages, but then uses them for his purposes. Thus, at the same time as the act of creation, or the creative act of writing, liberates from constraints, conventions and rigid systems, it is in itself an act of control and management. Liebhaber’s action causes a downpour, which returns the Bs to being immobilised, passive letters: “Often, inside a huge hailstone, was a bee, frozen into perfect stillness, magnified by the convexity of the encasing ice” (*Crow* 193). These frozen Bs, clearly, become part of the business of printing and writing again, as “[t]he sound of the hailstones, drumming on the shingle roof of the wheelhouse, on the deck of the boat, made him feel he was inside a typesetting machine” (197). Liebhaber’s intervention changes the course of the narrative, and promises to result in the happy ending he wished for: “A drop of rain hit him and he knew it would be a flood. At last, his marriage time had come. He had remembered the future correctly: there would be a flood, a joy of rain, his battle won, his ark floating” (185).

Ultimately, there is “a sense in which the ‘natural’ has been restored” (Rudy Dorscht 79), as Cathy, “the normal one” (*Crow* 218), defines the ending of the novel. As Rudy Dorscht points out, “‘Crows are cawing.’ ‘She’ is normal” (79). Although “[t]he title of Kroetsch’s book on b’s (*What the Crow Said*) undermines the authority both of a ‘master

storyteller’—the narrative *is* what the crow said—and of the narrating voice in the text which does not belong to a single speaker” (Rudy Dorscht 75), Liebhaber’s struggle to reinstate order is more akin to the classic realist text than to magical realism. Belsey writes:

The consistency and continuity of the subject provides the conceptual framework of classic realism classic realism recognizes the precariousness of the ego and offers the reader the sense of danger and excitement which results from that recognition. But the movement of classic realist narrative towards closure ensures the reinstatement of order, sometimes a new order, sometimes the old restored, but always intelligible because familiar. (75)

The unresolved oppositions between author and character, between single voice and dialogic narrative, and the precarious state of normality at the end of the narrative, reflect the “precariousness of the ego,” or, in other words, a threat to the Cartesian humanist subject. This simultaneous acknowledgement and subversion is central to Kroetsch’s understanding of deconstruction: “You take a given set of conventions and play with them in a certain way. I think some of the conventions of fiction control too much our way of seeing the world. It starts to get interesting when you take those conventions and both use them and work against them” (qtd. in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 133). This creates the conditions for Liebhaber to be, simultaneously, an author figure, a character, and “hardly more than a mere tray of alphabet, awaiting the insistence of an ordering hand” (*Crow* 68).

Ultimately, the Cartesian humanist subject is only temporarily disrupted, as human-animal separation tends to be upheld, rather than radically questioned, as in the magical realist novels discussed in previous chapters. Nonetheless, much of *What the Crow Said* appears to suggest a blurring of human-animal boundaries. Apart from the speaking crow,

there is, for example, a plague of horseflies which causes the Big Indians to behave like horses:

A few citizens of the Municipal District, unable themselves to cope with the flies, fastened makeshift tails to the backs of their trousers or skirts and learned in a matter of minutes to switch them back and forth. Women, especially, took to wearing over their eyes forelocks in the manner of horses. One elderly gentleman figured out how to twitch his ears and the muscles of his thighs. And yet, for all the precautions, the afternoon constituted a veritable bloodletting. (*Crow* 168).

Twitching ears and thigh muscles is within the realm of human ability, and whilst the mechanics of the tail-switching is unexplained, the make-shift nature of the tails identifies them as artificial contraptions. They contrast with Aureliano's pig tail in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in this regard, for example, with which he was born.

More prominently in *What the Crow Said*, there is Vera's "almost human" cry, "a cry of joy . . . inhumanly exquisite" (11), at the beginning of the novel, as well as Vera's son, who appears to have habits and sensory perceptions of coyotes. He communicates with "a short, sharp yip, a kind of bark that almost became a howl. Squatted on his haunches, he held his head high, listening. . . . Vera's Boy howled. From far up the valley a coyote answered" (190). Furthermore, he "could . . . sense on his skin the moisture conditions, and then, with his blue eyes shut under his black eyebrows, announce what crop would best thrive that season. He could, with a single sniff of the air, recognize the ideal seeding time while the local forecasters scratched in the cold soil and licked their fingers and tested the wind in vain" (168). The gossipy voice of narration and the talk of the men in the pub hint at the possibility that he might be a werewolf (139-40; 146), but most striking is his speech that "was half yips and barks, half what his listeners took to be pig Latin" (135).

However, Vera's cry is called "inhuman" only while "[t]hey could not describe it," and shortly after the reader is told with certainty: "They knew then . . . it was a human outcry" (*Crow* 11). The idea that Vera's Boy might be a werewolf is only based on vague insinuations, and his ability to foretell the weather by using his finely tuned senses cannot be directly related to coyotes, who never use their senses to forecast "the ideal seeding time." While the language he speaks is "pig Latin," it is, of course, nothing to do with communication between pigs.

The most obvious example of this is the exchange (literally) between the crow and the Schmier players, as the crow speaks "human," and the Schmier players, one after the other, begin to caw. In the end, "all the men" are cawing (*Crow* 85-7), apparently to amuse JG. While they caw again on the way to Cathy and Joe Lightning's wedding, "not so much to the waiting magpies, as to each other" (101), the Schmier players merely use, temporarily, crow sounds, which are meaningless to them. Not "ravens" themselves, they are only "raving," as the crow points out: "A bunch of raving idiots" (88).

Conversely, the crow's speech is human, with human meanings. While the crow's comments always match the circumstances, is not clear at all that the crow actually understands, and employs, the meaning of human language. The crow appears to learn from particular situations, and mimics the appropriate sounds. Thus, when the crow "shat in the middle of [Tiddy's] kitchen table," Tiddy scolds the crow: "'Shame on you' . . . 'Shame on you,' the black crow said" (91). Furthermore, the reader is told that "[p]eople, years later, insisted that it learned to talk from listening to Liebhaber piss and moan about the world" (64). The crow's command of human language, and his/her appropriate use of it, is undoubtedly remarkable, and tends to contradict the idea that the crow is merely a master of mimicry. However, whether the crow is capable of understanding human language or not, is left in doubt, as is the question whether the crow is the means by which JG communicates:

“Whether or not the crow was speaking what was on the silent child’s mind, that was never clearly determined. But there were those who insisted that the black crow sometimes spoke on behalf of JG” (64). The crow might be nothing more than a projector for JG’s voice.

Like the misplaced “animal letters,” the crow’s human speech is only part of the disruption caused by the free flight of the Bs: pieces of language that are displaced and disordered. Yet in the end, “[t]he crows are cawing” again (*Crow* 218). The concept of the human-animal divide is completely restored. Thus, this final cawing of the crows, incomprehensible and meaningless to the human characters in the novel, reinforces the idea of a gap between humans and animals, and the crow’s silence emphasises this gap further. The readers, like the Big Indians, are left with the nagging question “what *did* the crow say . . .?” (152). The unfulfilled desire for some revelation, wisdom or prophecy, however, is nothing to do with the caw of the crow. But that is, ultimately, all the crow naturally, and once normality is restored, ever says. The crow, in the end, cannot possibly answer questions about human experience, such as those “on the subject of women or guns” (152).

The crow who speaks and the men who caw can be seen as examples of Kroetsch’s “postmodern paradox[es],” which Hutcheon argues express “the refusal to pick sides, the desire to be on both sides of any border, driving energy from the continual crossing” (162). However, in *What the Crow Said*, it is the crossing of the border between humanity and animality that, paradoxically, defines and reinstates it. Hutcheon writes that “Kroetsch is the master of paradoxes, of opposites that do not merge dialectically, of doubles that stay double” (161). Jackman, too, describes the crossing and re-crossing of boundaries:

The topos that is *Crow* is one in which binaries are altered and alter each other. As opposing halves of an abstract objective system, they are parodied until they collapse under the weight of their own absurdity. However, the pairs are not denied; they remain as dynamic relationships. Even structure and

master narratives are not abolished; they also function as forces in an interactive field.

In regard to his representation of animals, the underlying principle, most notable in the speech exchange between the crow and the Schmier players, is that of “inversion (the world turned upside down)” (Stallybrass and White 56). Peter Stallybrass and Allon White explain: “Inversion addresses the social classification of values, distinctions and judgements which underpin practical reason and systematically inverts the relations of subject and object, agent and instrument, husband and wife, old and young, animal and human, master and slave. Although it re-orders the terms of a binary pair, it cannot alter the terms themselves” (56). They contrast this with hybridisation, which, they say “generates the possibility of shifting the very terms of the system itself, by erasing and interrogating the relationships which constitute it (58.). In other words, the defining boundaries remain intact, do not merge and stay double, even though they may be redrawn elsewhere, or turned upside down.

Kroetsch asserts elsewhere that humans and animals are “close” (qtd. in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 143). Vera’s sisters, for example, “hopped like chickens themselves, pretending to cackle, straying their way up straw-hid wooden steps” (*Crow* 8). For Rose, who has to take on more chores because of the men’s laziness, it is “almost a pleasure to go outside and feed pigs, to walk through the chicken coop and find a few warm eggs under the hens, to sit milking a cow, listening to the warm milk zing into the pail” (*Crow* 81). This kind of closeness to animals indicates the extent to which animal industries and products infuse everyday life, and is an affectionate portrayal of the humans who interact with animals on a daily basis.

However, Kroetsch’s comment on the closeness of humans and animals is followed by the remark “I look so much like a buffalo that some mornings I have an identity crisis myself” (qtd. in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 143), which derives its humour, ultimately, from

the otherness of animals. The simultaneous closeness and otherness of animals lends itself to an allegorical use of animal imagery, and Peter Thomas comments that *What the Crow Said* constitutes “a formal shift, away . . . from character to the flatness of beast-fable” (*Robert Kroetsch* 103). Wilson suggests that “*What the Crow Said* contains not specific stories but ways of treating stories that recall García Márquez, ways of treating stories that recall Ovid,” and Kroetsch replies that he “certainly use[s] Ovid” (Kroetsch, Neuman and Wilson 14). Accordingly, Peter Thomas argues that “the novel is about fable-making and the order of story rather than that of scientific rationalism” (*Robert Kroetsch* 100); Lecker calls it “a fabular tale of prairie life” (*Robert Kroetsch* 99); and Wilson declares that “Kroetsch enfables Alberta.” (“Boundary” 49). Indeed, representations of animals, not only by Kroetsch but also by Hodgins, are emphatically figures of speech. This calls for a more conventional reading, as the primary concern of a beast fable is that of decoding the allegorical message.

Allegory relies on the co-existence and combination of two parallel, and separate stories, or, as M.H. Abrams puts it, on the presence of a “second, correlated order of signification” (Abrams 5, 7th ed.), whereby the beast fable is the “[m]ost common . . . , in which animals talk and act like the human types they represent” (Abrams 6, 7th ed.). In that scenario, animals function as screens for human concerns and meanings. This “flatness” is prominent in Kroetsch’s novel, as Peter Thomas points out, and he construes the crow, in connection with JG, accordingly. He writes: “[t]he crow is the appropriate voice of corrupt and deathly self-love” (*Robert Kroetsch* 112), and thus assigns it an allegorical meaning.

And yet, Kroetsch tends to twist the traditional relationship between the two separate systems of signification. Bees, for example, are not like people, as they would be in a traditional beast fable, but people resemble bees in some ways, which, in turn, reflects upon the human characters’ personalities via a process zoomorphism. Peter Thomas draws attention to the connection between the Big Indian men, drones, and the idea of male

obsolescence, as Vera comments on the expendability of the drones after mating (*Robert Kroetsch* 287). The name “Droniuk,” or Jerry Lapanne’s “beeline[s] for Big Indian” (*Crow* 105, 109), for instance, highlight this comparison, and Vera’s remark about the drones, “[t]he males are useless” (58), mirrors and reinforces the often repeated assertion that “men are a bunch of useless bastards” (14, 19, 123, 189). The drones thus signify male obsolescence and laziness, and the Big Indian men, in turn, are expendable, as they, like drones, die after becoming lovers and husbands of the Lang women. Conversely, the Lang women, like queen bees, are apparently capable of becoming pregnant without the men. As Peter Thomas writes, “[h]aving a queen bee’s attitude towards her several suitors, their expendability for Vera is only a matter of time” (*Robert Kroetsch* 287-8).

At the same time, Kroetsch self-consciously addresses his own process of literary production, and ridicules ideas of allegory and symbolism, as well as the arbitrariness of such significations. Thus, Vera’s third husband observes “a snake trying to copulate with a logging chain. The tall, gangling stranger with hair the color of dust took that as an omen. A sign. He was supposed to stop building roads and get married” (*Crow* 176). Wilson comments that “*What the Crow Said* seems very mythological. And we have noted its resemblance to Ovid, and yet no particular thing in it is Ovidian” (qtd. in Kroetsch, Neuman and Wilson 113). Kroetsch’s use of fable is indeed unconventional, and Hutcheon writes that “Kroetsch is a problematizer and questioner of our cultural givens. He does not deny their existence, but he challenges their authority” (Hutcheon 183). Nonetheless, the narrative encourages conventional modes of reading, even if these do not yield conventional results. Thus, Rudy Dorscht, for example, construes Kroetsch’s animals in the first instance as signifiers of abstract concepts, and remarks that the coyotes, who have raised Vera’s Boy, are “trickster figures in Kroetsch’s work” and essentially “figures for language itself” (77). The (mock-) symbolic significance especially of the crow is taken (and presented) as a given.

Kroetsch's animals, unlike or not much like the magical realist animals discussed previously, are not agents as such, or embodied characters. As disembodied constructs, more akin to conventional literary devices, they are figures of speech, verbal artefacts.

Faris writes that “[f]or Camayd-Freixas, among the essential criteria of magical realism is the reader’s simultaneous adoption of a literal and an allegorical perspective” (*Enchantments* 21). I propose that an allegorical interpretation is not even always necessary, or even always particularly intended, certainly where animals are concerned. Sometimes, as discussed in Chapter One, a dog is “just a dog.” In any case, I agree with Faris, who proposes that “the weight of the nonallegorical thrust of realist narrative conventions works against a reduction of the magic in magical realism to a primarily allegorical mode” (*Enchantments* 21). Kroetsch’s representations of animals belong instead to “the history of fabulation,” which, Derrida argues, “remains an anthropomorphic taming, a moralizing subjection, a domestication. Always a discourse of man, on man, indeed on the animality of man, but for and as man” (405).

The separation between humanity and animality, and the use of animals as pure figures of speech, is more prominent in Hodgins’ novels, due to the fact that they are based on and infused with Christian Science beliefs. I agree with Carol Langhelle’s detailed study of *The Invention of the World*, in which she demonstrates that the novel “is written from a Christian Science perspective” (55). She argues that Hodgins “has, in fact, allowed the entire structure and meaning of the novel to be determined by his religious convictions” (56).²¹⁵ Langhelle sidesteps the issue whether “this tension” between the counterfeit and the real can be related to “the technique of magic realism” (7); however, she stresses that “it is important for the reader to understand that Hodgins’ reality is not *our* reality” (6, original emphasis). Thus, Christian Science, founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1879 (see Mary Baker Eddy Library), is based on the belief that matter does not exist, and “that this world is only illusion,

metaphor” (Langhelle 56). This belief arises out of the conviction that “man was created a perfect spiritual being in the image of God, as recorded in the first chapter of Genesis” (Langhelle 7), and is thus “perfect and immortal” (Eddy qtd. in Langhelle 7). Conversely, “[m]ortal material man and his belief in the reality of sickness, evil, sin, and death, are only illusion, falsity, counterfeit” (Langhelle 7). Reality, roughly defined as the tangible experience and perception of our environment and bodies with our senses,²¹⁶ does not exist according to Christian Science teaching. The only “Reality” (capitalized by Hodgins in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 61) is spiritual. Accordingly, any notion of realism is complicated, when Hodgins represents a reality he does not believe actually exists. Jeffrey points to “Hodgins’ implicit critique of the false realism of documentary narrative,” represented by Becker, collector of notes, interviews and other ‘true to life’ documents (Jeffrey 209). Yet Becker himself provides an explanation as to the purpose of his activity. He writes: “Maybe all our lives that instinct is in us, trying to translate the fake material world we seem to experience back into pre-Eden truth” (*Invention* 321). This attempt at translation lies at the heart of Hodgins’ realism.

The “fallacy of matter” is established, according to Eddy, with the second version of Genesis.²¹⁷ Langhelle explains that,

Since the second record of creation, in the teachings of Christian Science, is an allegory whose purpose is to depict the falsity and the effects of the belief in life springing from and existing in matter, it is reasonable to assume that Becker’s record of the Keneally legend is similarly meant to show the falsity and the effects of the belief in materiality and evil. (26)

Thus, Hodgins’ use of myth has to be seen as part of a larger project, which entails the exposal of magic as evil, and evil, in turn, as deception. Accordingly, myths and magic, both

in *The Invention of the World* and *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*, are presented as highly suspect.

For example, the story of Fat Annie is told by Christie, a descendant of “the members of the band of natives whose longhouses and sweat baths had once stood by the edge of the inlet” to Bald-headed Pete, a newcomer in town (*Resurrection* 64). This creation myth of Port Annie, the metamorphosis of Fat Annie Fartenburg from a whale with a human voice into a human being, is exposed as “another of [Christie’s] unbelievable tales” (241), or “whatever those crazy Indians claimed” (163). Christie’s story, handed down from his grandparents, is presented not only as a part of native superstitious folklore, but also as the kind of tall tale locals might tell to fool newcomers, as Christie’s drinking companion Belchy McFadden conspiratorially winks at him to confirm part of the story (117). The tale, which describes Fat Annie as a woman of whale-like proportions, becomes even less credible when she turns out to be a “poor old thing,” a “dry shrivelled-up vegetable root” (245).

Similarly, the native myth of Thunderbird collapses into the artificiality of a disintegrating costume. Thunderbird is reduced to one of Port Annie’s mayor’s fancy dress outfits, with “wire-and-paper wings . . . a little battered from going in and out of doors that weren’t wide enough, and the enormous beak that protruded from his forehead was bent in the middle, but other than that it was good as new, and colourful, a perfect costume for getting his picture taken for the *Port Annie Crier*” (43). The costume breaks, “snapping his beak right in two” (45), indicating that Thunderbird has nothing more to say. The Thunderbird myth, materialised as the mayor’s costume, is rendered powerless, and exposed as insubstantial, false and weak.

In her glossary to *Science and Health*, Eddy equates mythology and matter (somewhat obscurely, to the non-Christian Scientist), and defines them as “the opposite of Truth; the opposite of Spirit; the opposite of God; . . . that which mortal mind sees, feels, hears, tastes,

and smells only in belief" (Eddy 591). Mythologies, as well as the belief in matter, are erroneous inventions which obscure the "Truth" from this perspective,²¹⁸ and this is reflected in Hodgins' work. He remarks, in relation to his first novel, that his interest is in "[t]he Reality that exists beyond this imitation reality that we are too often contented with. The created rather than the invented world. I didn't call my novel *The Invention of the World* because it is an arresting title. It is a story about counterfeits" (qtd. in Hancock, *CW* 61-2).

Accordingly, Lily, Keneally's wife, dispels some of the myths surrounding Keneally. She says: "They told me you'd have a sack of turnips between your legs, but you look normal enough to me" (*Invention* 252-3). Later, she remarks, "[v]illain, god, demon, magician, con-man, call him what you want he was my husband," and points out that he was "human after all and getting old" (*Invention* 264). Richard Ryburn, one of Becker's interviewees, calls the legends around Keneally "hogwash" (*Invention* 195). Dairmud Evans, another interviewee, similarly reports that he was "trying to reconcile this desperate whining man with the man of the legends. It wouldn't work, I know, it never has. When story people become flesh people we can't bear the evidence" (*Invention* 203).

Such accounts suggest that, just because Keneally occasionally behaves like a bull, this does not mean he actually is a half-bull. The myth and rumours consolidate his power over his followers, and his behaviour reinforces it. The fear he instils in them is based at least in part on the stories surrounding him, supported by older, familiar legends associated with bull-gods and devils. Thus, his followers see what they are preconditioned to expect, instead of a man putting on an act. Lily comments: "I don't know who disgusted me more, him [sic] for being human after all, or the rest of them for letting him pretend he wasn't" (*Invention* 264). In contrast, the one "true" myth is that of Maggie's spiritual, "sacred journey" (Horner 6), at the end of which she arrives at her role as "central healer" (Horner 16). This role, also mirrored by Joseph Bourne, his wife, and Raimey in *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*, is,

as Langhelle points out, “one of the most important doctrines of Christian Science—‘the duty and ability of Christians to heal the sick’” (16).

Magic, however, has nothing to do with this, as Becker indicates to Lily (*Invention* 246). Hodgins exposes magic as evil in his first novel, and sets up a contrast with what are essentially divine miracles (not magic) in his second novel, such as the healing and resurrection of Joseph Bourne. Langhelle points out that “to conjure” and “to invent” are “both negative terms in the novel,” and contrasted with creation (17). Accordingly, Lily refers to Keneally’s “silly magic” (*Invention* 256). On the other hand, there is the miraculous re-appearance of Joseph Bourne in *Port Annie*, after his apparent death. The description strongly points towards the Christian Scientists’ belief in spiritual Reality (to borrow Hodgins’ capitalisation), and their disbelief in the existence of matter:

[N]o one touched. If it wasn’t flesh that hung on his ancient bones they’d never know; if it wasn’t blood that pumped through those veins it was something else that did the job as well. Or better, they didn’t want to know for sure. And old man come back to life was mystery enough without raising any other kinds of doubt. What seemed body could be the substance of soul, what seemed blood-life could be the animation of pure spirit, it wouldn’t matter. And if Ian McCarthy or someone had gone up to the old man now and passed his hand through that body without encountering a material thing to stop it, no one would have been more than a little surprised. (*Resurrection* 140)

Jeffrey comments on Hodgins’ resistance to the label “magic realism,” and notes that Hodgins’ remark: “This thing called ‘magic realism’ is not magic at all. It’s real. I don’t write anything unreal or unbelievable or even improbable” (qtd. in Jeffrey 204). However, this comment has to be seen in the context of miracles, rather than magic. His use of the term

“magic” here acknowledges, though, that readers may not always make a distinction between the two.

To use Faris’ words, “[t]he question of belief is central here” (*Ordinary Enchantments* 17). However, Hodgins’ narrative does not so much reflect the opposition between Western scientific rationality versus indigenous belief systems, “the implicit clash of cultural systems within the narrative” (*Ordinary Enchantments* 17), but a different belief system deduced from, and firmly rooted within, Western society. This conundrum (for Western, non-Christian Scientist readers) is illustrated in the discussion between Jenny and McCarthy, who debate the miraculous cure of Preserved Crabbe’s club-footed brother:

Well there had to be a sensible explanation, McCarthy said. No doubt there were plenty of ways to explain it, nobody was going to treat him like a fool. “Everything in this world has its rational explanation.” “Don’t count on it,” Jenny said and left. Naturally she didn’t mean what she said. She counted on an ordered universe as much as anyone in town, but she wasn’t quite so sure as Ian McCarthy was that all of it could be simply understood. There were still some mysteries left, thank goodness, and lots of room for new ways of looking at things. (*Resurrection* 205)

Faris argues that, “because belief systems differ, clearly, some readers in some cultures will hesitate less than others, depending on their beliefs and narrative traditions” (*Ordinary Enchantments* 17). Leaving aside the fact that Faris applies this to inter-cultural differences, this is certainly true for Hodgins’ first two novels. For a Christian Scientist reader, hesitation, or confusion, is less likely. Ironically, whilst empirical science, based on observing the physical world, is undermined here, the alternative explanation hinted at by Jenny’s and McCarthy’s discussion claims itself to be scientific and logical.²¹⁹ One Western worldview is undermined by another. Miracles fit into this (Christian) “scientific” system in a

straightforward manner, whereas magic does not. As Becker proclaims: “But magic is what seems to defy the laws, or suspend them. There’s nothing magic about something that was there all along, though hidden, like the underground roots of frozen grass” (*Invention* 246).

For “magic” that defies natural laws (that is, those considered by Mary Baker Eddy to be natural), Eddy uses the term “animal magnetism.” Briefly, she equates it with mesmerism, hypnotism, and other kinds of healing practices which claim to be curing physical ailments through either mental forces or faith.²²⁰ Describing animal magnetism as “the criminal misuse of human willpower,” (106), Eddy declares that “[i]n no instance is the effect of animal magnetism, recently called hypnotism, other than the effect of illusion. Any seeming benefit derived from it is proportional to one’s faith in esoteric magic” (101). The term “animal” here appears to be used to denote physicality rather than, specifically, non-human animals. She refers to Franz Mesmer’s theory, which is centred around the “mutual influence between the celestial bodies, the earth, and . . . [a]nimal bodies” (Mesmer qtd. in Eddy 100). Equally, she denotes “dishonesty, sensuality, falsehood, revenge, malice” to be “animal propensities” (Eddy 104), that is, qualities of matter and “error.”

It is no surprise, then, that Keneally’s evil nature, animal qualities, seeming hybridity, and the kind of trickery that Eddy would call “animal magnetism” are combined. Langhelle, speculating on what Keneally’s association with wolves might mean, fleetingly comments: “It is interesting to note in this connection that in Christian Science, an often used synonym for evil is ‘animal magnetism’ (30). “[M]agic’s solid grounding in reality” (*Ordinary Enchantments* 15) is therefore not so solid in Hodgins’ novels.

Delbaere-Garant’s solution to Hodgins’ seemingly confusing use of magical realist motifs, which are evidently at odds with the (Latin American) models they emulate, is to propose that “Jack Hodgins experiments with a variety of magic realisms,” in order to “stress the distinction between trickery and reality, invention and creation” (260). Langhelle

comments, “[t]he conventional realism of the settings, characters and voice in his works has led most critics to agree that Hodgins is a realist writer, but the fantastic and allegorical nature of much of his fiction makes it difficult for them to define exactly what sort of realist he is” (55). Accordingly, Delbaere-Garant identifies “psychic realism,” “mythic realism,” and “grotesque realism” in Hodgins’ first novel, which she considers to be modifications of magic realism (261). To a certain degree, this may counteract some of the confusion that arises when critics try to extend the term “magical realism” to *The Invention of the World*; however, this approach still assigns Hodgins’ fiction to a mode, or mould, it was never intended to fit in the first place.

Hodgins points out that any connection between magic realism and his work had “never occurred to [him] before,” until he read Hancock’s description of him as a “magic realist” (Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 71). Furthermore, he continues to be vague on the question whether the label “magical realism” actually applies to his work, as he says that magical realism “*may* describe what I’ve already done” (qtd. in Hancock, *Canadian Writers*, my emphasis). Even when he speaks in terms of “this other thing that you want to label magic realism” (Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 73), his description operates within the parameters of Christian Science rather than magic realism. He says: “It’s not the realism of the tree. It’s the reality beyond the tree” (Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 73), indicating Christian Scientist thought that what appears to non-Christian Scientists as matter needs to be “[s]piritually interpreted” to “stand for solid and grand ideas” (Eddy 511). Nonetheless, Hodgins concedes that the label “magical realist” appeals to him (Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 71), and, clearly, the motifs Hodgins employs look like magical realism (especially those borrowed from García Márquez), even though, ultimately, they are not.

Jeffrey declares that “as an inclusive category for Hodgins’ fiction, *magic realism* is inadequate and probably misleading” (198; original italics). Accordingly, Raimey, the first

noteworthy, most sustained and supposedly human animal, who, significantly, attempts to unlock the unused church shortly after her arrival (4-5), is, after all, definitely not an animal. She very clearly rejects the description of her as a “seabird”: “A strange town . . . where everyone treated her like some kind of foreign creature, not even human” (128). The opposition between humans and animals in Christian Science is absolute, as Eddy’s disagreement with the theory of evolution demonstrates: “Theorizing about man’s development from mushrooms to monkeys and from monkeys into men amounts to nothing in the right direction and very much in the wrong. Materialism grades the human species as rising from matter upward” (172). Any image of human animality is therefore a supposedly false perception of reality, the result of invention, not creation.

Langhelle comes to the conclusion that the reader should probably “have some knowledge of the teachings of Mary Baker Eddy in order to fully appreciate *The Invention of the World*” (57), and *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*, too, has to be understood on those terms. Therefore, due to Hodgins’ very unique concept of reality, his brand of realism is perhaps best conceived of as “Christian Science Realism,” which, in turn, determines Hodgins’ symbolic use of animals. For Hodgins, realism is the representation of a veneer, a facade of a reality that is only illusion, hiding behind it the “magic” of a spiritual, divine dimension. He explains: “What you and I call the ocean is to me only a metaphor. All those trees for instance, are metaphors; the reality lies beyond them. The act of writing to me is an attempt to shine a light on that ocean and those trees so bright that we can see right through them to the reality that is constant” (qtd. in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 62).

Discussing the destruction of the “diabolical,” which Hodgins considers “counterfeit,” in *The Invention of the World*, Hancock comments: “This is more than a literary convention. It’s something basic to your view of life,” to which Hodgins’ replies: “Oh yes. I’m writing allegories I suppose” (Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 77). His first two novels can thus both be

seen, above all, as allegories,²²¹ in contrast to Faris' assertion that the "magic in magical realism" cannot be reduced to a "primarily allegorical mode" (*Enchantments* 21). Further, Hodgins' *realism* is first and foremost allegorical, whereas miracles, such as the club-footed Crabbe brother's cure and Joseph Bourne's resurrection, are to be understood "quite literally" (qtd. in Hancock, *CW* 63).

Non-human animals, correspondingly, symbolise spiritual meanings, consistent with Eddy's assertion that animals, like the rest of "the universe," are merely representations of spiritual principles:

Animals and mortals metaphorically present the gradation of mortal thought, rising in the scale of intelligence, taking form in masculine, feminine, or neuter gender. The fowls, which fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven, correspond to aspirations soaring beyond and above corporeality to the understanding of the incorporeal and divine Principle, Love. (Eddy 511)

Langhelle relates this "'spiritual' interpretation of birds" to Becker's song "I'd rather be a sparrow than a snail" in *The Invention of the World*, and suggest that it represents "the main concern of the book—spirituality versus materiality" (18). Furthermore, she discusses the symbolic and religious significance of a shell-less snail, kept in a chocolate box by the young man Julius Champney meets in the park (*Invention* 237-8). Langhelle considers this scene "an absurd restatement of the parable" of the Good Samaritan (21). She also provides plausible interpretations for Cora Manson's plastic pig, connecting it with Cora's preoccupation "with the concerns of the flesh" (Langhelle 37-8), and the "various beast images in the novel" (Langhelle 46). Animals, whether "magical" or "realist," thus serve primarily in allegorical and symbolic functions, as well as being props to create the Vancouver Island setting.

In any case, non-human animals are clearly seen as part of the landscape and Hodgins is very explicit about its function in his fiction:

“[T]he landscape is ultimately only your setting. . . . Often a story for me begins when I discover a place has a meaning. Either in the lives of the people who live there or in the lives of people who come to it. It can then take on some symbolic importance that touches everybody. That is the only importance landscape has to me in my fiction. The role it plays in human lives.” (Hodgins in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 60).

Hodgins use of landscape, and, by association, animals, also recalls the “anthropomorphic taming, [the] moralizing subjection, [the] domestication” of fabulation Derrida identifies. His two-dimensional spiritual Reality reduces his animals, in their physical dimension, to the “flatness of the beast-fable.” Like Fat Annie’s “incredible translation from [speaking] whale” (*Resurrection* 66) into carnivalesque idol and inflated story, Hodgins’ fictional animals and landscape are meant to be translated and defined by their usefulness to humanity.

“A real cat”: Irreplaceability and Singularity

Both Kroetsch and Hodgins thus utilize animal imagery for pragmatic purposes throughout their narratives, as Hodgins’ animals, as every other part of the landscape, are abstract ideas per se, whilst Kroetsch employs his literally as figures of speech, constructs of metafiction and the postmodern. Such representations of animals can be described by extending the German concept of *Nutztiere* to express a literary paradigm. The term corresponds with the English “domestic animals” or “farmed animals,” but its connotations are farther reaching. Loosely translated as “useful animals,” *Nutztiere*, in its literal sense, connotes the idea of animals being “utile,” that is, “[u]seful, profitable, advantageous,” and of “utilizing,” “[t]o make or render useful; to convert to use.” Closely related to this is the idea of *Nützlänge*,

denoting small useful animals, such as spiders, helpful garden insects, and earthworms; a concept that can usefully be applied to Kroetsch's bees, for example. I will include both categories, *Nutztiere* and *Nützlinge*, under the term "useful animals," and discuss, in the following, the idea in relation to Derrida's concept of "the Animal" and "*l'animot*." Further, I will explore the idea of literary "useful animals" within the rural context of Kroetsch and Hodgins' writing.

The usefulness of Kroetsch's and Hodgins' animals is inextricably linked with their status as representatives of their respective species, the myths, fables, anthropomorphisms and other human uses associated with those species, and the animals' replaceability in that regard. A useful animal is always one of many, a representative of a particular species, or, as in literary contexts, for example, possibly of animality as a whole. It needs to be replaceable by one of its own species, or another species of equal use value, because the need that is to be met by a particular use usually extends beyond the animal's life.²²² Important here is the function these animals fulfil, not the animals themselves. Any singularity of a particular animal as opposed to another animal of the same or a similar species (or even any other animal), is therefore immaterial. Correspondingly, Kroetsch and Hodgins' animal imagery reflects literary conventions and cultural traditions and practices that reinforce the idea of 'the Animal' as a commodity and literary paradigm; a figure of speech opposed to and separate from the idea of humanity, but also always at its service²²³.

Derrida critiques the concept of "the Animal," and argues: "*Animal* is a word that men have given themselves . . . in order to corral a large number of living beings within a single concept" (400; original emphasis). He calls for the need to acknowledge the differences between species, and writes:

Confined within this catch-all concept, within this vast encampment of the animal, in this general singular, within the strict enclosure of this definite

article (“the Animal” and not “animals”) . . . are *all the living things* that man does not recognize as his fellows, his neighbors, or his brothers. And that is so in spite of the infinite space that separates the lizard from the dog, the protozoon from the dolphin, the shark from the lamb, the parrot from the chimpanzee, the camel from the eagle, the squirrel from the tiger or the elephant from the cat, the ant from the silkworm or the hedgehog from the echidna. (Derrida 402)

Furthermore, he recognises and stresses the irreplaceability and “the unsubstitutable singularity” of the cat he describes to illustrate his contemplation of the term “the Animal,” and resists the idea that his cat stands in for the species (Derrida 378). He insists: “No, no, my cat, the cat that looks at me in my bedroom or in the bathroom . . . does not appear there as a representative, or ambassador, carrying the immense symbolic responsibility with which our culture has always charged the feline race” (378).²²⁴ Neither is she a verbal construct for the purposes of his discussion:

I must make it clear from the start, the cat I am talking about is a real cat, truly, believe me, a *little cat*. It isn’t the *figure* of a cat. It doesn’t silently enter the room as an allegory for all the cats on the earth, the felines that traverse myths and religions, literatures and fables. . . . The cat I am talking about does not belong to Kafka’s vast zoopoetics, something that nevertheless solicits attention, endlessly and from a novel perspective. (Derrida, 374; original emphasis)

Derrida’s cat is acknowledged first and foremost in her unique existence, rather than being valued, primarily, for any particular function. Furthermore, Derrida adamantly states: “Nothing can ever take away from me the certainty that what we have here is an existence that refuses to be conceptualized” (379).

There is, of course, an absolute difference between a “real cat” and a cat represented in text. However, the suspension of disbelief and the act of reading fiction in itself, especially of any kind of realist narrative, but also of fairy tales, fantasy and science fiction, for example, require readers to pretend that characters, settings and animals are somehow real, within the imaginary world of the text, from the moment the reader’s mind enters that fictional space. It is, therefore, curious that Derrida should pick Kafka’s animals in particular. Like the magical realist animals that followed Kafka’s and were influenced by him, such as those I have discussed in the preceding chapters, Kafka’s animals “refuse to be conceptualised” and, furthermore, rendered into abstract figures completely detached from the (fictionally) “real” animals. Again, it is the realism of the narrative that counteracts this, as Faris has argued on a more general level. This refusal, I propose, is an intrinsic quality of magical realist representations of animals.²²⁵

In contrast to Kroetsch and Hodgins’ animal imagery, magic realist animals assert their physicality, their being and presence, their subjectivity and agency. Disrupting the narratives as pests and nuisances, or as manifestations of the magical and marvellous, they contest the position of central subject, and undermine the relationship between centre and margin, and between subject and object, altogether. Wilson describes the predominance of Cartesian thought in magical realism, and argues that “[m]agical realism involves, at the very least, Cartesian dualities: antinomies between natural and supernatural, explicable and inexplicable. . . . Magical realism can be, and indeed *is*, used to describe virtually any literary text in which binary oppositions, or antinomies, can be discovered” (“Metamorphoses” 223). Whilst this definition is too loose to usefully distinguish magic realism from, for instance, other kinds of postmodern texts, the disruption of such dualities is certainly a characteristic feature, indicated not least by the term “magical realism” itself.

Derrida coins the term “*l’animot*” to counter such dualities and better represent the heterogeneous experience and singularity of real animals. He suggests that

Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, Lacan and Levinas made of the animal a *theorem*, something seen and not seeing. The experience of the seeing animal, of the animal that looks at them, has not been taken into account in the philosophical or theoretical architecture of their discourse. In sum they have denied it as much as misunderstood it. Henceforth we can do little more than turn around this immense disavowal whose logic traverses the whole history of humanity. (Derrida 383; original italics)

Derrida argues that the term “the Animal,” “in the singular . . . , claiming thus to designate every living thing that is held not to be man” homogenises a very diverse group of beings, and proposes ‘*l’animot*’ to recognise their multiplicity and difference: “I would like to have the plural of animals heard in the singular. There is no animal in the general singular, separated from man by a single indivisible limit. We have to envisage the existence of ‘living creatures’ whose plurality cannot be assembled within the single figure of an animality that is simply opposed to humanity” (415). He defines *l’animot* as “[n]either a species nor a gender nor an individual, it is an irreducible living multiplicity of mortals, and rather than a double clone or a portmanteau word, a sort of monstrous hybrid, a chimera” (409).

At the same time, he insists he has “never believed in some homogeneous continuity between what calls *itself* man and what *he* calls the animal” (398; original italics), and explains that the “abyssal rupture” between humans and *animot* “doesn’t describe two edges, a unilinear and indivisible single line having two edges, Man and Animal in general” (399). However, he himself then undermines his own idea of an abyssal rupture, as he asserts that its denial “would be an *asinanity*” (415; original italics), deliberately describing humans in animal terms, calling the boundaries of that abyss into question and creating an oxymoron.²²⁶

He contemplates this abyss, considering that “the frontier no longer forms a single indivisible line but more than one internally divided line,” and asks “what a limit becomes . . . once, as a result, it can no longer be traced, objectified, or counted as single and indivisible. What are the edges of a limit that grows and multiplies by feeding on an abyss?” (Derrida 399). Thus, the concept becomes “impossible to think” (Foucault, *The Order of Things* xv), whilst the “irreducible” quality of the *animot* counters the absolute abstraction of “the Animal” from a creature like Derrida’s real cat, for example. *Animot*, it appears, are “natural” inhabitants of heterotopias, at the very least closely related to magical realist animals, whilst useful animals are intimately connected to the idea of “the Animal” as described by Derrida.

One of Maggie’s chickens, in *The Invention of the World*, appears to transcend the status of “useful animal,” as she and Maggie briefly regard each other: “In a moment there wasn’t anyone left outside but Maggie and a half-dozen black hens that came around the corner of the house, pecking in the dust. One of the hens stopped to look at her, cocked its head, then dismissed her as being of no consequence, and went on with its business of finding bugs” (39-40). The hen appears to assume subjectivity and marginalises Maggie in that moment of dismissal, which Maggie finds inherently unsettling, even alarming (61). This hen seems wholly detached from Maggie’s world; she seems the center of her own world, independent of human concerns. Maggie’s hen appears to question the core of Maggie’s being by looking at and dismissing her.

“The gaze of the cat” observing Derrida is, as he argues, “the point of view of the absolute other” (380). He identifies her subjectivity, as he writes: “It has its point of view regarding me,” suggesting an absolute opposition between him and the cat, but he also points out that this otherness is the “absolute alterity of the *neighbor*” (380, my emphasis), weakening the idea of absolute opposition. Derrida suggests that the gaze of an animal

causes us to think about what it means to be human, by taking us to “the edge of the so-called human” (399), facing the *animot*:

As with every bottomless gaze, as with the eyes of the other, the gaze called animal offers to my sight the abyssal limit of the human: the inhuman or the ahuman, the ends of man, that is to say the bordercrossing from which vantage man dares to announce himself to himself, thereby calling himself by the name that he believes he gives himself. And in these moments of nakedness, under the gaze of the animal, everything can happen to me, I am like a child ready for the apocalypse. (Derrida 381)

Unlike Derrida’s cat, however, Maggie’s hen’s gaze is not “bottomless.” It is, rather, a reflection of Maggie’s own needs at that point in time. For example, the hen, as one of all hens generally associated with motherly love in Western culture, serves as a reminder to Maggie of her shortcomings, but also of her potential, as a mother. After all, the world of chickens, from which the gaze is directed at Maggie, is one of mothering, indicated by one of the “brood hen[s]” who comes “out of her nest in the thatch to see what [is] going on in the world of men” (*Invention* 77). Maggie’s hen is thus no hen in particular; she is not “singular” or irreplaceable (unlike Allende’s Barrabás, for instance, who is a very unique character). She may as well have been any hen, the brood hen, for example, or one of any other species associated with good mothering. This corresponds with Keneally’s two “Thunderbirds”: Keneally gets a second dog he calls “Thunderbird,” “to replace the first,” also called “Thunderbird,” “which had died years before” (*Invention* 258). What matters are not the individual dogs themselves, but the inscription, the idea of a dog called “Thunderbird,” as a fitting accessory to the mythic figure of Keneally. As Berger says in relation to pets, “[m]ost people scarcely ever meet the gaze of an animal. The eye of the pet acts only as a coloured mirror” (“Animal World”1043). The hen’s gaze is reflective and allegorical.

At the same time, the hen's indifferent gaze is contrasted with that of "those people on the verandah," who "didn't look at her the way that chicken had, that hen," reminding Maggie of her place in, and belonging to, her community (*Invention* 63). The hen's dismissal signals to Maggie (and Hodgins' readers) that the possibility of a wholly other, hidden Reality exists, of which she had up to that moment been unaware. This is not, however, a reality in which animals may be "the subjects of their own experience" (Simons 21), but, again, a spiritual reality in which animals are merely representations of thought. Far from being "soaring fowl," the hen, close to ground and dust, represents Maggie's spiritual state of mind, as she is only at the beginning of her spiritual journey. The hen's gaze becomes the kind of "primal scene" that Derrida emphatically rejects in connection with his companion cat (380). As the hen, one amongst half a dozen other hens just like her, is substitutable; the scene is what Derrida calls "this deranged theatrics of the *wholly other that they call animal, for example, a cat*" (380). The hen is, after all, a figure of speech, too.

A Taste of Rodeo: The Agricultural Circus

The figurative usefulness of Kroetsch's and Hodgins' animals is a reflection of the rural background of both authors' fiction, where people's everyday work and lives are intimately tied to animal economies and useful animals. Kroetsch describes a conversation with fellow writers at the start of their visit to rural Alberta: "But the talk was still of the beauty of hogs. And the question of turning hogs into poetry" (*Alberta* 2). Furthermore, the everyday pragmatic use of animals in rural economies translates to the extraordinary, that is, popular culture and entertainment. This section explores the idea that the everyday use of animals in rural economies forms the basis for Kroetsch's and Hodgins' literary animal spectacles. Rather than the circensian spaces of Latin American magical realism, it is the agricultural spectacle of the rodeo that determines both authors' representations of animals.

Jeffrey calls Hodgins a “[r]ural island tale-spinner” (223) and describes Hodgins’ upbringing on a stump ranch “forest-bounded, rough-cut meadows with white-faced cattle grazing around great blackened stumps” (187). He writes, “[f]raming this centre we should imagine a strongly developed interlaced border of immediate relationships in a rural community; a kinship with which Hodgins still identifies” (Jeffrey 188). Hodgins himself remarks that “[t]his is very much a rural society; my own roots are rural; I have never felt entirely comfortable in any city” (qtd. in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 52). The experience of a strong community, centred around working the land, farming and telling stories, is also recognised by Kroetsch: “First of all there was the actual experience of a landscape in which people were farming, or coal-mining, or ranching—along the Battle River. And part of it was the way we survived through the oral tradition. Women cooking and canning together, visiting. Men working together, drinking together. I grew up in what you’d call an extended family” (qtd. in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 129-30).

Kroetsch romanticises the experience of a family farm in *What the Crow Said*, at a time when factory farming is beginning to take over the Canadian countryside.²²⁷ He depicts the hardship endured by the Lang women, who end up doing all the men’s work, but he also portrays a positive side:

The house was in shambles; it was almost a pleasure to go outside and feed pigs, to walk through the chicken coop and find a few warm eggs under the hens, to sit milking a cow, listening to the warm milk zing into the pail. But Rose managed stay just a little bit angry, putting the cows in the pasture, lifting the heavy pole gate, while her husband played schmier” (*Crow* 81).

Moreover, his description of a meal at the Lang farm suggests homeliness, family and belonging:

Tiddy's daughters had seen the men coming up the valley: they had sliced long strips off a slab of smoked bacon. They were frying eggs and pancakes. It was Rose, not Vera, who broke the honey-filled combs into a dish; it was Anna Marie who toasted thick slices of homemade bread in a wire rack on top of the stove. Old Lady Lang was pouring coffee from the huge pot that was used during threshing time. She poured the rich, steaming coffee into cups set in a row beside the cream pitcher; the aroma seemed to lift the frost from the frozen cheeks of the gasping and puffing men. (*Crow* 128)

Animal products, the rewards for the Lang women's hard work with animals, are at the heart of these positive experiences.

Accordingly, in *What the Crow Said*, there is little sense of Northrop Frye's argument that "[i]n Canadian poetry there is a special pathos in dying animals and falling trees" (53). He writes that "the main focus of guilt in Canada seems to fall on the rape of nature. The deaths of animals seems to have an extraordinary resonance in Canadian literature, as though the screams of all the trapped and tortured creatures who built up the Canadian fur trade were still echoing in our minds" (Frye 68). Frye describes the "guilt and uneasiness" inspired by "the unbroken violation of nature in Canada, the economy founded on the trapping and mutilating of animals, the destroying of trees, the drying up of rivers and the polluting of lakes" (53).²²⁸ Hodgins, similarly, shows little sign of this in relation to animals.²²⁹ Furthermore, Hancock comments on the reverse of Frye's argument, "the idea of Canadian characters being victims of their environment," to which Hodgins replies: "It doesn't relate to anything that is part of my experience" (Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 58). In response to Hancock's question whether he, as a "rural writer," would "automatically . . . have to have that struggle between man and nature," Hodgins replies:

No. I'm not conscious of a struggle between man and nature at all. Life is pretty comfortable here. At first this was one of the reasons why Canadian literature seemed so foreign to me. People were always getting lost in the snow and freezing to death or being starved out in droughts. All these strange things happening to them that never happened to anybody I ever met. In this part of the world the struggle between men and the elements is not very dramatic. This scenery is dramatic, but the struggle is not. (Qtd. in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 58)

An explanation for the apparent discrepancies between the assessment of Canadian literature by critics such as Frye and Margaret Atwood, and the novels of Kroetsch and Hodgins, is offered by McMullin, who suggests that literary criticism from Canada's urban centers fails to take account of the regional distinctiveness of British Columbia and the prairies. He argues that "Ontario's mythology has generally been clothed in the rhetoric of Canadian nationalism," and that literary criticism, such as that by Frye and Atwood, "often takes on the national themes" (McMullin 15). He comments that, "[c]onfronted by the heartland's proclivity to pass off central Canadian views as national views with no apparent concern for hinterland reaction, and faced with the domination of the cultural industries," one of the things "the west has by necessity been forced to do" was to evolve "its own distinctive form of literary expression" which he takes to be magic realism (McMullin 20-1).

Another explanation for this discrepancy lies in different conceptions of 'nature' itself. Frye states:

Still more important is the Canadian sense of the close relation of the people to the land. Everywhere we turn in Canadian literature and painting, we are haunted by the natural world, and even the most sophisticated Canadian artists can hardly keep something very primitive and archaic out of their

imaginations. This sense is not that of the possession of the land, but precisely the absence of possession, a feeling that here is a nature that man has polluted and imprisoned and violated but has never really lived with. (68)

When Frye talks about nature, the connotations are of “wilderness” and “wild,” native animals. However, in Kroetsch and Hodgins there is a sense that the settler culture’s close relation to the land is intimately linked with domesticated nature and the interaction with domestic animals; rural communities have made a place for themselves within that “wild” nature by clearing and farming the land. “Alberta,” the Alberta Centennial website proclaims, “was formed from the hard work of its agricultural community.” The frontier experience of battling with wild nature has been largely substituted by domesticated nature, farming and animal economies.

In rural economies reliant on animal products, where people are confronted with the daily use and death of animals, the relationship to their *Nutztiere* is determined by pragmatic concerns. In *The Invention of the World*, for example, the mythical bull figure of Keneally is mirrored by a Hereford bull who is “butchered . . . before you had time to think” (211) and transformed into “frozen chunks of meat” (212). In *What the Crow Said*, Liebhaber becomes preoccupied with breeds of dairy cows, in order to “make Tiddy rich and independent” (70). Kroetsch depicts the different processes and products involved in farming cattle:

He talked of nothing but milk production versus meat production, of grasslands and feed lots, of diets and cream prices and the future of cheese and the color of milk. Tiddy put a lot of money into purchasing breeding stock and remodeled her barn. Liebhaber began to conduct experiments in artificial insemination in order to speed up the genetic process. He invented gadgets for the collection and dissemination of the semen of widely scattered bulls. He argued with Father Basil about the souls of cows. He bought bib overalls to

wear over his ink-marked clothing; he bought rubber boots and began to smell of cow manure. The long-range effect was simple: years later a government inspector informed Liebhaber that he'd perfected the three-titted cow. (*Crow* 70)

Thus, animals are seen primarily in relationship to their products, or as products themselves. Kroetsch proudly comments: "As any Albertan is likely to tell you, grass-fed beef has a different colour, a different flavour. It's simply the best" (*Alberta* 14). In an economy that turns animals into raw products and replaceable units, there is no room for the "pathos" and sentimentality Frye describes, no room for regarding domesticated animals as anything other than useful.

Hodgins explains how the need for productivity infuses all aspects of life in the British Columbian context, where reading books is frowned upon as frivolous entertainment:

[B]ooks are viewed with a certain amount of suspicion. Particularly in British Columbia. We're not very far from the frontier after all. The job was to build your log cabin, shoot the bears and dig your garden. Books are a gentlemen's frivolity. A lady's pastime. . . . There's a suspicion of anyone who isn't doing something productive. That includes teachers as well as writers. The product can't be measured, therefore we can't be doing anything worthwhile. (Qtd. in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 53)

Correspondingly, one of the most popular and famous spectacles in Canada combines entertainment with the idea of usefulness and productivity: the rodeo is a "practical" circus for cowboy (and cowgirl) skills. Its sideshow is the agricultural exhibition, and in the biggest rodeo event in Canada, the Calgary Stampede, there is serious money to be made. Kroetsch remarks: "If you want to see a small town or small city at its best, try to take in an annual event such as a sports day, or a local rodeo, or a district fair" (*Alberta* 63).²³⁰

Kroetsch describes the atmosphere of the rodeo, an intrinsic part of rural Canada's cultural landscape, in his travel book *Alberta*. The scene at the Jenner Rodeo reinforces the notion that Kroetsch has come home, as he inhales "[t]he reassuring smell of sweat and horse manure and sage in the early afternoon air" (*Alberta* 18). Kroetsch expresses his admiration for and excitement about the rodeo. He humorously remarks that he would like to score a "winning goal" at ice hockey, but "[f]ailing that, I'd like to be admired by the girls for staying on a bronco at a rodeo. Failing both, I go on writing" (qtd. in Hancock, *Canadian Writers* 132). Rodeo imagery occurs in all three novels discussed here. For example, Tiddy Lang and Ebbie Else both confront bulls in *What the Crow Said* (9, 168-9), whilst Preserved Crabbe in Hodgins' *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne* takes on a *bulldozer* (230), just after Joseph Bourne states that the squatters resisting the development are "not a bunch of bull-headed clowns" (228). Additionally, a turkey-buzzard attacks Joseph Bourne and holds "onto the white thrashing head like a bronco rider, flapping its wings to keep balance, and eventually rode it to rest" (*Resurrection* 16). The earth itself is likened to a rodeo horse as it "could buck you off its back just any time it wanted to" (*Resurrection* 97), and the vibration of the mountain is "like running down the back of a bucking bronco" (*Resurrection* 252). In Hodgins' first novel, a three-year-old Keneally is said to have given a particularly mean bull "a crack across his nose" (*Invention* 79), whilst the confrontation between Danny Holland and Madmother Thomas about Madmother Thomas' donkey evokes the performance of rodeo clowns, as the audience laughs at the humiliating spectacle. Maggie indignantly observes: "You couldn't stand back and watch a thing like that. Not like these others who acted as if it were all part of the programme, clowns for comic relief" (*Invention* 32). On a more humorous note, Wade is compared to a bull led around by the women in his life as if he had "a ring in [his] nose, and the worst of it was he couldn't help liking it" (*Invention* 303).

Furthermore, whilst 'Horseman', Wade's doppelganger, may connote all the symbolic meanings attributed to him,²³¹ his name also suggests the figure of a skilled cowboy, one of the icons of Northern American frontier mythology. The rodeo provides a nostalgic return to that mythic past, a reliving of the frontier experience:

Meanwhile, inside the tack, ten to fifteen waiting teams either circle at a slow trot or stand motionless in a thin cloud of dust, suggesting, by perfect contrast, the open prairie and the roundup and Indian raids. And near the bucking chutes, which won't be used until next afternoon the cowboys sit on the fences, smoking and talking. The Blackfoot and Blood and Sarcee from miles around note the good and bad points of a passing horse or victorious driver. (Kroetsch, *Alberta* 137)

The Calgary Exhibition and Stampede in particular states as its mission the preservation and promotion of "Western heritage and values" ("Welcome"). According to Kroetsch, urban Canadians especially embrace stereotypical 'Cowboys and Indians' imagery of the rodeo:

The Calgary Stampede is a ritual release from middle-class bondage for all the prospering region that is southern Alberta. Sociologists have found that city folk, and the well-to-do especially, put on high-heeled boots, tall hats, tight denims, western shirts that cost enough to outfit a genuine cowboy—and with a friendly "Howdy, pardner" they begin to unbend. Banks become stockades, flapjack breakfast is free at the tail end of a chuckwagon, square-dancers jostle in the streets of the financial district, and bars just plain bust loose. (*Alberta* 136)

At the rodeo, a stylised re-enactment of the "struggle between man and nature," urban and rural settler culture and First Nations mingle, to watch or take part in entertainment with a purpose.

The rodeo means serious business in the agricultural community.²³² Underneath the veneer of circus entertainment there are the ordered mechanisms of a rationalised industry: “Every spring, the arrival of the new crop of foals is anxiously awaited. Each year’s babies are given a letter of the alphabet as the first letter of their names[;] each letter corresponding with the year of birth: for example Zorro Bandit, Zinc Buckle and Zippy Delivery were all born in 1990” (Calgary Stampede Rodeo, “Calgary Stampede Rodeo Stock”). Unlike the circus, however, the rodeo renders the ordinary into an extraordinary spectacle; spectators come to marvel at “traditional cowboy skills torqued up with pure vaudeville showmanship” (Travel Alberta website, “The Calgary Stampede”).²³³ In this environment, animal products and entertainment are inextricably linked, as Kroetsch illustrates: “I went and stood in line for a long time for a hamburger and a Coke; you could watch the events while you stood in line, so waiting wasn’t so bad. And you could taste rodeo in that burger” (*Alberta* 21).

The rodeo clown epitomises the connection between circus entertainment and agricultural pragmatism. Despite the differences (the circus presents trained animals who perform tricks, whilst the rodeo is supposedly an entertaining demonstration of livestock and horse handling skills), the rodeo closely aligns itself with the circus in some of its imagery. In allusion to Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey’s famous slogan “The Greatest Show on Earth,” the Calgary Stampede markets itself as “The Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth.” Kroetsch identifies the rodeo as a form of carnival: “I think there’s a double thing going on in carnival. It’s very much a community thing . . . it isn’t simply a private release, it’s a communal release and I’m intrigued by all those occasions like a rodeo or a sports day on the prairies where everybody gets together” (qtd. in Kroetsch, Neuman and Wilson 35). He contends that the rodeo, like other forms of carnival, is subversive, as “everybody gets to participate in that reversal of order upsetting the king. The great example in our culture is the rodeo clown who often does a parody of what the cowboy is doing out there, the clown

risking life and limb to parody the cowboy, who is risking life and limb” (qtd. in Kroetsch, Neuman and Wilson 35). However, carnival at the rodeo is controlled, commercialised and, certainly in the case of the Calgary Stampede, restricted to those who buy tickets; it is a version of the prettified carnivalesque (see Stallybrass and White 9). Accordingly, the rodeo clown is not an entirely frivolous figure, but plays a serious and important role, as he distracts the bulls when the riders have fallen to the ground. Kroetsch describes the matter-of-fact reality of an Australian rodeo clown: “He had bulls to distract, lives to save” (*Alberta* 21). It is, in the end, this same pragmatism and rationalisation of the carnivalesque spectacle that renders Kroetsch’s and Hodgins’ animals useful, rather than magical realist. Their animal imagery, ultimately, demonstrates the domestication of García Márquez’s “old cow.”

Conclusion

Both Kroetsch’s and Hodgins’ novels can be considered manifestations of “mythic realism,” grounded in the landscape of rural Canada and the multiple mythologies of settlement. Their mythical beasts and seemingly hybrid characters acknowledge the cultural heritage of European settlement, and, to varying and degrees, the mythologies of First Nations, yet both suggest the necessity of forging new stories to match the multicultural realities of settlement. In *What the Crow Said*, this is an endlessly generative and diverse narrative, represented by the crow figure, while in *The Invention of the World* and *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*, this is a universal, spiritual narrative, grounded in Christian Science.

Furthermore, both authors’ representations of animals are intimately tied to and arise from their rural Canadian background, where working animals and animal products is part of everyday life. The pragmatic use of animals thus forms the basis for Kroetsch’s and Hodgins’ animal imagery, which is determined first and foremost by its function within the narrative. Beside serving as ingredients for the local flavour of the landscape, they are

primarily figures of speech, which aligns them with Derrida's concept of "the Animal," a homogenising term, set up in absolute opposition to the idea of "the Human." This contrasts with magical realist representations of animals, which assert the animals' subjectivity, agency, and more central presence. Unlike Kroetsch's and Hodgins' abstract animal figures, magical realist animals refuse to be conceptualised, a characteristic also of Derrida's concept of *l'animot*. They are singular and irreplaceable. In contrast to this are the useful animals of Kroetsch and Hodgins, which represent less the animals themselves, but rather the act of domesticating them: they are useful in terms of their species, or as signifying "the Animal," in opposition to the "Human," in general. This pragmatism further works against the frivolity of the carnivalesque: unlike the circensian spaces of magical realism, Kroetsch's and Hodgins' mixture of carnivalesque imagery and pragmatic use of animal figures are grounded in, and reflect, the agricultural spectacle of the rodeo. An icon of popular entertainment in Canada, the rodeo signifies and mythologises the process of European settlement in North America, and the associated domestication of its nature. Referring to the circus in some of its language and imagery, the rodeo's objective, however, is not the frivolous display of animals, but to represent their function, and the skills needed to manage, contain and process them, in an entertaining way. Correspondingly, whilst Kroetsch and Hodgins allude to and borrow from Latin American writing, most notably García Márquez, their fiction represents a domesticated version of magical realist imagery. When Canadian cows dance, it appears, there has to be a purpose. Like the rodeo clown, everyone has, after all, a job to do.

Chapter Six

Paperzoo: *Life of Pi*

Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* won the Booker Prize in 2002, at a time when magical realism was considered by some to be "the most important trend in international contemporary fiction" (Faris, "Question of the Other" 101) and "*en vogue* not only with critics . . . but with publishers and the reading public as well" (Hegerfeldt 63). Perceived by many reviewers as magical realism,²³⁴ *Life of Pi* incorporates themes, styles, and techniques that are recognisably magical realist. Furthermore, the covers of all editions so far prominently display the Bengal tiger Richard Parker. *Life of Pi* signifies, like no other novel before, the connection between animals and the commercial success of the mode.

Although often quoted, the novel's conclusion that "[t]he story with animals is the better story" (317) has not been examined in regard to the question why animals in particular are so attractive to readers.²³⁵ This chapter will discuss to what extent animals may contribute to magical realism's commercial success in general and to Martel's novel in particular, which profits, ironically, from the popularity of the very animal practices—the circus and the zoo—that tend to be undermined by magical realist animals. I argue that part of the global success of *Life of Pi* rests on its mirroring and reinforcement of culturally ingrained, and often contradictory, human-animal relations, especially those promoted by commercial animal entertainment. The novel follows the tradition and discourse of circuses and zoos, which, as former showcases for the exploits of imperialism, continue to represent the world as an exotic fantasy. Throughout this chapter, I will make use of Graham Huggan's concept of the "postcolonial exotic," and, although Huggan does not discuss Martel's novel, apply it to *Life of Pi* where relevant. The narrative also constructs the readers' view of animals in keeping with the exoticising framework John Urry calls "the tourist gaze." By

naturalising animal practices such as zoos and circuses, *Life of Pi* reinforces rather than challenges human-animal relationships that are widely taken for granted. In the absence of an oxymoronic engagement with animals, I propose that Martel's paper tiger functions as a magical realist cliché rather than a circensian beast.

Life of Pi, which sold over four million copies worldwide and was an unprecedented success for Edinburgh publishing house Canongate,²³⁶ is the story of Pi Patel, a sixteen year old zookeeper's son from Pondicherry in India, whose family emigrates to Canada. However, the ship carrying the family and an assortment of zoo animals destined for North American zoos sinks in stormy weather, and after initially sharing the lifeboat with a small number of animals, Pi finds himself alone with a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. Pi's survival depends on his knowledge of animal behaviour gained whilst growing up surrounded by the Pondicherry zoo animals, and on training Richard Parker accordingly, like a circus animal, through fear and submission. In the course of the journey, the protagonist and narrator, originally a vegetarian, is increasingly animalised and turns into a carnivore and cannibal whilst maintaining an ostensibly natural mastery over Richard Parker. Representing Pi Patel as a practising Muslim, Christian and Hindu who, as an adult immigrant in Canada, studies zoology and theology, the narrative attempts to bridge the gap between science and religion and appeals to an idea of a common humanity. Philip Armstrong points out that "Pi's sensibility . . . is that of the tourist" (*What Animals Mean* 179). In this manner, otherness is familiarised and assimilated through a filter, or lens, of multiculturalism and exoticism, and diversity is reduced to a collection of lifestyle choices and spectacular souvenirs.²³⁷

Selling Animals

The tiger gracing the covers of all editions of *Life of Pi* to date illustrates the wide appeal of animals as marketable and spectacular commodities. After all, representations of animals feature on anything from stationery, t-shirts, and company logos to cartoons, television adverts, cinema screens and video games; they appear in coffee table books and children's stories, and as toys, posters, fairground rides, jelly bears and chocolate fish. Animals themselves are sold as ornaments (stuffed and mounted on the wall or alive in decorative fish tanks, for instance) or as pets, and exhibited as spectacular, profitable commodities in aquariums, stage shows and, as reflected in Martel's narrative, in circuses and zoos. John Berger's observation in regard to consumer items related to childhood still holds true three decades later: "No other source of imagery can begin to compete with that of animals" ("Why Zoos Disappoint" 122). In short, animals sell, and evidently very effectively so.

As Adrian Franklin writes, "the formation of mass markets, generalized affluence and mass popular culture" resulting from Fordism had "the greatest impact" on human-animal relationships in the twentieth century (*Animals and Modern Cultures* 38). Animals were turned into mass market products in the process, illustrated by the rise in pet keeping, for instance, and the "[i]ncreased interest in animals arising from hobbies and outdoor leisure," which "stimulated the demand for mass media representations of animals" (Franklin, *Animals and Modern Cultures* 39). Moreover, the dominant visual media, in which I include zoos and circuses, produce for the most part images of so-called charismatic animals, usually visually attractive mammals, birds or reptiles, with a particular focus on the cute, the colourful, and the carnivorous.

Martel's novel reflects this trend of using animals as glamorous commodities, as both the packaging and the content of *Life of Pi* place great emphasis on the instant visual appeal of exotic animals. In an online chat with the author, one reader commented that it was

specifically the book's cover that "drew" them to the book ("amagmom" qtd. in WrittenVoices.com), and since "[t]he sudden appearance of a tiger is arresting in any environment" (*Life of Pi* 160), including the window of a bookshop, the visual seduction continues inside the novel, where Richard Parker is described in vivid colours: "The weird contrast between the bright, striped, living orange of his coat and the inert white of the boat's hull was incredibly compelling" (*Life of Pi* 160). This virtually cinematic effect is translated further into a film (produced by Gil Netter and currently at the development stage [see "Ang Lee Circles *Life of Pi* Film"]), an illustrated edition of the novel with stunning images by Tomislav Torjanac (2007), and a rather cryptic, interactive promotional animation on the internet. The animation is "designed to do for books what the pop video did for singles" ("*Life of Pi* Interactive Movie Back Online"). However, the tiger, strangely, does not appear, but is only vaguely suggested by the orange and black pattern of the lifeboat tarpaulin ("*The Life of Pi* Promo").

Life of Pi is deliberately constructed as a colourful spectacle for the reading audience, whereby the Pondicherry zoo seamlessly transforms into a circus, which is presented by Pi as ringmaster: "Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, without further ado, it is my pleasure and honour to present to you: THE PI PATEL, INDO-CANADIAN, TRANS-PACIFIC, FLOATING CIRCUUUUUSSSSSSSSSSSSS!" (165, original capitalisation). The novel hereby presents the status of animals as globally traded commodities as an unquestioned given, and government regulations, "nit-picking bureaucrats" (89), and international laws to prevent trade in endangered species, such as CITES, are portrayed as a bothersome hindrance of trade between zoos and an obstacle for the "happy future" of the Patel family's "collection" in American zoos "willing to pay higher prices" (88). At the same time, the lucrative side of animal trade and exhibitions is downplayed as an incidental matter. Sounding somewhat like a public relations spokesperson for zoos, Pi thus declares: "A zoo is

a cultural institution. Like a public library, like a museum, it is at the service of popular education and science. And by this token, not much of a money-making venture, for the Greater Good and the Greater Profit are not compatible aims, much to Father's chagrin" (78).²³⁸ Promoted as "[a]n impassioned defence of zoos" (*The New Yorker* qtd. in the frontmatter of the 2003 Canongate paperback edition), *Life of Pi* appeals to contemporary audiences that are drawn to zoos, but also influenced by what Franklin describes as a shift from a "mood of entertainment and spectacle . . . to one of empathy and moral support" (*Animals and Modern Cultures* 48), as people seek reassurance that their zoo visit and entrance fee serves the greater good of animal welfare, conservation and education.

Indeed, zoos place a stronger emphasis on the elimination of small cages, and on breeding and conservation programmes (*Animals and Modern Cultures* 48). However, despite claims of conservation and education, the spectacle of looking at what are considered "wild" animals remains the prime reason visitors are attracted to the zoo, leading to what Franklin observes is a marked increase in "urban zoos and wildlife parks situated a short distance from large urban centers" (*Animals and Modern Cultures* 48). After all, education and conservation can be achieved more effectively in other ways and do not necessitate a visit to the zoo, especially when one considers that the benefits for the caged animals are at the very least dubious. For example, a study by Ros Clubb and Georgia Mason, partly funded, as the BBC reports, by "a number of British Zoos keen to learn more about how best to handle the animals in their care," has shown zoos to be utterly unsuitable environments for wide-ranging carnivores such as tigers and lions, with polar bears the worst affected species ("Carnivores' Need for Walk"). Clubb and Mason recommend that "the keeping of naturally wide-ranging carnivores should be either fundamentally improved or phased out," keeping in mind, for example, that "a polar bear's typical enclosure size . . . is about one-millionth of its minimum home-range size," a measure on which their wellbeing depends (473).

The zoos' justifications of their practices in terms of conservation and education, however, are designed to eliminate or alleviate any misgivings one might have against the confinement of animals in thoroughly artificially constructed environments, and to create a positive experience for zoo visitors. The recent hype surrounding polar bear cub Knut of the Berlin Zoo and the appearance of related Knut merchandise illustrate that spectacle and marketing take priority over conservation and concerns for the individual animal. The gap between the heavy promotion of animal spectacles versus comparatively moderate publicity for genuine conservation efforts was illustrated by Knut's first public appearance in 2007 which, incongruously, drew much more media attention than the coinciding Berlin launch of the International Polar Year, a global initiative designed to educate the public about climate change and therefore also to the plight of the polar bears in their natural habitat.²³⁹

However, both zoos and circuses commonly defend the exhibition of spectacular animals such as polar bears, tigers, lions, cheetahs, elephants, rhinoceroses, penguins, sea lions, apes, monkeys, zebras, giraffes, parrots and flamingos, with the argument that incarcerated individuals serve as so-called ambassadors for their "cousins in the wild."²⁴⁰ Without such shows, they argue, the public would neither be adequately educated about these species and their habitats nor be giving money to conservation causes. Ironically, Pi charges zoo critics with being fixated upon charismatic animals: "These people usually have a large, handsome predator in mind, a lion or a cheetah (the life of a gnu or of an aardvark is rarely exalted)" (*Life of Pi* 15). Oddly, there is no sense of irony about Pi's statements in Martel's narrative. After all, it is not aardvarks and gnus who attract the crowds at zoos; neither is there an aardvark on the front cover of *Life of Pi*. By focussing on the visual appeal of charismatic animals, especially the "large, handsome predator" on the cover, Martel replicates for readers of *Life of Pi* the culturally ingrained frameworks which structure the gaze of zoo visitors: his

book about zoo animals succeeds commercially for much the same reasons that zoos profit from actual animals.

My primary framework both for looking at both actual animals in zoos and Martel's fictional zoo animals is provided by the concept of leisure, which, to borrow John Urry's description of his book *The Tourist Gaze*, "is about consuming goods and services which are in some sense unnecessary. They are consumed because they supposedly generate pleasurable experiences which are different from those typically encountered in everyday life" (1). Accordingly, the zoo gaze, so to speak, like the tourist gaze, ". . . is constructed in relationship to its opposite," as Urry points out, and "what makes a particular tourist gaze depends upon what it is contrasted with; what the forms of non-tourist experience happen to be" (1). Zoos, which as an urban escape are a form of tourist experience for city dwellers, give the illusion of closeness to wildness (if not wilderness); a relationship with wild animals that urban dwellers, grown increasingly distant from animals (companion animals excluded),²⁴¹ nostalgically lack. Animal exhibits create the illusion of closeness while reinforcing distance. The zoo visitor's gaze is thus as contradictory as the tourist gaze, which focuses on "pseudo-events" and "finds pleasure in inauthentic contrived attractions" (Urry 7). Simulated habitats, jungles painted on concrete walls, safari imagery and so-called lion encounters, for example, thus create the very fantasy that Pi ridicules as the misguided fancy of zoo critics:

Well-meaning but misinformed people think animals in the wild are "happy" because they are "free". . . . They imagine this wild animal roaming about the savannah on digestive walks after eating a prey that accepted its lot piously, or going for callisthenic runs to stay slim after overindulging. They imagine this animal overseeing its offspring proudly and tenderly, the whole family

watching the setting of the sun from the limbs of trees with sighs of pleasure.

(*Life of Pi* 15)

Using “freedom” in scare quotes, Pi maintains that the animals’ lives in their natural habitat is akin to “mov[ing] about a chessboard” (16), and that animals are practically freer in the “confined freedom of a zoo” than in the “free confinement of a jungle” (286).

Moreover, he implicitly charges zoo critics with anthropomorphism here, a process he considers thoroughly unscientific and anthropocentric: “. . . we look at an animal and see a mirror. The obsession with putting ourselves at the centre of everything is the bane . . . of zoologists. I learned the lesson that an animal is an animal, essentially and practically removed from us . . .” (31). Pi echoes Martel’s view of the issue, who comments on the “real, true-to-life, totally un-anthropomorphized chimpanzee” he intends to use for a future novel (Martel qtd. in Sielke). Martel stresses that chimpanzees are “similar to us, in fact 98.4% genetically similar, which is, of course, misleading because the 1.6 percent makes all the difference. So they are quite close to us in some ways and very different in others . . .” (qtd. in Sielke). “Difference” is the key, reinforced and manifested throughout the narrative through physical barriers in the zoo and psychological boundaries on the lifeboat. Consequently, throughout the narrative, the human-animal boundary is maintained and reinforced.

However, whilst stressing that anthropomorphising animals is “dangerous” (*Life of Pi* 31) and “misinformed,” Pi concedes that it plays an important role in the success of zoos, as he describes the seasick orang-utan Orange Juice: “The poor dear looked so *humanly* sick! It is a particularly funny thing to read human traits in animals, especially in apes and monkeys, where it is so easy. Simians are the clearest mirrors we have in the animal world. That is why they are so popular in zoos. I laughed again” (122, original italics). Despite his observation, Pi shows little empathy for the seasick orang-utan, stopping short of considering

that the experience may be as bad (or perhaps worse) for Orange Juice. He indicates that anthropomorphism only goes as far as the image (she “*looked*” sick). The animal’s appearance as a strange-looking person is thus no more than a projection onto a screen, and a way of inventing interesting stories. As Pi explains, “I quite deliberately dressed wild animals in tame costumes of my imagination. But I never deluded myself as to the real nature of my playmates” (34). His reference to pheasants with “uppity British accents” and baboons talking in “the menacing tones of American gangsters” (34) serves to illustrate that anthropomorphised animal imagery can make stories more entertaining, or “better.”

Animals in *Life of Pi* thus serve primarily as narrative tools, as fictional “useful animals” rather than as characters within their own right. Indeed, Martel comments: “I used animals simply because they served the purpose of my narrative. . . . I find animals to be very useful and versatile” (qtd. in Sielke). Pi’s humanising of Richard Parker (*Life of Pi* 6) is more a comment on Pi’s own needs as a lonely human being in an extreme situation than on Richard Parker as a sentient individual. Richard Parker is, in fact, reminiscent of the humanised basketball called “Wilson” in the film *Cast Away* (2000). The protagonist, played by Tom Hanks, is shipwrecked and survives for several years with Wilson as his only companion. Pi’s encounter with a whale (*Life of Pi* 229) is a scene that appears to be entirely borrowed from *Castaway*, except that Tom Hanks is replaced by Pi, the makeshift life raft by a lifeboat, and the basketball by a tiger. Presented in this light, anthropomorphising is the projection of human traits onto any “object,” be it a basketball or a tiger. Any subjectivity of Richard Parker is immaterial, as the process is divorced from, and independent of, the object itself.

Despite insisting that his animals “really are animals,” Martel explains that they are also “possibly allegorical,” and that he finds “animals useful primarily because we project a lot onto them” (qtd. in Sielke, my italics). Like Pi, and like zoos, Martel knows that animals

who are “close to us” attract audiences perhaps naturally inclined to anthropomorphise.²⁴² After all, animals who are perceived to share common traits with us tend to receive the most attention (large carnivorous reptiles perhaps being the most notable exception), and amongst the birds, it is those able to speak (or “parrot”) who tend to fascinate the most. Martel’s inclusion of animals onto whom “we happily project” (qtd. in Sielke) is thus a calculated move, and a strategy he will employ in the allegorical novel following *Life of Pi*. In order to speak about the Holocaust, he uses animals “to speak indirectly about something that’s hard to talk about directly,” and he chooses a monkey and a donkey “because everyone likes monkeys and donkeys” (Martel qtd. in Sielke).

Captivating Cockroaches

If animals sell, so, too, does magical realism, and the combination of the two appears to be a potent formula for success. The decades following the publication of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in 1967, marked by the so-called Boom in Latin American magical realism and subsequent global success of the mode as “an international commodity” (Zamora and Faris 2), coincide with the period characterised by “a desire for a closer relation with animals and nature, a concern for the animals themselves and their well being, a search for new ways of accommodating animals in the global economy, involving difficult choices between human and animal interests” (Franklin, *Animals and Modern Cultures* 46). As a core feature of the mode, animal imagery is used to represent and market magical realism on its book covers. A quick, but non-exhaustive, survey reveals that animals appear prominently on the covers of various editions of magical realist global bestsellers such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The House of the Spirits*, as well as *Illywhacker*; *Green Grass, Running Water*; *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, *The Kadaitcha Sung*; and, of course, *Gould’s Book of Fish*, a novel about animal representation. *Life of Pi* is very much a commercial product directed towards this

particular market, which is not only signalled by the tiger on the cover: Martel also employs imagery commonly associated with magical realism throughout the narrative. Huggan writes that “magical realism, it could be argued, has itself become a commodified, increasingly formulaic aesthetic” (*Postcolonial Exotic* 71). Correspondingly, *Life of Pi*’s use of some of the more instantly recognisable ingredients of magical realism has caused James Wood to comment that “*Life of Pi* is proud to be a delegate for magic realism, and wears a big badge so that we don’t forget it” (“Credulity”). Martel seems to be comfortable with the label, although he does not directly profess to having written a magical realist text. Responding to the question whether he thinks “that ‘magic realism’ is a form of fiction that can only be written by marginalised people,” he muses on the reason why, despite being “a child of a white, western, middle-class family” and thus not fitting “the pattern,” he has written “a novel that some call magical realist” (“May Richard Parker be always at your side”). In any case, placing both a circus animal and Western scientific discourse prominently in an exotic, Third World context could hardly be a bigger badge for magical realism. Martel’s focus on elements such as the circus and the zoo; animal-related Western sciences; exotic and colourful animals, food and settings; Mexico and India, and references (if only passing references) to colonisation and independence invariably conjure up associations with popular magical realist fiction. Pi’s declaration, “Now I will turn miracle into routine. The amazing will be seen every day” (*Life of Pi* 148) is not only Pi marketing his lifeboat circus to an imaginary audience, but also Martel marketing his book and dropping a not-so-subtle hint about how the narrative is to be read.²⁴³ Accordingly, *Life of Pi* may be perceived as the end-product of a process that turns magical realism as a mode, and circensian animals as a common magical realist theme, into cliché. Like zoo animals or the magical realist label itself, India especially is “an infinitely rechargeable, universally applicable market tool,” (Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic* 66). Thus, Martel’s use of India, which “is currently very

much in fashion” (Huggan *Postcolonial Exotic* 59), reflects what Padmini Mongia calls “Indo-chic” (see Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic* 59), and there are “moments,” Wood observes, when Martel “over-loads the book with his acquired Indian exotica” (“Credulity”).

Huggan argues that “[o]ne need only consider the hypercommodified status of the ‘multicultural’ or ‘Third World’ writer, or of literary categories such as magical realism to recognise the prevalence of the word ‘exotic’ as a marker of metropolitan commercial appeal” (*Postcolonial Exotic* 19). Despite being “quick to point out . . . that his novel was not ‘exotic’” (Harding), Martel constructs a framework that is positively orientalist. For example, a portrayal of Richard Parker reflects the “descriptions of ‘the mysterious East’” prevalent in orientalist discourses (Said xi): “The patches of white above the eyes, on the cheeks and around the mouth came off as finishing touches worthy of a Kathakali dancer. The result was a face that looked like the wings of a butterfly and bore an expression vaguely old and Chinese” (*Life of Pi* 152). We almost expect profound wisdom to come forth presently from Richard Parker, in the manner of stereotypical “vaguely old and Chinese” characters from fairy tales, or maybe *Star Wars*. However, it is Pi who appears “vaguely old and Chinese,” as he imparts stilted pieces of wisdom beyond his age. After all, not many sixteen-year-olds would seriously consider uttering “And so it goes with God” (317), address adults as “my brothers” (318), or use muse loudly: “Can anyone fathom the workings of a drunken man’s mind?” (313). As Wood observes, “Pi’s speech is . . . wildly implausible; Martel again seems to have forgotten that his survivor is only 16” and asks the astute question why, after “hundreds of days at sea,” Pi is talking “as if he were at an editorial meeting of *Social Text*” (“Credulity”).

The tone of the narration is produced by the voice of the “Martel-like writer,” as Florence Stratton calls him (8). The narrator, who “naturally” recounts the narrative in the first person from Pi’s perspective (see *Life of Pi* xiii-xiv) is a “foreign backpacker” (*Life of Pi*

xii) like Martel, who has himself “been to India three times, each time with a backpack, dazzled by it all” (qtd. in WrittenVoices.com). The author’s assertion that “he doesn’t like exoticism in fiction” (Edemariam) sits oddly with his explanation that he chose to tell the story from an Indian boy’s perspective “because India is a place where all stories are possible” (Martel qtd. in WrittenVoices.com). There is no reason why “all stories” could not be possible in, say, Canada, or anywhere else for that matter, unless a view of the exotic other is at play, which does not consider a reversal of the gaze.²⁴⁴

This one-way gaze is illustrated by Martel’s comparison of a “homeless person in Montreal” who “has nothing, truly nothing” and “a homeless person in India” who “is materially bereft, but will most likely have some sort of Hindu thought coursing through his [sic] mind which will somehow give him a perspective, a way of understanding his suffering” (qtd. in Sielke). After all, might a homeless person in Montreal not, for instance, have some sort of Christian thought coursing through their minds, such as the idea that God has a purpose for their suffering?²⁴⁵ Conversely, it appears questionable whether homelessness should even lend itself all that well to transcendental musing, no more for an Indian than for a Canadian. The statement implies the odd assumption that Hindus somehow suffer less and do not experience the utter desperation that may come with homelessness. In any case, it is not the assertion that Hindus may culturally and spiritually have a different outlook on life in any given situation that is disconcerting, but the implied assumptions that come with the vagueness of it. “Some sort of Hindu thought” and “somehow” conjures up the “mysterious East” again in a manner that takes it for granted without any proof, other than the contrast with an anonymous person in Montreal, about whose beliefs we are told nothing. Wood observes that if an Indian novelist were to describe a “Canadian Episcopalian” in the same manner of the “blazon of an outsider” that Pi applies to Hindus, it would “almost certainly

sound ridiculous; Westerners are too easily entranced by lovingly lacquered ‘Indianness’” (“Credulity”).

India in general and Pi in particular are, like Martel’s animals, screens onto which exoticist fantasies are projected. Martel is able to use Pi because “[e]veryone’s the same, but they express their sameness in different ways” (Edemariam). This idea is an expression of “boutique multiculturalism.” Stanley Fish describes a “boutique multiculturalist” as someone who “does not take difference seriously because its marks (quaint clothing, atonal music, curious table manners) are for him [sic] matters of lifestyle, and as such they should not be allowed to overwhelm the substratum of rationality that makes us all brothers [sic] under the skin” (qtd. in Huggan 124-5). A form of exoticism, boutique multiculturalism emphasises “spectacle and a commodified appreciation for the cultural other” (Huggan 153), epitomised in *Life of Pi* by the paper version, so to speak, of “THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH!!” (165, original capitalisation). In other words, the boutique multiculturalist “shops around” for spectacular commodities that are familiarised through a process of exoticising, which, Huggan explains, “channel[s] difference into areas where it can be attractively packaged and, at the same time, safely contained. What is at work here is a process, commodified of course, of cultural translation through which the marginalised other can be apprehended and described in familiar terms” (24, italics omitted).

The gaze of the backpacker, detached from local culture to a significant degree, thus allows the “multicultural writer” Martel not only to invoke the settings of popular postcolonial, magical realist fiction in a rather clichéd fashion (“You must imagine a hot and humid place, bathed in sunshine and bright colours” [*Life of Pi* 13]), it also permits him to construct a commercially appealing “Third World” persona through which he speaks. This persona aligns him with previous Booker Prize winners and magical realists such as Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy, and allows him to dismiss the suggestion that a hegemonic

discourse may be at play. *Life of Pi* incorporates what Huggan calls the “emphasis on spectacle” (*Postcolonial Exotic* 153), which is an effect of the novel’s exoticism and the related boutique multiculturalism. Emphasising spectacle “occlude[s] the underlying political mechanisms through which more ‘traditional’ racial/ethnic hierarchies are preserved” (Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic* 153).²⁴⁶ The mechanisms at work here are what Huggan calls “the aesthetics of decontextualisation” and “commodity fetishism,” which are “interlinked” and constitute “significant continuities between older forms of imperial exoticist representation and some of their more recent, allegedly postcolonial counterparts” (*Postcolonial Exotic* 16, italics omitted). Said explains that magical realist “works and their authors and readers are specific to, and articulated in, local circumstances” (308), yet *Life of Pi* is not grounded in the local, but rather “trans-pacific, floating”—like Pi’s circus. It is a decontextualised narrative, situated between the Americas (Canada, Mexico, USA, Panama) and Asia (India, Japan).

As such, the narrative is more reflective of Martel’s own background as the child of Canadian diplomats who frequently moved countries,²⁴⁷ and directed towards a cosmopolitan readership. References to political or historical processes relevant to the various locations (mainly India and Canada), or even to postcoloniality as a more global phenomenon are fleeting or shallow, in the manner of the trivialising pun, presumably meant to be humorous, playing on the idea of Indians migrating to Canada, where they keep a cat called “Moccasin” (92). Correspondingly, zoo animals, including the Pondicherry Zoo animals, are taken out of their ecological contexts and trivialised and decontextualised. They are reduced to the equivalent of exotic souvenirs, reflective of the human-animal relationships up to the 1970s as described by Franklin: “[M]ost of the interactions were explicitly anthropocentric: animals were clearly there for the pleasure and entertainment of humans and read explicitly for their leisure use value” (*Animals and Modern Cultures* 44).

Martel's paperzoo thus features the "very pretty," such as the Pondicherry Zoo zebra (84), or the bougainvillea creeping through a coral tree, which becomes an "aviary" for Indian birds (77). The plant, native of South America, is presumably an allusion to some of the "masters" Martel imitates (see Martel, Interview with Mishal Husain),²⁴⁸ as well as an ornamental frame for decorative birds. In this context of visual imagery, even the "ugly" hyena (136) is attractive to a degree, because "it" can be easily packaged in a mixture of exoticism and the anthropomorphising language of literary conventions.²⁴⁹ As Martel explains, "[t]he other animals in the lifeboat[,] the zebra, the hyena and the orang-utan[,] arose naturally, each one a function of a human trait I wanted to embody; the hyena cowardliness; the orang-utan maternal instincts and the zebra exoticism" ("How I Wrote *Life of Pi*"). As Roland Barthes argues, exoticism, which he considers a type of mythical speech, makes the assimilation of "the 'Other'" possible (166). However, the hyena is ultimately too unfamiliar, too *other*, too "ugly beyond redemption" (115), to stay in the narrative for too long and therefore disappears soon and "practically" without a noise (150). After all, apart from feeling "intense hatred for the hyena" (120), Pi counts himself "lucky" for ending up with a good-looking tiger, and asks himself: "What if I had ended up with a creature that looked silly or ugly, a tapir or an ostrich or a flock of turkeys? That would have been a more trying companionship in some ways" (175). The course of the novel is thus determined by aesthetic considerations, and dominated by exoticist aesthetics in particular.

Not surprisingly then, Macondo's cockroaches (see García Márquez, *Solitude* 357-8) do not stand a chance in Martel's "ark" (209, capitalisation omitted). Like the rat and the flies, they are usually forgotten by reviewers when the *Tsimtsum* survivors are listed (a human, a tiger, a hyena, a zebra, an orang-utan, flies, a rat, and cockroaches), and even Martel himself overlooks them completely, listing "only five survivors" when discussing the novel (Martel qtd. in "Ask Booker Prize Winner Yann Martel").²⁵⁰ This oversight reflects the

fact that insects, with few notable exceptions such as butterflies, are unpopular, and commonly reviled as pests. Randy Malamud cites a study by Stephen Kellert, that “found aversion, anxiety, fear, and loathing toward insects prevalent” (43), and a “majority” of people even “expressed willingness to eliminate whole classes of animals altogether, including mosquitoes, cockroaches, fleas, moths and spiders” (Kellert qtd. in Malamud 43).²⁵¹ People are not attracted in great numbers to exhibitions of live insects because they find them “ugly,” even more so than the hyena, who, as a mammal at least, still holds a freakish fascination as a zoo exhibit.²⁵² Moreover, invertebrates cannot easily be anthropomorphised or taught tricks. When insects are humanised, the contrast does not have a familiarising, but more likely a ludicrous effect, such as the Toronto Zoo’s Madagascar hissing cockroach rock band (see Toronto Zoo, “Bugs Rock”); or else, they are marketed as villains and for their *yuck* factor, as it were, as in the Toronto Zoo’s trading cards of “Grossius Yuckius (aka the Hissing Roach)” and “Assassin Bug” (Toronto Zoo, “Bugzibitz II Trading Cards”). The “foreign life forms” that are the cockroaches in *Life of Pi* (170) are, after all, much too “foreign” to be assimilated, or domesticated.

Huggan writes that exoticism “is the perfect term to describe the domesticating process through which commodities are taken from the margins and reabsorbed into mainstream culture” (*Postcolonial Exotic* 22), and when that process is accompanied by oversimplification and mass production of complex narratives, the outcome is art turned into cliché.²⁵³ *Life of Pi* illustrates just those processes of simplification and commodification, which make the issues presented palatable to the mainstream reader and thus facilitate absorption of a mode considered marginal. The end-product is a rather laboured, hackneyed writing towards a magical realist formula. Unlike Phoebe Kate Foster, who argues that “[i]n the best tradition of all good literature, [*Life of Pi*] ‘shows,’ but never ‘tells,’” I suggest that the novel displays several instances of “telling“ what the reader is supposed to see without, in

some instances, actually showing. Accordingly, Pi indicates that his journey across the sea is to be read in an oxymoronic fashion, as “opposites often take place at the same moment” (216). As the prime example, “the worst pair of opposites,” Pi cites “boredom and terror” (217), yet his explanation that “even these two opposites do not remain distinct” (217), a reasonably accurate definition of an oxymoron, does not make up for the fact that the items he lists—such as changing weather conditions, food and water supplies alternating between scarcity and abundance—are juxtapositions of events that just happen to occur at the same time, and as such are unlike oxymorons and very “possible to think,”²⁵⁴ especially in the case of boredom and terror, which are not even opposites.²⁵⁵

Similarly, the narrative mimics the oxymoronic, impossible structure of well-known anti-linear magical realist fiction, characterised by what Said calls the “dense interwoven strands of a history that mocks linear narrative” (276). Chapter 97, which contains “[the story” (*Life of Pi* 291), is an example of Martel’s borrowing from magical realism.. As his chapter 97 is supposed to contain chapters 1-94, it resembles Borges’ “Chinese Encyclopedia,” for example, in which categories of animals defy Western taxonomies by containing each other as well as everything on the outside (see Foucault, *Order* xv). However, Martel’s manoeuvre only superficially disrupts the linear narrative. His stated intention is, in fact, to uphold linearity and simplicity: “. . . most of my stories are quite linear. . . . So, I would say that in terms of narrative, my stories are simple and classical” (Martel qtd. in Sielke). Martel wants his stories to be “uncomplicated” and “not convoluted,” whilst “creating a more complex picture” (Martel qtd. in Sielke).

The elimination of oxymoronic structure has strong implications both for the perception of the text as magical realist and for the representation of animals. Accordingly, *Life of Pi*’s magical realist “chic“ is only superficial, and essentially different from the magical realist fiction discussed in preceding chapters. In spite of the emphasis on Richard

Parker, who becomes a circus animal, there is no circensian dynamic at play here. There is no balance between fundamentally different systems of representation. For example, any blurring of human-animal boundaries, a typical trait of magical realism, is temporary and superficial in *Life of Pi*. Martel comments that “the animals might embody certain traits. We think of tigers as being ferocious, etc. But to my mind, it was the other way around: the humans embodied certain animal traits” (qtd. in WrittenVoices.com). However, despite the increasing ‘animalisation’ of Pi during his journey on the lifeboat (see *Life of Pi* 225, 239), the idea of a human-animal divide is ultimately upheld. Moreover, everything is plausible and can ultimately be explained by Western science and logic. As Pi states, “I applied my reason at every moment” (298). Accordingly, even the carnivorous algae island is plausible, as Pi demonstrates. Although it may operate “by some chemical process unknown” (282), this does not mean the “island is botanically impossible,” as Mr Okamoto maintains (294). Pi’s arguments to the sceptical Mr Okamoto and Mr Chiba are quite logical, and he invokes the Enlightenment by pointing out that scientific consensus once “dismissed Copernicus and Darwin” (294).

Pi asserts also, however, that to “be excessively reasonable” is to “risk throwing out the universe with the bathwater” (*Life of Pi* 298), and mirrors Martel’s conviction that “there are limits to what you can do with a calculator or a hammer. You must make a leap of faith to get the full flavour of life” (qtd. in Renton). Yet this “leap of faith” is not in contradiction to rationality in *Life of Pi*. Amazement does not require the impossible, and as Martel points out, animals, for example, can “fill [him] with wonder” (qtd. in Sielke). This is reflected in Pi’s observation of albatrosses, who “were something supernatural and incomprehensible” (*Life of Pi* 230). They are, nonetheless, still “only” albatrosses, and not, for instance, supernatural spirits of albatrosses, or circensian hybrids impossibly crossed with another species. Likewise, the dorado’s changing colours seem like a miracle, and yet Pi finds out

that there is a scientific explanation “later” (185). The Pondicherry Zoo’s zebra especially, admired by Mr Kumar, the angular, atheist biology teacher (see 25-6), and Mr Kumar, the “Muslim mystic” (61), embodies the idea that science and religion are not mutually exclusive, as each Mr Kumar appreciates the zebra from his own perspective. Thus, the Muslim calls the zebra “a wondrous creature,” to which the biology teacher replies with the Linnaean label (84). The religious Mr Kumar’s response, “*Allahu akbar*” (84), reconciles science and religion, reinforces the idea that natural order is as Allah intended it, and thus opens up the possibility that scientific explanations may be discovered “later” Martel, in fact, states: “Science and religion don’t have to collide—I see them as complementary, rather than contradictory. Science can be a gateway to the greater mystery” (qtd. in Renton).

Armstrong, citing Marian Scholtmeijer, argues that science in *Life of Pi* represents a reduction of animals to “a system of behaviours to be isolated, manipulated, and tabulated” (*What Animals Mean* 216). They effectively become “Cartesian beast-machine[s]” through Pi’s knowledge of zoology and behavioural science, as the lives of Richard Parker, trained like a circus animal, and the other Pondicherry Zoo animals are governed by flight distances and stimulus responses (Armstrong, *What Animals Mean* 216-17). Science thus attempts to reduce animals to something that can be logically and fully explained, and the behaviour of which²⁵⁶ can be fully controlled. This reduction is consistent with Martel’s simplification process, because without the oxymoronic dynamics inherent in magical realism, *Life of Pi* eliminates the various challenges posed by animals, who are both like us and unlike us. The “animal other” in a zoo enclosure, possibly more than anyone, is subject to a gaze that, as Urry writes, “enables people to take possession of objects and environments, often at a distance” and which “facilitates the world of the ‘other’ to be controlled from afar, combining detachment and mastery” (147). However, through their oxymoronic quality—from our

human animal point of view at least—non-human animals always, and ultimately, elude us conceptually; we can approach, but never capture them.

However, it could be argued that *Life of Pi*'s animals differ little from magical realist fauna, as its animals, in turn, are just as exoticised, decontextualised and commodified. One of the German editions of *House of the Spirits* illustrates this well, as its cover shows Isabel Allende with a sulphur-crested cockatoo on her shoulder.²⁵⁷ Readers will not necessarily recognise, or even particularly care, that this is not a South American parrot representing Chile (the setting of the narrative), but a native of Australia. The bird, commodified as pet, marks a generic exotic, the “warm and humid place” of *Life of Pi*, and thus is part of the “semiotic system” Huggan calls “the postcolonial exotic” (see *Postcolonial Exotic* xvi). Like “most of the familiar semiotic markers of Orientalism,” which Huggan identifies in Rushdie’s work, and which appears to “pande[r] to a wonder-seeking Western readership” (*Postcolonial Exotic* 72), the cockatoo represents a familiar marker of exoticism more generally: whether an exotic animal comes from “the Orient,” from Africa, or some other sunny place, is immaterial for the consuming public (as long as the place is “warm”). Magical realism can thus be considered the contemporary continuation of imperial armchair-travel literature, and the reader a virtual tourist. Hans Magnus Enzensberger points out that the goal of tourists is to experience “adventure,” the “elemental,” and “the untouched” (126). They seek the “inaccessible,” but in a “comfortable” and “accessible” way (Enzensberger 127). The zoo epitomises such an opportunity to experience “wildness” and exotic settings in comfort. Likewise, to experience Martel’s paperzoo or magical realism’s postcolonial settings, one does not even need to leave the house.

Ironically, even in the controlled environment of the zoo, it is often precisely this “irreducibility” that attracts people to observing animals. Much of the fascination for the zoo visitor lies in gazing at an untameable animal, or an animal who despite having been tamed or

subdued remains ultimately unpredictable, potentially dangerous, and intent on escaping our control. Bars, deep moats filled with water, or walk-through cages for the visitors are the visual markers of this wildness,²⁵⁸ an impression that intensifies the more tightly controlled and confined an animal is. It is this tension that drives readers of *Life of Pi* to keep turning the pages. Signage, however, teaches zoo visitors “how, when and where to ‘gaze,’” to borrow Urry’s words (10),²⁵⁹ and serves not only as marker of an absent, far-away and possibly lost habitat for the urban tourist, but also as an ordering device that frames the animal in terms of Western science and as an object of observation. The animal pacing, climbing, capering, or sitting behind the information board becomes a signifier for nature, an endangered habitat, or an exotic elsewhere, but also a symbol of Western physical and conceptual conquest of the elusive animal. Thus, in *Life of Pi*, it is the scientific labels, zoological and behaviourist explanations that frame “wondrous creatures” firmly within scientific order, and reduce them to domesticated, useful animals.

Indeed, as Armstrong points out, the Pondicherry Zoo animals are “(contentedly) imprisoned” (*What Animals Mean* 181). Overall, animals in *Life of Pi* are compliant with the imposed order, as illustrated in Pi’s account of animals in what he considers a good zoo, where “[e]verything in an enclosure [is] just right” (*Life of Pi* 40). In contrast, several editions of *House of the Spirits* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, as well as at least two editions of *Illywhacker*, show birds who are either not caged at all, who are on the verge of flying away, or who have just left their cage. The cover of the Spiegel-Verlag 2006 German edition of *House of the Spirits* (*Das Geisterhaus*) especially captures the essence of magical realist oxymoron: although the image foregrounds a parrot locked in a golden cage, the gaze is focussed on the shadows projected onto the back wall and in the center of the image, showing an open cage and the escaping bird. Similarly, on the cover of the 2004 Harper Perennial edition of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the artwork of Cathleen Toelke,

depicting a sleeping person, is brought to life by a single, small, stray insect crawling into the bottom corner. Like real animals, and unlike the Pondicherry Zoo animals, magical realist fauna does not comply.

Elusiveness and non-compliance are thus another reason magical realist cockroaches, for example, are not wanted on the voyage. Circensian, feral animals essentially embody themselves; their ‘irreducibility’ injects them with an agency that precludes conformity with human interests and denies human authority. Accordingly, parrots are foulmouthed and ants tear the house down. As feral animals, they challenge Western order in physical, geographical, and metaphorical senses, as García Márquez’s cockroaches and ants or Allende’s maggots show. They assert themselves as significant agents, undermine human mastery and question hierarchical ideas about *Homo sapiens* as the pinnacle of evolution. Besides, cockroaches of the Macondo kind in particular are a “species . . . definitely resistant to any and all methods of extermination” (García Márquez, *Solitude* 357), which is why Martel’s cockroaches need to fly to their deaths of their own volition (see *Life of Pi* 170). Indeed, as the most resilient amongst the survivors, there is no reason why cockroaches would abandon the lifeboat, which potentially holds plenty of food, after only five days. Yet their resilience is partly the problem (for Martel), because the insects’ presence on the boat undermines the tiger’s position as the top of the food chain, which Pi manages, effectively, to wrest from him by establishing himself as “the alpha male” (*Life of Pi* 43) through the application of (human) reason and ingenuity. Both Pi and the tiger would become breakfast for flies and cockroaches if they died; the insects’ presence on the boat threatens to provide an anticlimax in a narrative about human ascendancy. Martel thus constructs his central animal character in accordance with circus acts, where “[i]t is this compliant animal,” submissive to the alpha male, “that will be the star of the show” (45). In keeping with magical realist chic, he installs Richard Parker as the “major lifeboat pes[t]” (168), who can

ultimately be conquered through circus training. Since the same cannot be said for cockroaches, Martel avoids the challenge they represent by throwing them overboard with the stroke of a pen, so to speak.

Like the complicated cockroaches, irony, too, goes overboard in the simplification process. This is where *Life of Pi* differs significantly from the postcolonial fiction Huggan terms “postcolonial exotic” because unlike these narratives, Martel’s novel does not display “an ironic relation to Orientalism, emphasising the ideological shortfall of self-serving Orientalist myths” (Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic* 72). Equally, *Life of Pi* has no such ironic distancing towards exoticism more generally, of which Orientalism can be seen as a subcategory. As Huggan points out, “the postcolonial exotic is both a form of commodity fetishism *and* a revelation of the process by which ‘exotic’ commodities are produced, exchanged, consumed; it is both a mode of consumption *and* an analysis of consumption” (*Postcolonial Exotic* 264, original italics), and this is where “The Greatest Show on Earth” in *Life of Pi* differs from “The Best Pet Shop in the World” in *Illywhacker*, for example. There is no self-reflexive irony that “constructs the metropolitan reader as a voyeuristic consumer,” no “parody of the reader-as-consumer” (Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic* 72). The implausible speech of sixteen-year-old Pi; his authority as an animal behaviour expert, who does not know, despite specialising in sloths with “an algae” in their fur (*Life of Pi* 4), that the singular of “algae” is “alga²⁶⁰”; Pi’s indignation at the offer of a leather boot because he “consider[s] cows sacred” (252), when much is made of the fact that he fishes with pieces of his own leather shoe (see 178); and the supposedly indistinct opposites that are neither opposites nor indistinct, do not suggest subversive irony despite their incongruity, but weaknesses in a deeply conservative narrative. The novel does not have a “deconstructive project,” as Stratton argues (5). Unlike the circensian spaces of magical realism, which expose the contradictory discourses and power structures at play, and where, to employ Huggan’s theory

again, “exoticism is effectively *repoliticised*, redeployed both to unsettle metropolitan expectations of cultural otherness and to effect a grounded critique of differential relations of power” (*Postcolonial Exotic* ix-x, original italics), *Life of Pi* reinforces imperialist discourse and mainstream animal practices, such as the zoo or the circus. Rather than the “postcolonial exotic,” *Life of Pi* exemplifies a “colonial exotic,” epitomised by the Pondicherry Zoo.

Arresting Animals

Malamud points out the imperial legacy of the zoo, which continues to define how animals are represented: “The zoo’s forte is its construction of zoogoers as paramount, masters of all they survey, and zoo animals as subalterns” (58). The emphasis upon zoos as repositories of charismatic, or emblematic, animals originates in the imperialist tradition of collecting animals who symbolised the colonies from which they were taken. James R. Ryan illustrates the role of big cats in nineteenth century photography. He discusses a picture of Lord Curzon, who, standing “at the head of the slumped tiger, clutching his gun,” assumes “the conventional stance of the victorious huntsman and landowner” (*Picturing Empire*, 103). Ryan points out that Curzon’s “confident pose symbolized British authority over India at the moment when Britain’s Empire was at its zenith” (*Picturing Empire* 103). Zoos, like circuses, were once the showcases of empire, “an endorsement of modern colonial power” (Berger, “Why Zoos Disappoint” 122), presenting to European audiences animals who signified the exotic places which had been colonised, and who simultaneously symbolised the subjugated natives of those places, alongside whom they were sometimes exhibited.²⁶¹ Moreover, they represented the domination of nature, which, according to Harriet Ritvo, was most powerfully expressed by “the sight of large carnivores in cages” (Ritvo “The Order of Nature” 47), and which continues as a colonisation and domestication of nature today.

Martel places himself firmly within this imperial tradition. He says that he “wanted an Indian animal,” and therefore his choice of a tiger “now seems . . . natural” (qtd. in WrittenVoices.com) and “obvious” (“How I Wrote *Life of Pi*”). Readers readily recognise the colonial symbolism, widespread in adventure narratives, or zoo and circus imagery, and therefore Martel does not need to explain; his choice does indeed go without saying in this conventional context. The connection between *Life of Pi* and the tiger as emblem for India as imperial colony, moreover, is clearly established by the UK and US covers of the illustrated editions of *Life of Pi*. It is not coincidental, but entirely fitting and consistent with the narrative’s imperial legacy that the cover painting was inspired by a Victorian etching, originally intended as the image on the UK edition (see Torjanac). Urry points out the importance placed on the visual sense “within the long history of Western societies” (146), and whilst an emphasis of zoo marketing is now conservation, the imperial tourist gaze of zoo visitors and “its organising power of vision” has not fundamentally changed. As Malamud writes, “[t]he zoo’s exercise of control and oppression, and insistence on the distant, subjugated subject as other, sustain an imperial hegemony” (58). Pi, accordingly, stresses that Richard Parker is “royalty”: “What a stunning creature. Such a noble mien. How apt that in full it is a *Royal Bengal tiger*” (175, original italics). The tiger’s noble status enhances Pi’s own position as the “super-alpha trainer” (44), because above the king (of beasts), after all, is the emperor.

Malamud describes the parallel between zoo and colonial discourse: “The zoo is the analogue, in popular culture, to the colonialist text in literary culture. Such a text appropriates and packages the ‘native’ experience, simultaneously contextualizing and distorting that experience with the inherent biases of the imperial culture” (58). Martel not only illustrates the analogous relationship between zoo and text, but links the two by transforming the zoo into text and the text into zoo. *Life of Pi* thus translates, to apply

Huggan's theory, "power-politics into spectacle," and thereby exhibits the "exoticist rhetoric of fetishised otherness and sympathetic identification" that "conceals the inequality of the power relations" (*Postcolonial Exotic* 14, italics omitted). In a narrative lauded as "a formidable argument for the retention of zoos" (F. H. King), the exotic spectacle of zoo and lifeboat circus serves to trivialise, hide and naturalise the power-relations involved in these animal practices both through specious arguments and through the creation of mythical discourse as described by Barthes.

Martel propagates his conventional view of zoos through setting his protagonist and himself up as a rational, unbiased authorities on the topic, and by contrasting Pi's opinions to the "nonsense" circulated by "[w]ell-meaning but misinformed people" (*Life of Pi* 15). Like no other author discussed in this thesis, Martel stresses, and is frequently asked about, his research into the topics his novel deals with: "I read a history of zoos, some books on zoo biology, on animal psychology. And I visited zoos. I interviewed someone at the Toronto Zoo as well as the director of the Trivandrum Zoo in India" (qtd. in Sielke).²⁶² He projects this role as researcher by creating a protagonist with a zoology degree, frequently citing "the literature," implying expert publications (see *Life of Pi* 19, 29, 85, 163, 265), and producing a semblance of a scientific text by citing "Beebe (1926)," "Bullock (1968)," "Tirler (1966)," (4) and "Hediger (1950)" (44), complete with publication dates in brackets in the manner of a professional scientific journal article.

Many readers and reviewers accept Martel and Pi, who largely reflects the author's views,²⁶³ as authorities on zoo animal welfare and behaviour, and their arguments apparently even manage to convince some people who were previously critical of zoos. Martel, after all, is a convert himself, so to speak. He explains:

A zoo is not an ideal place for an animal—of course the best place for a chimp is the wilds of Tanzania—but a good zoo is a decent, acceptable place.

Animals are far more flexible than we realize. If they weren't, they wouldn't have survived. But my opinion about zoos came after research. Initially I had the opinion that most people have, that they are jails. (Martel qtd. in WrittenVoices.com, capitalisation omitted).

Thus, readers comment in an online interview with Martel that his “research on the zoos was good. After reading your book, I started thinking that zoos are not such bad places,” that his book made them “look at zoos in a new light,” and one person writes: “I have to admit that you certainly changed my mind on the whole zoo thing. My husband is delighted that he can now take our son to one without feeling my wrath” (Written Voices.com).

The arguments put forward in *Life of Pi* to support Martel's opinion, that it is “better to have a good zoo—note the adjective—than not” (Martel, “A Giraffe in a Cage is Worth Two on the Box”), are not only unconvincing but also specious.²⁶⁴ Thus, Pi's portrayal of zoo animals as bothersome hotel “guests” jokingly suggests that the reason the animals “never leave their rooms,” except to “saunter to their balconies, so to speak,” is out of an inflated sense of entitlement and grandeur, treating zookeepers like servants who have to put up with their “guests” eccentricities (*Life of Pi* 13). Elsewhere, Pi maintains:

One might even argue that if an animal could choose with intelligence, it would opt for living in a zoo, since the major difference between a zoo and the wild is the absence of parasites and enemies and the abundance of food in the first, and their respective abundance and scarcity in the second. Think about it yourself. Would you rather be put up at the Ritz with free room service and unlimited access to a doctor or be homeless without a soul to care for you?
(*Life of Pi* 18)

The image of the “zoo hotel” that Pi conjures up sounds as though zoo animals really live the life of luxury that only very privileged humans ever experience. The comparison trivialises

and clouds the fact that, unlike real hotel guests, zoo animals have not checked in for a holiday, are not free to leave at any time, are unable to choose their own company, are sometimes completely isolated from others of their own species, almost always isolated from other species with whom they would interact in nature, and, in any case, will usually not be returned to their natural habitat. The argument is also false in presupposing that humans would “intelligently” choose to stay at the Ritz, or conversely, be unintelligent not to make that choice; after all, being locked up in the same hotel for all of their lives is hardly a lifestyle choice most people would actually make. No matter how nice the hotel, most people would eventually get bored and long for a change of scenery and freedom of movement, a desire a globetrotter like Martel, for instance, can surely appreciate.²⁶⁵

Pi further reinforces the idea of the “zoo hotel” by giving examples of animals who had every chance to leave, but evidently, or so Pi suggests, chose not to escape “simply because they had no reason to” (*Life of Pi* 41). Once again, Pi cites “the literature,” which provides “legions of examples of animals that could escape but did not, or did and returned” (19). His argument is once again framed by a view of animals as slaves to stimulus responses. Thus, Pi maintains that “animals don’t escape *to somewhere*, but *from something*”; that they run away from either bad enclosures, slightly miscalculated elements of the enclosure, skirmishes amongst the animals themselves or disturbances, but that animals who are “perfectly adapted to their enclosures” will “seek to escape” out of “madness” (41, original italics). His most convincing example appears to be a “herd of roe-deer,” who, “[f]rightened by visitors, . . . bolted for the nearby forest, which had its own herd of wild roe-deer and could support more. Nonetheless, the zoo roe-deer quickly returned to their corral” (19). Such examples are designed to prove the validity of the hotel comparison, because animals—except for the supposedly mad ones—are seen here as voting with their feet, so to speak.

Indeed, Pi insists that a good zoo can create “the *essence*” of the animals’ natural habitats (40, original italics), which meets all of their needs and, moreover, provides comfort, shown by their choice to stay when they could escape.²⁶⁶ This argument is implicitly and supposedly proven by way of a logical fallacy, as well as by omitting a few important factors. Pi’s exclamation, “A plague upon bad zoos with bad enclosures!” (40) is one that everyone can essentially agree with. The logical fallacy lies in the assumption that if there are “bad zoos” that have “bad enclosures,” then there must also be “good zoos” that have “good enclosures.” The latter statement cannot, or has not yet been, put to the test, because if it were true that animals would rather be captive in a good zoo than free in the surrounding environment, then zoos like the Berlin, Toronto, San Diego and Singapore Zoo, listed by Pi as exemplary (see 40), could simply open their enclosures, and the animals would stay.

However, zoo animals are surrounded by an alien environment, such as the commonly urban setting, or an adverse climate and habitat. Therefore, instances of animals staying in or returning to their enclosures does not in any way prove the argument for the zoo hotel. Pi explains that “[a]nimals that escape go from the known into the unknown—and if there is one thing an animal hates above all else, it is the unknown” (41). He gives the impression that the “unknown” is largely the lack of routine and of the carefully, scientifically constructed essence of their habitat; the fact that lack of food and terrifying traffic, or simply the terrifying unknown for an animal reared in the zoo, might drive an animal back into their enclosure is not mentioned.

Additionally, the argument that zoo enclosures and cages serve as “protection” (39) for the animals from predators and hostile humans, for example, is not convincing either, as other methods are available.²⁶⁷ In contrast to zoos, the endangered rhinos of Matobo National Park in Zimbabwe, for instance, are heavily guarded and surrounded by a fence that spans a vast area.²⁶⁸ Due to this, sightings of rhinos cannot be guaranteed, but that is the point: the

enclosure is primarily designed for the animals' interest, and tourists who manage to see them count themselves lucky. Tourists do pay an entrance fee, but they cannot ask for it back if they do not see any rhinos, or any of the many other animal species in the game park that they would like to see. The market principle of supply and demand does not apply in that sense; you pay for what you may not get, which makes national parks fundamentally different from zoos that are dependent on the supply and demand mechanism. I agree with Malamud, who goes so far as to argue that an institution governed by those principles cannot ever be adequate: "[E]ven in the hands of the most enlightened emperors of commerce, consumer culture cannot beneficially mediate people's relationship with animals, and nature can prosper only to the extent that it can be divorced—rescued—from consumerist forces" (98). After all, the priority of consumer culture lies not with the question of "what it would take to make the animals happy" (see Masson and McCarthy 146), but with the question of what makes producer or provider and consumers happy.²⁶⁹

In any case, Pi's examples are highly selective and omit cases of the "many well-fed, well-treated captive animals [who] regularly try to escape over and over again" (Masson and McCarthy 144-5), but while oversight of obvious and valid counterarguments could be seen as the flaw of a youthful protagonist, Martel's own suggestion that animals would not have survived if they were not flexible enough to be accommodated by zoos also fails to acknowledge that all sorts of animal species, human animals included, survive and produce offspring even in the most desperate of circumstances, such as wars, famines, and droughts in the case of humanity, for example. Pi's assertion, and a well-propagated argument by zoos, that "the best sign" to indicate a good zoo is reproduction (*Life of Pi* 40), is thus only a limited measure of how "good" a zoo is. The well-publicised birth and subsequent rejection by his mother of polar-bear Knut in the Berlin Zoo is a fitting example, as the zoo environment cannot possibly be ideal. The measure should not be life itself, but rather

quality of life, and, as Malamud argues (48-9), or Mason and Chubb's study demonstrates, this is severely impaired in a zoo environment.

By not considering alternatives or by omitting important factors, Pi thus manoeuvres the novel's readers, largely already disposed to agreeing with him in a desire to justify common animal practices, towards acceptance of his arguments by providing false or contrived choices, such as the fallacious choice between the Ritz and homelessness, as the question really only allows one answer because of its narrow options. After all, would an animal not rather choose freedom with an abundance of food, or sufficient food at least, over captivity with an abundance of food, for example? Pi's contrived portrayal of zoos as the only alternative to extinction—which is ultimately the reason Martel endorses zoos²⁷⁰—makes it hard to disagree with his narrowly focused point of view. Moreover, his pretended acquiescence adds an element of emotional manipulation, designed to make “zoo detractors” (41) feel guilty of not preventing species extinction: “But I don't insist. I don't mean to defend zoos. Close them all down if you want (and let us hope that what wildlife remains can survive in what is left of the natural world). I know zoos are no longer in people's good graces” (*Life of Pi* 19).

Martel himself concedes that the majority of zoos are far from being the Ritz for animals (see Martel, “A Giraffe in a Cage is Worth Two on the Box”). Arguments revealing animal suffering in zoos, however, carry little weight in *Life of Pi*, as suffering, to whatever degree, is not considered an outcome of the institution as such, but of the failure to correctly apply known science, “the art and science of zookeeping” (39), which, Pi maintains, will result in an “emotionally stable, stress-free wild animal that not only stays put, but is healthy, lives a very long time, eats without fuss, behaves and socializes in natural ways and—the best sign—reproduces” (40). *Life of Pi* reflects Malamud's observation that “[t]hose who promote zoos refute (or anticipate and defuse) indications that animals may not like their cages and

may suffer in them” (Malamud 145). Indeed, Pi’s “zoo hotel” argument reflects the attitude shown by the San Diego Zoo, which goes even further than to claim that zoo inhabitants like their cages: one of their billboards shows a monkey by the side of an untarred jungle-road, holding a hitchhiker’s sign to the San Diego Zoo. The caption proclaims: “NEW MONKEY TRAILS. WHERE *EVERY* MONKEY WOULD LOVE TO LIVE” (M&C Saatchi, “Monkey Trails,” my italics, original capitalisation).²⁷¹

Armstrong argues:

Of course, the merest knowledge of either zoos or zoology is sufficient to discredit Pi’s claims, which cannot account (among other things) for the pathologically repetitive behaviour of many confined animals, the needs of migratory species whose territories are defined not by boundaries but by vastly extensive paths of travel, the distress produced by inappropriate climatic conditions, or the other incalculable effects of removing organisms from the network of relationships that comprise their native habitats. (*What Animals Mean* 178)

Yet, Pi’s response would be that any zoos that do not meet these needs by recreating the essence of the animals’ habitats would simply need to improve. As Martel suggests, “[b]etter to work at making zoos better” than not have them at all (“A Giraffe in a Cage is Worth Two on the Box”). Pi’s argument, however, is based on an impossible ideal, which is used to justify the institution of the zoo per se. Readers are reassured that their spectatorship actually amounts to doing something good for animals, and once the idea that the institution as such is “good” is accepted, it justifies the practice regardless of whether the particular zoos subsequently visited actually meet the ideal. The matter of improvement becomes incidental, an issue for experts to worry about.

What zoo visitors therefore see is the ideal of the zoo, not the reality, as mythical discourse sets them up to disregard cages, zoochotic behaviour, and the inadequacy of the zoo “habitat.” As Malamud writes, “[t]hey see what they want to see, rather than the thing itself” (134). The imperial legacy of the zoo, which turns animals into subalterns, the exoticist commodification of wild animals, the conservationist discourse of the recent decades, and the benign image of the zoo as the “last ark” (the *only* possible “ark”) for endangered species, are examples of mythical speech, which together form a kind of zoo Mythology, uncritically accepted by the spectators. Malamud argues that “[t]hey cannot help it: the hegemony of cultural conditioning cannot be eschewed when one looks into a cage” (134). Indeed, the zoo as cultural institution functions as a mirror to society which reflects and reinforces common beliefs, attitudes and practices in the context of human-animal relations. The cultural conditioning is achieved by mythical speech, which, according to Barthes, depoliticises by “giving an historical intention a natural justification” (155): myth “transforms history into nature” (140).

Accordingly, Pi presents the zoo, a cultural institution, as a natural entity, whereby the word “natural” becomes a mantra to reinforce the idea. He points out, for example, that “[i]n zoos, *as in nature*, the best times to visit are sunrise and sunset” (*Life of Pi* 15, my italics); that his father, as a “good zookeeper,” was “a natural” (40), and that Mr Kumar, looking at the Pondicherry Zoo animals and “read[ing] the labels and descriptive notices in their entirety,” is really looking at “nature as a whole” as “an exceptionally fine illustration of science” (25-6). The zoo itself appears like a natural setting, as Pi not only “underemphasizes the presence of cages and barriers” (Armstrong, *What Animals Mean* 177), but practically renders them invisible. Thus, in the “huge zoo, spread over numberless acres,” Pi describes the “surprises” of “[s]uddenly” seeing giraffes, “the elephant that was there all along, so big you didn’t notice it,” the hippopotami in the pond, the “great troupe of

monkeys” and “strange birds,” all apparently in amongst the “young couples” and the “men sleeping” on the benches (12-3). The Pondicherry Zoo sounds more like an African wilderness, or a vast game park (the presence of courting couples on park benches notwithstanding), than a zoological garden, where every animal is so clearly signposted that there is little room for surprises. Only the “two *mighty* Indian rhinoceros” are behind a “*low* wall” in a “*shallow* pit” (13, my italics), an enclosure that seems to be dwarfed by the animals and hardly the equivalent of a cage at all.

Malamud comments that “[t]rendy replications of habitats mislead zoo spectators to believe that wild animals can be at home in alien compounds” (107). Indeed, when Pi does mention cages, such as the “cat house,” it is ostensibly a “house,” and not *really* a cage (33), as the name would have us believe. Malamud argues that “[i]t seems paradoxical at best, deceptively hypocritical at worst, for the zoo—fundamentally a place of confinement—to promote the idea of cagelessness for its captive animals and to dupe spectators thereby into believing they are watching real animal life” (109). Similarly, Barthes proposes that readers “consume myth innocently,” by seeing a “factual system,” such as Pi’s scientific explanation as to why animals are comfortable in their enclosures, instead of a “system of values” (Barthes 142), such as the idea of human mastery over nature, or exoticist discourse.

The representation of the Pondicherry Zoo does indeed appear to be deeply deceptive. As a zoo operating in India between 1954 and 1977, it appears, implausibly, to conform to the contemporary ideal of “immersion exhibits,” which emerged in the nineteen-eighties, as Dhun Karkaria and Hema Karkaria’s overview of Indian zoo-design through the ages, “Zoorassic Park: A Brief History of Zoo Interpretation,” shows. Pi’s concept of good zookeeping is mirrored in their description of contemporary design, as Karkaria and Karkaria write that “[t]oday, the zoo director sees his job as that of a conservationist.” They suggest that immersion exhibits “may be an answer to this dilemma” between conservation and the

visitors, who “think the zoo owes them spectacular entertainment.” Moreover, they describe what Pi, in his words, explains as the recreation of essences:

The enclosure is landscaped with the use of both real and artificial material giving an extremely real impression of the animals’ habitat. Skills, materials, techniques and processes employed for the creation of natural history museum kind of dioramas are used with such finesse, coupled with the removal and concealment of all man-made elements that you never feel for a moment that you are in a zoo! This is extremely important as the first goal of interpretation is to present a given animal in relation to its habitat. (Karkaria and Karkaria)

However, given its historical placement, the Pondicherry Zoo is more likely an example of the “Hagenbeck approach,” described by Karkaria and Karkaria: “The animals were still captive but their captivity was well hidden by judicious placement of various moats, plants and rocks as well as carefully laid out paths to ensure that nothing interfered with the look of the exhibit. All artificial structures were kept out of sight of the visitor.” Martel’s apparent conflation of time in the space of the Pondicherry Zoo is not a magical realist subversion of linear history, but another example of conjuring up an ideal that contemporary readers are inclined to agree with.

Moreover, it seems extraordinary that Pi does not report what must have been signs of zoochosis, caused by extreme confinement, after “spen[ding] hours observing” Richard Parker for 227 days at sea (*Life of Pi* 191). Instead, Pi reports:

He didn’t have much of a routine beyond eating, drinking and sleeping, but there were times when he stirred from his lethargy and rambled about his territory, making noises and being cranky. Thankfully, every time, the sun and the sea quickly tired him and he returned to beneath the tarpaulin, to lying

on his side again, or flat on his stomach, his head on top of his crossed front legs. (191)

There is no swaying, chewing, or pacing, for instance. Arguably, learning about the symptoms of zoochotic behaviour would have been a valuable lesson for readers concerned about zoo animal welfare, but like the educational institutions that zoos present themselves to be, Martel's paperzoo, itself presenting an image of being "at the service of popular education and science," does not inform about zoochosis. As Armstrong comments, such "considerations are ignored because Martel is less concerned with the fate of animals than with advancing a particular view of the human condition, which is—despite the novel's glossy postmodern style—fundamentally that of humanist modernity" (*What Animals Mean*).

That is not to say there is no concern for animals; after all, the narrative may be read as an environmental metaphor, whereby humans and animals rely on each other for survival (see Armstrong, *What Animals Mean* 177). It is, however, a question of emphasis and priority, as Martel's animals do not, first and foremost, represent their own individual being, but, despite the individual names and characters of Orange Juice and Richard Parker, they are "specimens," representatives of their species, the justification Martel provides for the incarceration of zoo animals in the first place. *Life of Pi* is motivated by an anthropocentric desire for closeness to wild animals and for supposed education. Martel illustrates both by his "favourite pastime in the zoo," which is, apparently, "to look the animals in the eye" (Alanyali, my translation)²⁷², and his comment: "I do believe that it's good that we have zoos because if we don't, children will never see animals in the flesh. An animal becoming extinct will have no more impact on them than a TV show that's been discontinued. Children won't really feel for an animal the way they would if giraffes were being pushed to extinction and they had seen giraffes" (qtd. in Sielke). For the animals themselves, it makes no difference whether they are seen by children or not, except that captivity in a zoo is more likely to be

detrimental than beneficial,²⁷³ a fact glossed over by discourse designed to manipulate the way children and their families feel about zoos.

Ultimately, there is nothing particularly unusual or unexpected in Pi's speech. Despite his glossing over cages and fences, readers are well aware that they would be part of the zoo. As Barthes writes, "it is natural and goes without saying" (156, italics omitted). Cages and fences do not need to be hidden, or conversely, they do not need to be mentioned, because "[m]yth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflexion" (Barthes 140). Like circuses, zoos actually exhibit their cages, enclosures, moats, fences, and glass houses, after all,²⁷⁴ and not without a measure of pride, as the San Diego Zoo's example shows. However, their presence is embedded in the language of "environmental enrichment," Pi's recreation of "essences," and comparisons with "bad zoos" and now outdated, historical practices, for instance.²⁷⁵ As Barthes writes, "[m]yth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification" (156).

Accordingly, instead of seeing the confinement of tigers, who are naturally wide-ranging animals, on the small area of a "moated island" (33), the readers of *Life of Pi* perceive the view *out* of the "cat house" cages, which suggests nature and freedom of movement: "Through the cage exits we could see the vegetation of the surrounding island, flooded with sunlight. The cages were empty—save one" (33). As Steve Baker explains, "what [myth] distorts and inflects is the historical and the cultural, so that they appear entirely natural. But what is most useful here is the idea that *nothing is actually hidden*, it's just that the culture typically deflects our attention from these things, and makes them seem unworthy of analysis" (8, original emphasis). Zoo visitors know, of course, that the zoo is a place of confinement; it is common sense, after all, as Barthes points out: "Sometimes—rarely—the Other is revealed as irreducible: not because of a sudden scruple, but because *common sense*

rebels” (166, original italics). For fleeting moments, they are aware that the “animal other” is behind bars (or other, cosmetic equivalents), but then dismiss the fact and look through the bars, not at them, instead.

Moreover, Malamud argues that “[i]nstitutional, cultural, and historical aspects of zoo practices conspire to screen or marginalise zoo animals’ pain, making it easier to ignore. Those who inflict this pain are adept at rationalizing, trivializing, or denying its existence” (179). In a similar fashion, Pi naturalises the circus, in the first instance by closely associating it with the zoo, which, by the time he begins to talk about the circus (see *Life of Pi* 43), he has already established as an appropriate environment for animals. He extends his argument about flight distances and “territory” to the circus (43) and provides, once again, expert opinion, a quotation by Heini Hediger, whom he calls “. . . a wise animal man. Mr. Hediger was for many years a zoo director He was a man well versed in the ways of animals” (44). Most readers will find it difficult to even consider disagreeing with the weight of authority portrayed here, which is used to link the zoo so seamlessly with the circus and to support the practice of keeping animals for entertainment. Both zoo and circus are indeed closely related and share imperial origins and legacy; both operate along the same ideological paradigms of human superiority, colonisation of nature, and commodification and exoticisation of animals; and both practices exist primarily to provide animal entertainment, regardless of the main justifications provided, such as conservation and education.²⁷⁶

What Pi’s speech largely omits is the fact that circuses differ markedly from zoos by engaging in practices which would be considered unacceptable in a zoo environment, such as confinement in extremely small cages and trailers, training with whips and bullhooks, and frequent transport. He does admit that his aggressive intimidation and training of Richard Parker “was not good zookeeping . . . but psychological bullying” (211), yet this bullying, in the context of the extreme situation he finds himself in, the necessity for survival, and the fact

that his strategy worked to ensure the survival of both himself and Richard Parker, seems excusable. The circus as an animal practice is justified *per se* nonetheless, through behaviourist arguments based on Hediger's quotation, which are thus presented as "naturally" and universally valid, and the suggestion that animals, such as lions, actually want to be dominated by circus trainers and benefit from that relationship by being looked after and cared for in circuses. Accordingly, this time, instead of letting animals vote with their feet, as it were, he lets the circus lions speak for themselves to seemingly prove the validity of his argument:

They are in the presence of a strongly dominant male, a super-alpha male, and they must submit to his dominance rituals. So they open their jaws wide, they sit up, they jump through paper-covered hoops, they crawl through tubes, they walk backwards, they roll over. "He's a queer one," they think dimly. "Never seen a top lion like him. But he runs a good pride. The larder's always full and—let's be honest, mates—his antics keep us busy. Napping all the time does get a bit boring. At least we're not riding bicycles like the brown bears or catching flying plates like the chimps." (43).

The trainer's dominance, Pi argues, is in the animals' best interest, especially where the "omega animal," "the one with the lowest social standing in the pride" is concerned (44).

In this fashion, Pi exploits readers' inclination to side with the underdog, so to speak, by explaining "a fact commonly known in the trade," which is that the most "inferior" animal's "close relationship" with the trainer "will also mean protection from the other members of the pride" (44-5). Once again, going to the circus apparently amounts to doing a good deed for the "[s]ocially inferior animals," who, in some ways, are also more *human*, as they "are the ones that make the most strenuous, resourceful efforts to get to know their keepers. They prove to be the ones most faithful to them, most in need of their company,

least likely to challenge them or be difficult” (45). Such domination, Pi explains, makes all of the animals feel “[s]atisfied,” as this “make[s] clear to [the animal] where it stands, the very thing it *wants* to know” (44, my italics). *Life of Pi* presents the circus as a place that meets the animals’ supposed need of hierarchical order, submission and protection; a relationship that seems, once again, entirely natural. As Pi points out, the “nature of the circus trainer’s ascendancy” is “a question of brain over brawn” (44). The novel reclaims “the values of scientific modernity,” since humans are presented as “innately different from and superior to animals because they possess a greater capacity for rational inventiveness,” for example, as Armstrong argues (*What Animals Mean* 178). Martel thus demonstrates, throughout *Life of Pi*, his view of the natural order: “We are reasonable animals. That’s what makes us more powerful than other animals” (qtd. in Sielke). Ultimately, Pi’s conquest of the tiger in his “floating circus” is the central image that sums up the paradigm determining human-animal relationships in *Life of Pi*: the theme of the novel, as Pi says, is “mastery in the making” (*Life of Pi* 211).

Conclusion

Life of Pi is Martel’s perceptive assembly of the kinds of elements that “make a story work” (see Martel, Interview with Mishal Husain) and which, ultimately, sell successfully. The emphasis on charismatic, colourful and exotic animals appeals both visually and in terms of literary and historical traditions. However, by emulating yet simplifying the complexity of magical realism, *Life of Pi* illustrates how art, animals, and animal art are turned into a commodified, exoticised and clichéd spectacle that veils, rather than uncovers, the hegemonic discourses at play, as considerations for target markets appear to dominate the creative process. In consequence, *Life of Pi*’s project of human ascendancy, invoking the spirit of the Enlightenment and grounded firmly within Cartesian paradigms of Western science, is

actually a reversal of the process underlying postcolonial magical realism, which is, typically, “mastery in the unmaking.” The product, a kind of faux magical realism, is attractive nonetheless because it can be consumed with ease; it is palatable to the general public, whose animal practices are largely endorsed in essence, if not necessarily in detail.

The animal story, accordingly, is “the better story” because *Life of Pi* operates on the same level as animal entertainment: the idea that “close encounters” with wild animals can be controlled and provided on demand, that humans can be masters over ferocious animals, and that these animals can supposedly be tamed,²⁷⁷ is attractive, especially when it is coupled with the notion that this is for the animal’s own good, as the lingering popularity of circuses and zoos demonstrates. One of the achievements of *Life of Pi* is the attempt to make explicit the discrepancy between reading animals as “real” animals, in and for themselves, as embodied, living beings, versus reading them as symbolic projections, as figures of speech. However, Martel does not ultimately succeed in representing a sense of “real” animal characters, keeping them trapped within a field of vision constructed by zoo mythology. Therefore, if magical realism has freed animals from Cartesianism, the rigidity of Linnaean taxonomic orderings, and the hegemonic structures of imperialism, Martel has put them back into the cages. In the context of magical realism, to which *Life of Pi* aspires, the story with elusive, feral, pest animals who escape control, cross boundaries, assert their subaltern “animal voice” and challenge authority, is a much “better story” still.

Conclusion

Animal Writing

Beyond our various cultural and social constructions of nature, Arturo Escobar writes, is “the existence of a biophysical reality . . . with structures and processes of its own . . .” (“After Nature” 1-2). By this, he does not mean to promote an essentialised ideal of nature, but he argues for the necessity to acknowledge the reality of “an independent order of nature, including a biological body,” at the same time as “the constructedness of nature,” its histories and “political implications,” need to be interrogated (“After Nature” 3). In this way, he suggests, one may be able to theorise “the manifold forms in which [nature] is culturally constructed and socially produced, while fully acknowledging the biophysical basis of its constitution,” and highlight “the interwoven character of the discursive, material, social, and cultural dimensions of the human-environment relation” (“After Nature” 2).

In a similar vein, beyond the constructedness of animality, and the many figurative uses we make of animals, is the “biophysical reality” of their embodied lives, the experience of what Jonathan Balcombe calls their “conscious, sensory encounters with the world” (8), as well as the material realities of our uses of and encounters with them. Just as our experience of nature is historically, geographically, politically, economically and socially contingent and culturally mediated, as Escobar’s paper “After Nature” shows, we cannot separate our constructed views of animals from what animals might mean to themselves, or even (fully) know how they experience their lives and encounter the world. Being like us and unlike us, they are familiar and elusive at the same time.

In relation to scientific enquiry, Escobar finds Katherine Hayles’ suggestion helpful: “we need to acknowledge that we are always positioned observers and that our observations always take place in continuous interaction with the world and ourselves” (“After Nature”

15). This view is also pertinent for my analysis of representations of animals in magical realist fiction, but equally, the position and subjectivity of the “observed,” as it were, needs to be recognised: animals do not care what humans think about them; they do not care what I write about them here. What matters to animals themselves undoubtedly, however, is how we interact with and treat them.

Our conceptions of animals, as expressed in literary production, for instance, simultaneously reflect and influence our treatment of them. Moreover, representations of animals often illustrate more about humans than about animals. This notion is not new: John Berger wrote in 1971 that “animals have always been central to the process by which men [*sic*] form an image of themselves” (“Animal World” 1042). Accordingly, examining the material animal practices, human-animal relationships and “biophysical realities” of each novel’s respective context has uncovered a variety of issues related to human identities and relationships in postcolonial environments, which are, nonetheless, inextricably intertwined with the way nonhuman animals are regarded, treated and experienced.

The fictions of Watson, Mudrooroo, King and Highway assert an indigenous identity through the recuperation and rejuvenation of traditional beliefs and narrative modes fused with the Western realist novel, whilst the settlement narratives of Carey, Flanagan, Kroetsch and Hodgins, as well as Martel’s globalised and virtually dislocated novel, seek to construct identities distinct from the culture of the imperial British motherland. García Márquez and Allende, in turn, set up a hybrid Latin American identity that acknowledges historical European influences alongside those of other cultures, but rejects its hegemonic status, in conjunction with US-driven neocolonialism, both culturally and economically. What all of these novels have in common is the recognition of nonhuman subjectivity and agency, and, to varying degrees and with the exception of Hodgins’ novels, of a kinship with nonhuman animals. In Martel, Hodgins and, partially, Kroetsch’s respective narratives, that recognition

leads to an attempted retrieval of Cartesian humanist values and human mastery over nature. However, even their reclamation of human ascendancy, in appropriating a mode of writing that so emphatically deconstructs it, recognises that the influence of the Cartesian humanist subject is waning.

Magical realism's popularity in the latter decades of the twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first century coincides with a more widely emerging, global environmental awareness, growing environmental movements, and activist calls to changes in our modes of consumption. Though often still in an all-too-limited fashion, these calls are increasingly, finally, even surprisingly, supported by governments and corporate bodies after years of resistance. "Greenwash" is a very recent entry in our dictionaries, but its existence attests, at least, to the growing appeal of environmentalist ideas to consumers. The realisation that we are but one species amongst many, inextricably interconnected even with seemingly insignificant life forms, has become pertinent to our survival. Magical realist representations of that interconnection—whether they make use of the Darwinian notion of being "netted together"; the idea of a "web of life" and "Oneness" with other species, as expressed by Kakkib li'Dthia Warrawee'a; or the Native North American concept of "All my Relatives," for example—strike a chord with readers in the West.

Animality is not only a significant feature of magical realist content, but also a quality that determines form and style. As a feral narrative mode, magical realism's unsettling representations of animals, animality and human-animal relationships are, however, in contrast to the more conventional forms of the classic realist text. As Catherine Belsey writes: "The experience of reading a realist text is ultimately reassuring . . . because the world evoked in the fiction, its patterns of cause and effect, of social relationships and moral values, largely confirm the patterns of the world we seem to know" (51). Classic realist texts hide their modes of production as much as their modes of consumption (see Belsey 126-28),

whereas magical realism deconstructs, dislocates and defamiliarises. It is a mode of writing that openly addresses its production (cf. Belsey 91-2), and which ironises its consumption through the style Graham Huggan calls “the postcolonial exotic.” Beyond the postcolonial context, magical realism suggests the potential of challenging us, as consumers of these texts, to question our modes of consumption in other spheres of life, a challenge that has become ever more relevant in the context of climate change: Do we consume in different ways, but with continued familiarity and reassurance (that is, do we, for example, visit a “good zoo” instead of a “bad zoo”? Do we only drink milk from cows fed or bred to be less flatulent?), or do we find other ways of being that may be more radically transformative of our lives, lifestyles, and understandings of ourselves?

Rethinking our relationships with animals has become a necessary measure in a consumer capitalist system, in which a view of animals as production units, as commodities at our disposal, contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, for example. Moreover, increasing consumer awareness of, and resistance to, the cruelty inherent in factory farming systems, for instance, sheds light on a shifting sense of how we would like to be, how we would like to see ourselves, as humans in this world. Western consumers are slowly but steadily beginning to rethink their role as “masters” of nature. The main question is not “Are we changing?” but “Are we changing—fast and radically—enough?” As the choice between familiarity and dislocation or transformation applies to other modes of consumption, magical realism’s circensian spaces reflect the dilemmas of a wider cultural context in overlapping, intertwining and blurring our contradictory, ambiguous and conflicting relationships to, and views of, nature in general and animals in particular. As such, magical realism offers the possibility for innovative modes of reading that acknowledge the subjectivity of nonhuman others.

Such recognition of nonhuman others is an act of empathy, of imagining what and how the other feels, and of acknowledging that they do feel to begin with. This act of empathy transcends the lonely logic of the Cartesian “I,” who only accepts his or her own existence as proven beyond doubt (God as the creator of “I” aside) and as centrally important to the surrounding universe. Magical realism’s carnivalesque tendency to focus on communities rather than individual protagonists is in itself a move beyond the boundaries of the Cartesian subject, and a recognition that others not only also exist, but that they are in some way or degree “like me” and as significant as “I” at least in relation to their own experience.

The magical realist novels discussed here tend to create communities that not only extend beyond the text to incorporate the reader, but that are also characterised by the interconnectedness of human and nonhuman worlds. This extension of community to incorporate the nonhuman suggests that the distinction between human and nonhuman animals may be dissolved altogether, and thus moves these narratives, along with the reader, into the realm of the posthuman. In the end, postcolonial magical realism conveys, to varying degrees, the idea that we ourselves, in our human animality, are also already the posthuman other, and that the all-surveying, central human subject has never “really” existed to begin with, except as the Myth and fantasy of those for whom disregard of nonhuman others is an expedient measure in the maintenance of power. Writing, and reading, with empathy for nonhuman others means to recognise that we, too—authors, readers and critics—are all literally and literary animals.

Notes

¹ Amongst the many such critical attempts proposing definitions are, for instance, Michael Scheffel's *Magischer Realismus* (1990); Maggie Ann Bowers' *Magic(al) Realism* (2004), which seeks to explain differences between "magic," "magical," and "marvellous" realism whilst also using "magic(al)" realism as an overarching term; and Takolander's *Catching Butterflies* (2007), the most recent study devoted to defining the label. The collection of essays entitled *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* (1995) and edited by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy Faris is, to date, still the most prominent collection of resources on magical realism, which offers various historical and more contemporary attempts to classify, position or contextualise this mode of writing. Faris' *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative* (2004) is also a notable, more recent contribution.

² I make no distinction between "magic realism" and "magical realism." An argument for a difference in emphasis between "magical realism" and "magic realism" may well be made, of course, on the basis of an apparent juxtaposition of two nouns ("magic" and "realism") versus using an adjective ("magic" or "magical") as a qualifier for the noun "realism." The semantic difference is, however, either immaterial or negligible for the purposes of this study.

³ Cf. Takolander (13), where she almost suggests as much, but then devotes the rest of her study to the classification of a distinct genre.

⁴ By "structural theme" I mean a narrative structure that is reflective of the story's content. An example is *Illywhacker*, in which the ending is a return to the beginning, as in a circle, reflecting the geometry of a circus ring.

⁵ This is emphasised by the fact that, in amongst the abundance of non-human animals depicted in magical realist narratives, talking animals are comparatively few and far in between. A notable exception is the donkey narrator of *Ardour* by English author Lily Prior, for example, but even there the donkey is unable to communicate with the human characters in the narrative. In the texts discussed in this thesis, instances of talking animals are either grounded in or borrowed from animist spiritual belief systems, rather than “arbitrarily constructed,” with Robert Kroetsch’s *What the Crow Said* representing a more complicated and ambiguous case.

⁶ Nonhuman animals add another dimension to Faris’ definition of the “irreducible element” in so far as their irreducibility comes as a revelation in the Western context, where the prevailing conception of animals is strongly influenced by Cartesian humanist beliefs, which dictate that animals are indeed reducible. Appropriating and applying Faris’ definition, I suggest that the irreducibility of animals is revealed to readers of magical realism because “we cannot explain [them] according to the laws of the universe, as they have been formulated in Western empirically based discourse, that is, according to ‘logic, familiar knowledge, or received belief’” (*Ordinary Enchantments* 7). Just as “the reader [therefore] has difficulty marshaling evidence to settle questions about the status of events and characters in such fictions” (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 7), readers cannot settle questions about the status of animal characters, or indeed of animality itself.

⁷ Carnival does not simply invert hierarchies into their opposite; it is also a levelling force that turns everyone, regardless of class, into a carnival participant. This is illustrated, for instance, by carnival-related proverbs commonly used in Cologne, a city that prides itself on the everyday presence of carnival in its culture: *Jede Jeck es anders* thus translates to “Everyone is different,” or “other,” as it were (with “*Jeck*” meaning “crazy carnival participant” specifically, but also used to denote “everyone” in general); while *Jeck loss Jeck*

elans translates (loosely) to “Live and let live.” These are carnivalesque expressions of equality and tolerance for difference (however much or little these may actually be applied in day-to-day life). For an illustration of the historical connection between carnival as an egalitarian political force (in spirit and theory, at least, if not always in practice, as the longstanding exclusion of women, for example, shows [see Schmidt 51]) and the democratic movement in Germany, see, for instance, Klaus Schmidt.

⁸ I capitalise “Myth” and “Mythology” throughout this thesis when denoting the construction of Mythical discourse in the Barthesian sense, discussed especially in Chapter Two, and to distinguish the concept from the traditional stories and beliefs (“myths” and “mythologies”) pertaining to particular cultures.

⁹ The use of the problematic term “white” will be discussed in the following chapters. Inevitably, I also speak as a German, an international reader from a globalised audience, and as a migrant to Aotearoa New Zealand.

¹⁰ In its contemporary form, the circus, moreover, creates an illusion of human-animal partnerships that is diametrically opposed to the material reality of the animals’ experience (see Schwalm, “No Circus without Animals”).

¹¹ Note my distinction between maban reality and maban realism as a representation of maban reality in Chapter Four.

¹² The term “pest” is a negative label for species that are considered destructive, noxious, and invasive. The labelling is contentious and contingent upon varying human interests, or upon particular interpretations of ecological balance and the needs of other species. The term “pest” is an expression of a particular human-animal relationship, often accompanied by “pest control.” I will retain these labels, not to endorse the inherent value-judgment, but to denote this particular view of an animal or animal species, where appropriate.

¹³ The “unmaking of mastery” is a reversal of *Life of Pi*’s protagonist’s description of his lifeboat circus as “mastery in the making” (211).

¹⁴ *La casa de los espíritus* has been translated into over twenty-five languages (“La casa de los espíritus”).

¹⁵ Secondary texts and electronic sources frequently omit the accents of Spanish spelling. I will reproduce anglicised spelling in quotations without comment henceforth.

¹⁶ By “West,” I mean industrialised nations which have their cultural roots in European epistemologies, with industrial animal economies that are traditionally based on pastoralism and animal domestication, and that are characterised, in the present day, by consumer capitalist commodification of mass-produced animals, animal products and animal representations. By ‘Western reader’ I mean those (including myself) who identify as European or as being of European descent or origin, and whose perception of animals and experience of reality has been shaped and influenced by European epistemologies.

¹⁷ In contrast to the term “companion animal,” the term “pet” normally denotes a relationship of ownership, dependent property or commodity, and unequal power relations. I will therefore use the term “pet” wherever this meaning is relevant. Indeed, Peter Carey’s *Illywhacker* in particular requires “pet” to be understood on those terms, as I will discuss in Chapter Two.

¹⁸ See the introduction for a discussion of Takolander’s and Pinet’s respective approaches. Nicole C. Matos, discussing animal imagery in García Márquez’ *Of Love and Other Demons*, points out the disruptive force animals represent in relation to colonialism and argues: “The image of a rabid dog encroaching on a cherished human space and wreaking havoc without regard to race or other social constructions introduces a subtle threat to colonial culture that animals, wild or domesticated, often embody in the novel” (46). Her short but perceptive article considers animals in relation to Julia Kristeva’s concept of “the

abject,” and Matos keenly observes a connection between animals and African slaves, and the animals’ occupancy of a “strange liminal space” (46). Moreover, she evokes an idea of “the animal inside” one of the main characters (Matos 48), yet the brevity of the article does not make room to explain what she means by that, if anything, beyond the general idea of a paradoxically abject experience that disrupts “the marketplace of ‘civilized’ culture” (Matos 47), and neither are the other observations explored in depth.

¹⁹ Jones is referring to Faris (“Scheherazade’s Children” 171).

²⁰ J.M. Coetzee observes this phenomenon in relation to his novel *Disgrace*, which features dogs very prominently. He comments: “Most reviewers have more or less ignored their [the dogs’] presence In this respect they—naturally—mirror the way in which animals are treated in the world we live in, namely as unimportant existences of which we need take notice only when their lives cross ours” (qtd. in Engström, “Animals, Humans, Cruelty and Literature”).

²¹ Because of Descartes’ influential position, I use the term “Cartesian” here and elsewhere not only to refer to Descartes’ philosophies directly, but also more loosely to denote theoretical and material practices based on the assumption of a human subject-animal object split.

²² I will retain the term “New World” to denote the European explorer’s perspective of the Americas. I note, however, that these continents were far from new to their indigenous populations.

²³ This is emphasised even more strongly in the English translation, where Barrabás is initially attributed with the reflexive pronoun “which,” which soon turns into “who.” In both *The House of the Spirits* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the reflexive pronoun “who” is occasionally used for animals instead of “which,” but there is no consistency in their usage. However, this inadvertently influences the conceptualisation of animals, and suggests that the

division between humans and animals, at least grammatically, is more pronounced in English than in some other European-based languages, such as Spanish.

²⁴ Conversely, it could be argued that Barrabás' preference for marmalade is an expression of pleasure as an adaptive behaviour. This, however, would also compromise the idea of a Cartesian machine, as humans experience pleasure, too, of course. For a discussion of the animals' ability to experience pleasure, see Balcombe's *Pleasurable Kingdom*.

²⁵ I prefer, however, the term "ferality" over "ferity" as the latter term, in its original meaning, carries negative connotations that may or may not play a role in particular magical realist employments of the concept. "Ferality," moreover, foregrounds *fera*, the referent, and gives it more prominence over those cultural attributes that are more closely associated with "ferity."

²⁶ See Leal (119-22); Allende ("Questions and Answers"); Flanagan (qtd. in Kornegay); Flanagan (qtd. in Hugo); Carey (qtd. in Meyer 80).

²⁷ *Das Ungeziefer* is both grammatically and conceptually a neutral term in German, therefore "it" rather than "he" is appropriate here. "Monstrous," "uncanny," "scandalously inappropriate" and "too enormous to comprehend" are all connotations of Kafka's term *ungeheuer*, the connotations of which cannot be completely captured by English translations. "Vermin" is the closest translation of *Ungeziefer*, a singular, amorphous term used to denote a plurality of small "pest animals" such as cockroaches, flies and maggots, as well as insects in general, spiders, and rodents, for example. The designation of the term to a particular animal or species depends on the definer's momentary or general perception of them as repellent, annoying, dirty, useless and possibly damage-causing.

²⁸ Following Bakhtin's description, I suggest that carnival cannot be readily understood through theoretical study alone. It needs to be experienced with all the senses ("lived") from in amongst a carnival crowd in order to grasp its spirit.

²⁹ Elizabeth Knox' *The Vintner's Luck* or Lily Prior's *Ardour* also feature prominent angels—human-bird hybrids—for instance.

³⁰ See Nigel Rothfels' *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo*. See also Roslyn Poignant, who documents the removal of two groups of Aborigines from Australia by an agent for P.T. Barnum, and their subsequent exhibition in Europe.

³¹ Indeed, such fake legendary creatures are still part of the repertoire of circuses, as the Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey circus' 1985 exhibition of a "living unicorn" illustrates (Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey, "The Living Unicorn!").

³² For a more detailed study of the way human-animal relationships are represented in the circus, see Tanja Schwalm's "'No circus without animals'?: Animal Acts and Ideology in the Virtual Circus."

³³ Since completing earlier drafts of this chapter I have become aware of Julian Cowley's comments on Ishmael Reed's work. Cowley also refers to Foucault's *The Order of Things* and the historical shift from the circular to a tabular arrangement of animals, and relates this to Reed's use of circus aesthetics, in the context of Reed's deconstruction of the novel as a "Western genre" (1239). However, Cowley limits his analysis to Reed's work, and does not connect it to magical realism. Nor does he, beyond Foucault's argument, specifically address literary representations of animals. Furthermore, Cowley points out that "Reed embraces the circus, not the museum" (1240). This is different from circensian spaces, which encompass both.

³⁴ I will frequently return to this phrase in the following chapters, as it captures the essential nature of heterotopias and heterotopic creatures.

³⁵ This oxymoronic relationship between these two types of heterotopias is particularly striking in the Australian context discussed in the next chapter.

³⁶ An example of Western scientific methods applied in a local context was illustrated by the Australian television series *The Alice* (2004-2005). The programme is characterised by strong magical realist components, and includes the portrayal of a doctor (“Matt Marione”) and a nurse (“Jess Daily”) who negotiate their position in outback communities between offering Western medicine where it is needed and standing back to leave room for Aboriginal healing methods, especially where Western medicine proves ineffective, or less effective.

³⁷ Calling developing countries “Third World” is contentious, as is, in fact, “developing countries,” since both terms imply value judgments, as critiqued by Escobar. I use “Third World” here to reflect the particular view of former colonies shaped by the “Discourse of Development” that Escobar describes.

³⁸ Allende, for instance, writes: “In 1975, half of Latin America’s citizens lived under some kind of repressive government, most of which were backed by the United States, which has a shameful record of overthrowing legally elected governments and of supporting tyrannies that would never be tolerated in its own territory” (*My Invented Country* 158).

³⁹ By “we,” here and elsewhere, I mean Western readers.

⁴⁰ Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson and Susan McCarthy describe the case of Alex, whose command of human language went beyond simple mimicking towards actual understanding of simple expressions (see 34-5). For more information on Alex’s abilities, see *The Alex Foundation* website.

⁴¹ His view of the land as devoid of human habitation corresponds with the idea of Australia as *terra nullius*, discussed in Chapter Three.

⁴² Here, Allende reflects Bentham’s view of a direct correlation between the treatment of slaves and “the inferior races of animals.” He suggested in 1789 that, whilst the “French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason why a human being should

be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor,” it might be recognized “one day . . . that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the *os sacrum*, are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate” (Bentham qtd. in Regan and Singer 130).

⁴³ Significantly, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the result of “love,” another counter-Cartesian concept, is a human-animal hybrid, the pig-tailed Aureliano, who is “the only Buendía to have been conceived” with that emotion (García Márquez qtd. in Mendoza 75).

⁴⁴ All page numbers for *Gould’s Book of Fish* refer to the 2002 paperback version.

⁴⁵ Huggan’s description here points to Rushdie’s fiction in particular; however, it is part of a discussion of the postcolonial exotic as a wider phenomenon of postcolonial literature and clearly applicable to *Illywhacker* and *Gould’s Book of Fish*.

⁴⁶ The *Australian Museum Fish Site* offers an excellent overview of these species with colour photographs. (At the time of access, no information about the Striped Cowfish was available.) *FishBase* also offers information and images; alternatively, see Bernhard Grzimek et al.

⁴⁷ Harvey M. Feinberg and Joseph B. Sodolow trace the origin of the phrase, which “passed from Aristotle to Pliny to Erasmus” and eventually became popularized in the variation above. They contend that the original Greek proverb cited by Aristotle referred “specifically to strange hybrid animals” (Feinberg and Sodolow 261).

⁴⁸ Philo and Wilbert observe the perception of “wilder-lands . . . as repositories of wild creatures available for sports such as hunting and shooting” (12).

⁴⁹ The narrator may be referring to Sid Hammet, but the statement “I shall be you” (*Gould’s Book* 445) strongly suggests that the reader is directly addressed.

⁵⁰ As Broome writes,

Phrenologists claimed that the shape of the head and its bumps represented the shape and size of the brain within, and the different personality traits of the person. By reading these signs a person's, or a race's characteristics and abilities could be revealed. Practitioners of this "science" told colonial audiences that Aboriginal skulls revealed deficiencies in the so-called moral and intellectual organs of the brain, and excesses in those areas allegedly controlling the passions, aggression and the observational instinct. (94)

⁵¹ Indeed, Ritvo describes the application of phrenology to nonhuman animals and its inherent confusion and implausibility (see *Animal Estate* 36-7).

⁵² See M. Cherif Bassiouni. See also the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

⁵³ Cliff Lobe suggests the connection between *Illywhacker* and Foucault's comparison of Bentham's Panopticon with the menagerie of Versailles (24).

⁵⁴ Similarly, Huggan notes that "[m]otifs of entrapment . . . abound in Carey's fiction" and especially in *Illywhacker*, although he focuses "particularly" on "spider webs" which, he suggests, make the reader "complicit with the narrator's lies and self-deceptions" (*Peter Carey* 17). The spider, who entraps the reader, is the opposite figure to a nonhuman animal trapped in a cage by humans. Herbert's suggestion that he might be both a spider and a prisoner (*Illywhacker* 567) illustrates the oxymoronic effect of the circensian space, and shows that, in the case of a settler Australian like Herbert, the idea of the victimhood of a convict past is not straightforward or innocent.

⁵⁵ Penny Olsen informs that Halley's images of the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, the Major Mitchell Cockatoo and the Regent Parrot "reflect the keeping of parrots as companions, which was common from quite soon after settlement" (76).

⁵⁶ Huggan distinguishes hybrid monsters from “the monster as mutant,” and whilst he considers the former to be positive symbols, he argues that, within a range of functions, the latter serve as “evil portents” (*Carey* 69). I agree that they may serve a range of functions, but I do not distinguish between two contrasting types—one with positive, one with negative connotations. Instead, I propose that mutating, transforming or metamorphosing all serve to resist and dismantle Enlightenment science and the human-animal divide, and therefore all offer the possibility of “a different future,” whatever other functions they may have (positive or negative). Furthermore, whilst Huggan notes that Carey’s hybrids transgress a multitude of boundaries, including human-animal and machine-animal boundaries, he does not address how animality in particular might be important in what he regards as a celebration of hybridity in the works of Carey and Rushdie (see Huggan, *Carey* 73, 81).

⁵⁷ See Moyal 68-70.

⁵⁸ For an example of the pun on Barron Field’s name by one of his contemporaries, see G. A Wilkes (n.p.).

⁵⁹ Other references to bower-birds include *Illywhacker* (535, 569, 604, 623).

⁶⁰ See Gill and Anderson, who discuss the representation of “a stewardship role for pastoralism that further naturalises the presence of cattle and which strengthens the naturalness and the morality of the pastoral landscape.”

⁶¹ The term “useful animals” will be discussed in detail in Chapters Four and Five.

⁶² This sentence is used verbatim in a publication by David Michalk, employed as Leader of Weeds Research and Director of the Orange Agricultural Institute by the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries (see Michalk 3). Compare, in addition, Michalk’s remark that the “successful dominance of world markets by Australian livestock products is a tribute to the ingenuity and resilience of the men and women that pioneered these industries” (2) with Meat and Livestock Australia’s comment: “This success is tribute

to the ingenuity and resilience of the men and women that run this industry” (“Paddock to Plate”). The fact that these comments are closely echoed by Meat and Livestock Australia certainly indicates that animal industries and government agencies are united in promoting a view of animal farming as a national endeavour, in the course of which they represent a history that glosses over Aboriginal suffering, dispossession and exploitation resulting from pastoral settlement.

⁶³ One current Meat and Livestock Australia campaign poster states: “A week of lamb. Any less is unAustralian” (“A Week of Lamb”).

⁶⁴ Representing a linkage between vegetarianism and “unpatriotic behaviour” is revealed as more calculated and serious than the humorous tone of the commercials would suggest. The impact of such views, after all, is felt and experienced by vegetarians and vegans to be real and not uncommon, as a study from New Zealand, a country with a (post-) colonial history equally dominated by pastoral settlement and animal industries, shows. As Annie Potts and Mandala White report, respondents to a survey about ethical consumption in New Zealand recounted being made to feel unpatriotic because they chose not to eat meat (see 80-2). Kekovich’s polarising references to social activists are no less grounded in real prejudice, as they serve to confirm the kinds of banal stereotypes commonly held by those who feel threatened by alternative propositions. In my experience from New Zealand, for instance, the odd member of the public will accuse animal advocates manning information stalls as being “unemployed hippies” or tell them to “get a job,” which is especially ironic when aimed at fellow volunteers who work several jobs or who are highly-respected and educated members of the community in reputable full-time positions. Meat and Livestock Australia thus provide their target audience with the kinds of stereotypes they supposedly feel comfortable with, at the same time as such polarising comments are designed to reinforce the practice of eating animals as mainstream and “normal.”

⁶⁵ For further references to butchers, see, for example, *Illywhacker* (165, 170, 230, 397, 403, 409, 433, 460).

⁶⁶ Meat and Livestock Australia report:

From the handful of stock that arrived with the First Fleet in 1788 Australia now has a cattle herd of over 26.5 million head and a sheep flock of over 121.6 million head. Today beef remains one of Australia's largest rural exports, worth around \$2.4 billion each year. Overall exports of meat and livestock earn around \$3.5 billion—making a significant contribution to the nation's economy. Add to this the income generated from sales of meat within Australia and the many jobs created to support it and you have an industry worth well over \$6 billion. (“Paddock to Plate”)

⁶⁷ See also Morton and Smith, who comment on land clearing by pastoralists and agriculturalists, and remark that “the eradication of feral species, and the correlative preservation of endangered ones, could be seen as ‘an unusually attractive decoy’ that distracts attention from more fundamental issues of land management in Australia” (167). Moreover, Gill and Anderson point out that cattle are “thought to transform nature” by breaking up the soil and fertilising it, a process considered a positive contribution to the supposed improvement of the land and thus represented as “treading lightly relative to the interventions of rabbits. While cattle are theoretically at least subject to pastoralists’ control, rabbits are not so readily managed.”

⁶⁸ See Landström (208-11) for an account of the construction of exotic species as “alien invaders.”

⁶⁹ See, for example, Meat and Livestock Australia's posters of the 2008 campaign, which feature Kekovich with a group of children standing behind him, waving lamb chops as though they were Australian flags. Given that the campaign relies on stereotypes, the

absence of any children who could be construed as having Aboriginal ancestry is striking (“A Week of Lamb. Any Less is UnAustralian”).

⁷⁰ A similar euphemism is “opening up” the land, as in Michalk’s document, where he writes: “Sheep production started in earnest when the hinterland of Australia was opened up by the early explorers which allowed ‘squatters’ to move flocks from the narrow coastal plain near Sydney to the vast grassy woodlands and open grasslands in western New South Wales” (4).

⁷¹ The original German phrase is “*auf schwankendem Pferd*,” which may simply denote the horse’s natural movement, but it may also suggest that the horse is staggering, and that all is not well with the horse, either.

⁷² The original phrase is “. . . *da dies so ist, legt der Galeriebesucher das Gesicht auf die Brüstung und, im Schlußmarsch wie in einem schweren Traum versinkend, weint er, ohne es zu wissen.*” The term *schwer*, describing the dream, has multiple meanings and can denote heaviness, seriousness and difficulty. The ending of the piece, “ohne es zu wissen,” is ambiguous; the reader is left wondering what it is that the spectator does not know, whether it is the reality of the equestrian’s misery, or whether they do not know that this misery is not real.

⁷³ “*Der Gegensatz von wirklichem Elend und blendendem äußeren Schein des Zirkus . . .*” “*Vordergründig geht es um Elend und Schein der Zirkuswelt. Das ist ein Thema, das die erzählende Dichtung des Expressionismus lebhaft interessierte.*”

⁷⁴ Rudd’s apology and the subsequent speech display the kind of empathy and acknowledgment that the Australian novels discussed in this and the next chapter identified as lacking in Australia’s historical writing, public discourse, government policies and public discourse. What real and practical changes will follow to address the social inequalities created through racist policies of successive Australian governments, and, conversely, to

what extent the right-wing school of thought Flanagan mentions will resist this recent development and remain influential, are questions that remain to be answered. Flanagan—like Carey—stresses that whilst the apology is “a fundamental and necessary step towards Australians coming together to address their national ills,” it “will not alter the condition of Aboriginal people. The hurt won’t end, nor the misery and inequality that sees indigenous Australians with a life expectancy 17 years less than non-indigenous Australians” (“An Invitation”). The apology, he contends, needs to be followed up with concrete action, such as “once more looking at the matters of a treaty, land rights, and compensation to the survivors of assimilation” (“An Invitation”; cf. Carey, Interview with Stephen Sackur). However, all of the Australian novels discussed in this thesis (in Chapters Two and Three) comment on Australian policy and society before the apparent watershed in Australian history marked by Rudd’s speech, and my analysis engages with the context in which these novels were written.

⁷⁵ Further references with an immediate juxtaposition between animals and writing include the “fourth gallery” of the pet shop, where spiders live alongside “old yellowing newspapers” (*Illywhacker* 524), Leah’s letters which “fill with the sweet fecund odours of the little pet shop” where she visits Emma and where “[s]he was as happy . . . as in a letter” (473), Leah’s “crabbed handwriting” (299) and the “little square of newspaper she had tucked away in her feathers” of her emu suit (233), or her father’s letters marked by a “rare black one-shilling Kookaburra” stamp (299). Animals are associated with print publications, as smuggling and selling “the last-recorded golden-shouldered parrot” is meant to finance the publication of *Malley’s Urn* (622), Phoebe’s poetry magazine, available for sale in the pet shop (see 541). Charles, moreover, fears that *Time* magazine will do a story about bird smuggling (see 587), and Herbert and Leah discuss his “write-up” of their variety act involving Leah’s emu dance and snakes (304).

⁷⁶ Carey connects animals metaphorically with money: “My pocket contained a damp bird’s nest of crumpled currency from which drifted the unmistakable odours of Ballarat Bitter” (*Illywhacker* 360).

⁷⁷ Whilst the gesture of kicking the jellyfish may appear gratuitous and brutal, there is no suggestion that he kicks the jellyfish roughly. I propose that the gesture is an act of kindness, based on Jack’s character described elsewhere, to save the stranded creature from death on the beach, whereby Jack’s use of his foot is a way of avoiding injury to his hands from the creature.

⁷⁸ Jonathan Balcombe observes that such “dubious assumptions lean heavily on prejudice and convenience” (185). Balcombe cites evidence not only for the perception of pain in fish, but he also argues that “[t]here are some good reasons to suspect that fish feel pleasure” (189). See Balcombe (185-191) for further discussion.

⁷⁹ See, for instance, Flanagan, “Paradise Lost—with Napalm”; Flanagan, “The Rape of Tasmania.”

⁸⁰ “Numminer” is the term “Twopenny Sal” uses to describe the British, while she uses “Palawa” for her own people.

⁸¹ The author currently known as Mudrooroo has frequently changed his name. He has called himself Colin Johnson, S.A. Jivaka, Mudrooroo Nyoongah, Mudrooroo Narogin and, currently, Mudrooroo (see M. Clark, 58). For the sake of consistency I will refer to him as Mudrooroo in text, but provide either “Mudrooroo” or “Narogin” in parenthetical references as appropriate, in accordance with the current entry for the respective work on the National Library of Australia website (<http://www.nla.gov.au>), especially since in the case of *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* the name on the cover is not identical with the name listed in the copyright section or with the National Library of Australia listing provided in the front matter, which labels him “Mudrooroo Nyoongah.”

⁸² Mudooroo explains the Dreaming as “indicat[ing] a psychic state in which or during which contact is made with the ancestral spirits, or the Law, or that special period of the beginning now past which is still heavily pervasive in the present” (*Us Mob* 41).

Mussolini Harvey, a Yanyuwa man from the Gulf of Carpentaria, moreover, explains the nature of Dreaming spirits: “The Dreamings are our ancestors, no matter if they are fish, birds, men, women, animals, wind or rain” (qtd. in Rose, *Nourishing Terrains* 27). Dreaming also denotes a spiritual connection to all things natural, and the belief that human beings are part of and at one with every other part of creation. For further explanation and an excellent overview of the Dreaming, see Rose (*Nourishing Terrains* 26-28).

⁸³ The distinction between “black” and “white” people is contentious, as they suggest the idea of “race,” a term that denotes biological determinism and rigid classifications that cannot be scientifically upheld. As Gillian Cowlshaw and Barry Morris write: “Race is not a self-evident and natural category, but a historically grounded social construction, dynamic and shifting. Discourse and imagery construct a generic Other, an Other who is often perceived as hostile” (3). However, the terms “black” and “white” are commonly used by both “black” and “white” authors referred to in this chapter. As Cowlshaw and Morris point out, “while race may matter little as a biological fact, it does matter as a major organising principle, as a source of imaginative energy and as a secret focus of social identity” (4-5). Thus, the terms “black” and “white” are used in this sense in *Ghost Dreaming* (see, for example, 34, 74, 79 and 32, 52, 77-78, 142 respectively), as well as throughout *Kadaitcha*. Significantly, the categories “black” and “white” are inherently unstable in Watson’s novel, at the same time as they reflect a powerful binary that affects the lives (and deaths) of the characters. Accordingly, I will retain the terms “black” and “white” for the purposes of this discussion and elsewhere in this thesis where appropriate, not to suggest biologically

determined categories or perpetuate racist discourse, but to reflect the dubious binary produced by social ordering.

⁸⁴ The meaning of Aboriginal Law is explained by Mussolini Harvey in *Nourishing Terrains*:

The Dreamings made our Law or narnu-Yuwa. This Law is the way we live, our rules. This Law is our ceremonies, our songs, our stories; all of these things came from the Dreaming. One thing that I can tell you though is that our Law is not like European Law which is always changing—new government, new laws; but our Law cannot change, we did not make it. The Law was made by the Dreamings many, many years ago and given to our ancestors and they gave it to us. [. . .] All things in our country have Law, they have ceremony and song, and they have people who are related to them”
(qtd. in Rose 27, original ellipsis)

⁸⁵ While using the term “Aboriginal” or “Aborigines” in a generalised sense, it is important to acknowledge the diversity of Aboriginal societies and customs. As David Unaipon writes: “Of course, it will be readily understood that the Aboriginal language and customs vary a great deal according to the nature of the country the tribes are living in, although there is a great common understanding running through us all. Our legends and traditions are all the same tales, or myths, told slightly differently, with local colouring, etc.”

(7) See also Broome (15). Cf. Foley, who discusses the label as both disempowering and empowering. I retain the generalised term, however, since the novels discussed here focus on groups or communities composed of members with diverse backgrounds, who share a common identity connected to the land and the Dreaming.

⁸⁶ See Belsey’s comments on the classic realist text, which she associates with the “consistency and continuity of the subject” (75). See also Belsey (67-83).

⁸⁷ I use “Law” with a capital letter to denote Aboriginal Law, as opposed to “the law,” the rules of Western legal systems.

⁸⁸ The spelling of “Aboriginal” varies in the sources I quote. I use the capitalised version, in accordance with Jackie Huggins’ argument that spelling “Aboriginal” with a lower case “a” is disrespectful, as this sets it apart from the adjectives for other nations and ethnicities, which are capitalised. This may, of course, not be an author’s, or editor’s, intention, yet the often simply accepted practice of not capitalising “Aboriginal” should not be passed over without question. See Anita Heiss (204).

⁸⁹ Similarly, Kate Hall comments:

Existing critical approaches to magical realism are inadequate because they fail to move beyond the politics of polarity encapsulated in the oxymoronic reading of the term, and because such approaches reduce the complexities of the magical realist text until it becomes simply a hybrid of realism and its ‘Other’, which is characterised stylistically as the fantastic, or ontologically as the supernatural. (117)

⁹⁰ Mudrooroo seems to assume here that his readers are exclusively Westerners operating within a cultural universe determined by Cartesian scientific thinking, which does not allow for the possibility of realities other than those scientifically, or rationally, knowable. Whilst his comment appears to underestimate the potential of and for an Aboriginal readership, it serves to emphasise that maban realism operates outside of the frameworks of Western epistemologies, not only in regard to ideas about genres and representations of reality, but also, significantly, in relation to animals. However, the vast majority of Mudrooroo’s readers are indeed non-Aboriginal. Gary Foley asserts that non-Aborigines “constituted the 98% of the readers of [Mudrooroo’s] work.”

⁹¹ See Franklin, *Animal Nation* (167-69); Rose, *Nourishing Terrains* (6-15).

⁹² Whilst the serpent is described as “it” in this passage, Island, as an animal or animal-like creature, is masculine elsewhere. It appears that the pronoun “he” refers primarily to Jangamuttuk in this passage, but I contend that there is a deliberate ambiguity and boundary-blurring with Fada and Island here.

⁹³ Correspondingly, Alexis Wright describes the role of the land in her maban realist novel *Plains of Promise*: “The land is, I suppose, one of or even the central character. Most of the images and ideas relate to the land being alive and having important meaning, which is tied to the ancient roots of our continent” (qtd. in Vernay 121).

⁹⁴ Indeed, Watson considers Uluru to be “the centre of every single dreaming path in the world” (Davies and Watson 196).

⁹⁵ The anthology *Mongrel Signatures: Reflections on the Work of Mudrooroo*, edited by Annalisa Oboe, also provides discussions by several commentators about the controversy.

⁹⁶ Colin Johnson’s alias “Mudrooroo” is, after all, the word for “paperbark” in the language of the Bibbulmun, to whom he specifically claimed to be related (see M. Clark, *Likely Story* 31, 16, 43, 58).

⁹⁷ However, the charge of imposture on the grounds of personal gain is complicated by the fact that, whilst Mudrooroo ultimately did derive personal gain, recognition and a career on the basis of his public identity, at the time he “entered into his Aboriginality,” as he currently describes it (“The Global Nomad”), assuming an Aboriginal identity was a “passport to discrimination,” as Foley points out (Foley), rather than to “money and accolades from the white Australian public and other ignorant Aborigines,” as van den Berg puts it (“Intellectual Property Rights”).

⁹⁸ See also Maureen Clark (*Likely Story* 185, 244).

⁹⁹ Mudrooroo states in full: “So just see me as a mongrel and forget any other labels” (“The Global Nomad”).

¹⁰⁰ See, for example Shoemaker (“Curse” 20). Maureen Clark discusses the question throughout *Mudrooroo: A Likely Story*.

¹⁰¹ Eggington suggested that Mudrooroo’s works be destroyed. See Shoemaker (“Curse” 4) and Pybus (38).

¹⁰² See Maureen Clark (“Crafty Impostor” 109), Shoemaker (“Curse” 4), or Cassandra Pybus, who writes: “[H]is connection to Aboriginal Australia has been intense and his writing has been profoundly important to Aboriginal Australia . . .” (37).

¹⁰³ Watson’s statement was made pre-1996. In any case, it reflects his view of Mudrooroo at the time of writing *Kadaitcha*.

¹⁰⁴ As in *Ghost Dreaming* and *Kadaitcha*, country is essential to Wright’s maban realism: “I try to situate my fiction in my traditional land space and because the meaning of country is extremely important to me” (qtd. in Vernay 120).

¹⁰⁵ See Hall’s comments on the “epistemological dilemma” of Western critics, who may see “the use of the term ‘Maban Reality’ . . . as a claim for an authentic essentialised Aboriginal reality in opposition to . . . ‘natural scientific reality,’” and thus fall into the trap of applying a framework of “Manichean dualities—culture/nature, rational/irrational, technology, superstition” (119).

¹⁰⁶ His use of “our” is of course highly contentious here and elsewhere.

¹⁰⁷ In the same vein, neither am I suggesting that maban realism is “inauthentic,” an argument Maria Takolander pursues in relation to magical realism in general, and Mudrooroo’s version of it in particular (158-165).

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Watson’s and Davies’ comments on real events and life experiences, and poetic licence (190-91).

¹⁰⁹ Watson, too, comments that “[a]t the present time, black writers are writing for a white readership . . .” (qtd. in Dean).

¹¹⁰ A study focussed on maban realist animals from an Aboriginal perspective—or indeed any other point of view—has, to my knowledge, not been done yet. Clark discusses some aspects of Dreaming animals, such as the cat as introduced species, in Mudrooroo’s fiction; however, she considers them primarily as symbolic for human conditions (see M. Clark, *Likely Story* 186-7, 197-99)

¹¹¹ Both novels have also been successful in France and Holland, for example (Mudrooroo, *Indigenous Literature* 200).

¹¹² This is also reflected in Wright’s *Plains of Promise*, which is named for the farming potential European settlers saw in the Aboriginal country of the Gulf of Carpentaria (see Vernay 121).

¹¹³ See Archer-Lean (246), Suzanne Baker (“Binarisms and Dualities” 87; “Magic Realism” 57), Hall (117).

¹¹⁴ Cf. Franklin, who writes: “The colonisation of Australia involved the meeting of one culture that defined itself as absolutely different from animals with another that defined itself as indistinguishable from animals” (*Animal Nation* 48). By “indistinguishable” Franklin refers to totemic relationships. It is not to imply, of course, that Aboriginal people cannot tell the difference between humans and other animals.

¹¹⁵ For other descriptions of the island’s Aborigines as a “flock” of sheep, see *Ghost Dreaming* (126, 133).

¹¹⁶ See *Ghost Dreaming* (50, 53, 59, 64-65, 67, 132).

¹¹⁷ Critics of *Kadaitcha* have largely focused on negative imagery in Watson’s novel and neglected its humour, created by the blurring of boundaries and ambivalence. Ambivalent figures such as Jack Finlay and Stephen, the English lecturer, for example, are treated with a form of affectionate but thorough ridicule.

¹¹⁸ See *Kadaitcha* (52, 185, 205, 206, 238).

¹¹⁹ For instance, Boonger and Jarroo, Tommy's friends, sit in a restaurant "wolfing down fish and chips" (*Kadaitcha* 178), and both triumphantly declare their and Stephen's darts victory: "We skunked them migloo like they was dogs!" (185). Tommy shakes himself "like a dog" (237), and Ningi says to Tommy: "[W]e waste our time like puppies at a bitch's tit" (228). The image of dogs is also used as a disparaging label and an insult. Booka calls Tommy a "fuckin' dog" (52), women are branded as "bitches" (16, 21, 171, for example), and there is also Stephen's "bitchy humour" (168). Tommy accuses Ningi of having "let [Koobara] die like a mongrel camp dog" (228). Tea-Pot/Bunda's father calls his son a "dingo dropping" and accuses him of killing him "like a dog" (125).

¹²⁰ See also *Kadaitcha* (262-3) for an instance of Tommy and Purnung reassuring each other in both spiritual and more human terms.

¹²¹ See also Serpell's "Anthropomorphism and Anthropomorphic Selection—Beyond the 'Cute Response'" for a discussion of anthropomorphism as an adaptive feature in the relationship between companion animals and the people who live with them.

¹²² I am assuming that by "those older forms of representation" Griffiths means transcriptions of Aboriginal oral narrative that reduce those texts to children's stories or fables and not the original representations in oral form themselves.

¹²³ Archer-Lean points to the same strategy in Mudrooroo's *The Kwinkwan*, the sequel to *Ghost Dreaming* (265-6).

¹²⁴ For other representations of Tommy as hunter, see also *Kadaitcha* (131, 193, 294).

¹²⁵ See, for instance, *Kadaitcha* (25, 99, 166, 192, 193, 236).

¹²⁶ As Griffiths argues:

Strategies of recuperation and texts which insist on the importance of re-installing the 'story' of the indigenous cultures are, therefore, as many Australian Aboriginal spokespeople have insisted, crucial to their resistance.

Such recuperations may be the literal recuperation of the texts of pre-colonial cultures, the narratives of the dreaming or the body of pre-colonial oratures" ("Myth of Authenticity" 239)

¹²⁷ Tommy comments that mullets make "a good feed" (*Kadaitcha* 77), and he is clearly trained to look for "telltale flashes of fish scales" in the water (273).

¹²⁸ "A recent report put malnutrition among Aboriginal children on a par with some of the world's poorest countries, such as Sudan and Sierra Leone" (BBC News, "Aborigines Fight for Their Money Back"). See also Tatz ("Genocide in Australia").

¹²⁹ Susan Lever contemplates Watson's use of the death penalty, as "no-one has been executed in Australia for nearly thirty years" (104). She suggests that "[a]n acceptance of the novel's authenticity as an account of contemporary Aboriginal attitudes and experience depends on how the reader responds to these genre clues," as "the realist depictions of the operations of courtrooms or of Aboriginal pub life in modern Brisbane seem to invite trust," and wonders whether "the death penalty [is] one of the elements imported from American movies, and merely an accepted part of the genre" (104). See also Griffiths' comment on the matter ("Representing Difference" 482n17). However, against the background of the disproportionate number of Aboriginal deaths in custody, the death sentences in *Kadaitcha* allude to the fact that dying in custody is a reality for too many Aborigines (see the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Deaths in Custody reports), as well as to the wider context of significantly lower life-expectancy amongst Aboriginal communities compared to the overall Australian population (see Australian Bureau of Statistics ix-x). Watson thus literalises the metaphor of "passing a death sentence" upon Australia's Aboriginal population here.

¹³⁰ For example, the RCIADIC states in its final report: "Although the discriminatory legislation which embodied attitudes of racial superiority have been repealed, those attitudes are still embedded in practice and in administration" (*Final Report, Part F*).

¹³¹ Hall suggests the term “polychronotopic” in relation to the “juxtaposition of multiple time/space configurations within the [magical realist] narrative.” The text is thus “not only polyphonic (multi-voiced), but also ‘polychronotopic’” (Hall 115).

¹³² Notwithstanding the fact that his novel is fiction, Watson comments that “[e]verything that is in that book happened actually within the precincts of Brisbane” (“I Say This” 593), and describes his approach thus: “So what I did was I took the entire history of white settlement and compressed it into living memory, and I thought that was fairly effective” (“I Say This” 590-1). His strategy reflects the very real “sense of urgency” felt by Aboriginal people, who “have shorter lives than white people”: “Our memories are dimming and we are losing songs, stories, language. . . . That sense of urgency is portrayed by the central character Tommy who does have a mission to perform and time is running out” (qtd. in Dean).

¹³³ See also Dingle, who describes the process of dispossession in the wake of sheep farming: “Physical dispossession was somewhat more gradual. . . . It began around Sydney in 1788 but relatively few groups were affected until pastoral methods of fine wool production were developed from the 1820s. Sheep then rapidly colonized the eastern side of the continent; they and their capitalist owners took exclusive possession of the land” (56).

¹³⁴ The institutionalised practice of forced Aboriginal labour operated in conjunction with the systematic removal of children from their families, known as the Stolen Generation (see Kidd 9), which is detailed in the “Bringing Them Home” report (1997).

¹³⁵ Rose points out, however, that “VRD Aborigines, and cattle station Aborigines throughout the north, were largely isolated from Europeans who might wish to ameliorate the conditions of their lives” (*Dingo* 18).

¹³⁶ See also Jonathan Richard’s paper on the impact of the Native Police on race relations in Queensland. He argues: “It is important to look at the history of relations

between indigenous people and police in Queensland because so many contemporary issues and problems can be traced back to the events and policies of the nineteenth century” (Richard, “Moreton Telegraph Station”).

¹³⁷ See Colin Tatz, who discusses the controversy surrounding the use of the term "genocide" in the Australian context. He points out that “[i]n the current climate of heat in Aboriginal affairs . . . very few people use the word. Almost all historians of the Aboriginal experience—black and white—avoid it. They write about pacifying, killing, cleansing, excluding, exterminating, starving, poisoning, shooting, beheading, sterilising, exiling, removing—but avoid genocide.”

¹³⁸ As Pro Rodeo Online proudly states: “Rodeo embodies the frontier spirit as manifested through the aggressive and exploitative conquest of the West, and deals with . . . the reordering of nature according to the dictates of this ethos. It supports the value of subjugating nature, and reenacts the ‘taming’ process whereby the wild is brought under control” (original ellipsis).

¹³⁹ Even without breaches of welfare codes, rodeo animals invariably suffer. From a position between the chutes and the holding pens at the Methven Rodeo 2006, for example, I observed young calves separated from their mothers and crammed into pens for long periods of time in which they could barely move. Larger animals got stuck and twisted in the chutes; one was dragged out of this position by the tail. Moreover, animals were intimidated (legally and illegally) by cowboys and handlers with sticks, kicks, cattle prods and loud noise. Animals, marked with old scars, displayed numerous new injuries at the end of the event, and rodeo participants/staff revealingly allowed me to film only “as long you’re not SPCA.” As for Australian rodeos, I have been shown undercover footage that gives evidence of several abuses during one particular event, including a young calf’s legs being broken.

¹⁴⁰ However, the horses' bucking seems to have more to do with the flankstrap, as suggested by Ralph Clark himself and by my own observations at various New Zealand rodeos, where horses continued to buck after the cowboys were thrown and until the flank straps were removed.

¹⁴¹ Keith Thomas, commenting on early modern England, points out: "The ideal of human ascendancy . . . had implications for men's relations to each other, no less than for their treatment of the natural world. Some men were seen as useful beasts, to be curbed, domesticated and kept docile; others were vermin and predators, to be eliminated" (46-47). He also suggests that pastoralism—the management of herds and domestication of animals—and authoritarian rule over people perceived as animals "reinforced each other. . . . Domestication thus became the archetypal pattern for other kinds of social subordination. The model was a paternal one, with the ruler a good shepherd Loyal, docile animals obeying a considerate master were an example to all employees." (46). Correspondingly, depicting Aborigines as animals was also a matter of convenience in justifying the abuse of Aboriginal labour.

¹⁴² The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "meat" as "[t]he flesh of animals used for food."

¹⁴³ This term is borrowed from Philo and Wilbert (10-11).

¹⁴⁴ However, the sexualisation of "meat" in *Kadaitcha* does not always necessarily presuppose victimhood, as in Jelda's and Tommy's case at least (see 94, 288).

¹⁴⁵ See also the description of Surfer's Paradise, where "[g]ambling, cheap flesh and illicit drugs [are] the common currencies and trading went on twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week," a sign of "human degradation" (283).

¹⁴⁶ And he, too, alongside the other high society "butchers," so to speak, who are entertained at Booka's house, is ultimately "made meat of" and dismembered in revenge by Tommy, who tears his head off (see *Kadaitcha* 245).

¹⁴⁷ The idea that Watson represents women in a degrading fashion seems to stem at least in part from a confusion between the author's position and the attitude of his protagonist. Thus, Griffiths argues that the "numerous presentations of Jelled [sic] and other young Aboriginal women as sexually promiscuous" are "open to this kind of charge," and states that "Watson's 'defence' that they too are 'warriors,' free of the sexual hang-ups of their white sisters, is a dubious one" ("Representing Difference" 481). Griffiths does not provide a source for "Watson's 'defence';" most likely, this refers to an assertion made by Tommy: "Black women had an alarming frankness about life and love. They were totally different from their fucked up white sisters" (*Kadaitcha* 184). However, Tommy's opinions cannot be equated with Watson's. Griffiths seems to miss the fact that Tommy is a flawed hero, as Ningi points out: "'You have so many gifts, my boy,' Ningi said sadly. 'But you also have an abundance of stupidity and that can be very dangerous'" (250).

¹⁴⁸ In the context of Watson's hunting trope, one could say that the derogatory label "gin" is turned around into an empowering concept, as "gin traps" snap back to wound their oppressors, though the fact that women are "instrumental" in this way is still a contentious issue.

¹⁴⁹ This is reinforced by the fact that "Gubba," Tommy's surname, is not only "a common Aboriginal word for a white person" and "a colloquial abbreviation of the word 'government,'" but that it also means "peeping tom" (Gelder and Jacobs 110, 111).

¹⁵⁰ By *Mitläufer*, I mean to denote someone who, despite having knowledge of injustices, allows them to occur or continue by either remaining passive about them or by

quietly enjoying the benefits of such acts, without being directly involved in committing them.

¹⁵¹ See for example Gideon Eshel and Pamela A. Martin for a study of the effects of meat production on the environment.

¹⁵² Meat and Livestock Australia (“Paddock to Plate”).

¹⁵³ A recent campaign by Voiceless and Animals Australia, which involved adverts designed to look like recipes from a cookbook, illustrates just how controversial it is to bring the connection, the hidden processing of animals into meat, into the limelight. The adverts, with titles such as “Lame and Pained Pork Pie” and “Traumatised Suckling Piglet with Severed Tail,” highlighted the suffering of factory farmed animals and were to be placed in mainstream Australian magazines. However, all but two publications refused to print them (see Voiceless; “Disturbing Pork Ads Mess with Industry”).

¹⁵⁴ With the official apology offered to the Stolen Generation by current Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in 2008, these issues are beginning to be addressed. The apology marks an important turning point in Australian politics and, perhaps, culture, and history changes as I write in 2009, such as the very recent declaration by Rudd's government that the previous Australian opposition to the UN Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous People be overturned and the declaration be endorsed. The denial about Australia's past, however, is very recent and deeply ingrained, and *Kadaitcha's* message remains pertinent, as I argue here.

¹⁵⁵ These took place on 21 March 2009.

¹⁵⁶ One backpacker's website comments: “To carry out a top BarBie is indeed to become Australian” (Stoned Crow).

¹⁵⁷ “We have found in Brisbane that white Australians will not walk unassisted to the Treaty table, we have to drag and force them to acknowledge us as equals” (Watson qtd. in Dean).

¹⁵⁸ Muecke is talking about human bodies only here, but the blurred distinction between human and non-human animal bodies is intrinsic to Mudrooroo's and Watson's maban realism, as humans and animals are "one" and of the same origins within the Dreaming.

¹⁵⁹ "The most troubling aspect of the apology was the fact that Mr Rudd rejected the need for compensation to the Stolen Generations and instead proposed that closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage was an appropriate substitute" (ANTaR). Other concerns include the continuation of the so-called Northern Territory Intervention, instituted under the previous government and upheld by the Rudd government without adequate consultation of the communities affected (see, for instance, Socialist Alliance).

¹⁶⁰ In this chapter, I follow Gerald Vizenor, King and others in using the capitalised version of "Native" to mean natives of the Americas and, given the subject matter at hand, specifically those of the North American continent.'''

¹⁶¹ My use of the term "Indian" in this chapter reflects both the stereotype created by the frontier Myth of the Wild West and King's usage of the term, which plays on a "pan-Indian" experience of colonisation as much as on the stereotype "Indians" are expected to conform to. Gerald Vizenor rightly criticises the term:

The name "Indian" is a convenient one, to be sure, but it is an invented term that does not come from any Native language, and it does not describe or contain any aspect of traditional Native experience or literature. Indian, the noun, is a simulation of racialism, an undesirable separation of race in the political and cultural interests of discovery and colonial settlement of new nations; the noun does not reveal the experiences of diverse Native communities. The name is unbidden, and the Native heirs must bear an unnatural burden to be so christened in their own land. (47)

¹⁶² Cynthia Sugars also comments on the trickster's deconstruction of colonialist binaries in Native literature in general (see 87n7).

¹⁶³ Note the allusion to the circus announcements "Roll up, roll up" and "Are you ready to rumble?"

¹⁶⁴ Coyote in *Green Grass* appears to be male, according to Robinson Crusoe (see *Green Grass* 258), so I will use "he" for King's trickster, but "she" when Weesageechak appears as the Fur Queen and "she-he" for the trickster in general. I prefer the slash to the hyphen (as in "she/he" or "s/he") because it is a connecting symbol more than a dividing device.

¹⁶⁵ Robert A. Brightman describes the Weetigo of Cree narratives and beliefs:

The most salient trait of the windigo is clearly anthropophagy, which contrasts with human zoophagy. The term 'cannibalism' is imprecise, since Crees emphasize that the witiko, although formerly human, no longer is so. The very fact of eating or desiring to eat human flesh results in the loss of human identity, paradoxically resulting in a diet that is thereafter not technically cannibalistic. (140).

¹⁶⁶ Brightman's study of Rock Cree human-animal relationships is appropriate here: Brightman focuses primarily on the Rock Cree communities "in and around . . . Granville Lake and Pukatawagan" (xii), but he also explicitly includes Brochet, Highway's home community (xv). Variations are possible due to the "fluidity and mobility of Cree society" (5-6), and it is not my intention to efface potential differences between the stories and beliefs of specific communities and those Highway may identify with. However, Brightman's study of human-animal relationships is detailed and extensive—he acknowledges his limitations and his desire for a "Mississippi Cree" to "write a better book" (xi)—and I use Brightman's

account where the beliefs and practices he describes are reflected, at least to a significant degree, in *Fur Queen*.

¹⁶⁷ Indeed, the arctic fox is “one of the few species [of fox] that humans consider edible” (Wallen 143).

¹⁶⁸ It should be noted here that even though some Cree suggest that animals may have spoken in the past and hold the belief that “animals talked and behaved” like human beings at the beginning of the world, this past is “both continuous with and detached from the present” (Brightman 37-8).

¹⁶⁹ Brightman points out here and elsewhere, however, that, outside of dreams, bears tend to have special status: “It is said that bears, for example, understand spoken Cree, a competence not conventionally generalized to other animals” (32).

¹⁷⁰ Since Highway conceived his novel in Cree and translated as he wrote (Hodgson), I wonder whether “black coffee” might be a Cree pun that alludes to barking, or else, whether the English phrase “black coffee” might sound somewhat like barking to the ears of a Cree speaker; a point I can only surmise, but which a Cree speaker might clarify.

¹⁷¹ Indeed, animals are reported to speak Cree as part of the shaking lodge (Brightman 173-6).

¹⁷² However, now that dogs are being trained to sniff out cancer cells in human bodies, this ability may not appear so “magical” anymore even to scientifically-minded Westerners.

¹⁷³ Brightman points out, however, that “[i]n conventional waking experience, animals are usually seen as mute, noncultural, and unreactive socially with human beings. There is a Cree commonsense view that these visible differences separate animals from humans as qualitatively distinct life forms, whatever their similarities” (Brightman 161). Nonetheless, this commonsense view is not readily comparable to the distinctions made from

Western scientific perspectives, as Brightman's many descriptions of Cree human-animal encounters show.

¹⁷⁴ Rather than employing common terms such as "domestic animals" or "farmed animals," I prefer the German concept of *Nutztiere*, "useful animals," here. The term and its application to fiction, and its distinction from the more common labels for farmed animals, will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

¹⁷⁵ I refer to Coyote with a capital "C" to denote the archetypal trickster figure, and "coyotes" in the plural and lower case when I mean the species. "The coyote" here is taken from Sandlos and the Canadian Wildlife Service document he cites, reflecting the convention of referring to the many individuals belonging to a species by an emblematic singular term, but also signalling the ambivalence of "the animal" Sandlos discusses, who belongs to both the trickster stories and the biological realm.

¹⁷⁶ See, for example, the scene in which "I" appears to be talking to Coyote, but is in fact directly addressing the reader: "'Okay,' says Coyote. 'Tell me a story.' 'Okay,' I says. 'You remember Old Woman? You remember that big hole and Young Man Walking On Water? You remember any of this at all?' 'Sure,' says Coyote. 'I remember all of it.' 'I wasn't talking to you,' I says. 'Who else is here?' says Coyote" (*Green Grass* 432).

¹⁷⁷ See Flick for information on Fredric Remington, "the most famous artist of the Old West," and for a comment on the stereotyping of Indians at Remington's burlesque theatre (157).

¹⁷⁸ Brightman discusses this extensively. However, Brightman also points out that "[c]ontrary to Cree theology, moose, caribou, and beaver are not infinitely regenerated or reborn, or, at least, they proved not to be under the regime of intensified harvesting that followed the expansion of the inland posts" (300-1).

¹⁷⁹ Brightman relates how humans can display Weetigo tendencies: “Witikos are imagined as existing in a state of chronic ravenousness, evocative of the famine tragedies said to induce the condition. One man said that persons who greedily ate acceptable food in great quantities were thought likely to be incipient witikos” (141).

¹⁸⁰ The advert for the condominium in the mall is seemingly a minor detail, yet King repeatedly draws our attention to it (cf. *Green Grass* 413).

¹⁸¹ This slogan now no longer appears on their webpage.

¹⁸² In fact, James Bailey of the Barnum and Bailey circus worked for Buffalo Bill Cody as manager of the Wild West shows (see McMurtry 9). Lewis Eldon Atherton writes further that “[w]ith the passing of the Wild West Shows, the American public turned its attention to rodeos” (77), and indeed, the founder of the Calgary Stampede, Guy Weadick, intended to “make Buffalo Bill’s Wild West extravaganza look like a side show” (The Calgary Stampede, “The Calgary Stampede Story”).

¹⁸³ See John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett (50).

¹⁸⁴ The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* describes the Wild West as “a spectacular featuring fancy shooting, a buffalo hunt, capture of the Deadwood (S.D.) stagecoach, a Pony Express ride, hard-riding cowboys, and yelling Indians” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, “Cody, William F.”)

¹⁸⁵ Larry McMurtry stresses the importance of the Wild West in shaping American identity: “The Wild West, as it evolved under his [Bill Cody’s] leadership, was always, however crudely, a pageant of American life—and particularly that part of it that had involved the settling of the American West” (115-6). He also highlights the significance of patriotic elements in the performance: “He noticed that cowboys were always competing with one another in roping contests or bronco-riding contests. Cody quickly concluded that if these ranch competitions could be organized, people might pay to see them. If such

competitions could be linked to some patriotic theme or occasion, then *lots* of people might pay to see them” (115, original italics). For the reception of the Wild West show in various European countries, see John Burke (185-200).

¹⁸⁶ For an analysis of the currency of the frontier myth depicting hostile savages conquered by noble white men as propagated by Buffalo Bill Cody, and its both contrasting and complementary role in relation to nineteenth century historian Frederick Jackson Turner’s myth of a peaceful settlement of the North American continent, see Richard White and Patricia Nelson Limerick respectively.

¹⁸⁷ The ambiguity of the term “Western” is inevitable here and throughout this chapter.

¹⁸⁸ Gill asserts that “[t]he famous Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show . . . exploited Native Americans as curiosities for audiences throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. Even Sitting Bull traveled with the show in 1885” (122). Ironically, the fact that Sitting Bull was part of the show is generally used as legitimisation for its project, and many sources stress that Buffalo Bill was a friend of Indians. This sweeping generalisation aside, it also erases Buffalo Bill’s role as an Indian Scout, and his bragging about the scalping of Chief Yellow Hair, as people want to see him as a flawless hero, not as the ambiguous human being he appears to have been.

¹⁸⁹ “Native American ritual acts and ritual dress often involve the extensive use of feathers. Among many people, nothing is more potent and meaningful than feathers. Feathers can scarcely be symbolic apart from images of motion, flight, air, and the sky. The types of birds from which feathers can be collected and the habits and character of those birds provide an endless potential for religious symbols” (Gill 58).

¹⁹⁰ Greg Dickinson, Brian L. Ott and Eric Aoki highlight the continued importance of the myth created and perpetuated by Buffalo Bill’s Wild West: “The continuing desire for the

BBM's [Buffalo Bill Museum's] version of history is dramatically illustrated by public response to the West as America exhibit at the National Museum of American Art in 1991." They describe the critical response to the exhibition, which "consistently highlighted the ideological biases of Western Art," as "vitriolic," and argue that, "[a]lthough the exhibit indicates that alternative visions of the West are representable, the resistance to this different vision of the West demonstrates the continuing importance of the traditional Western narrative to US American culture" (103-4).

¹⁹¹ Reg Crowshoe tells of the impossibility of passing knowledge, ceremonies and other cultural aspects on to the younger generation before the founder of the Calgary Stampede Guy Weadick invited "the First Nations, the Piikani, Kainai, Siksika, T'suu Tina, and the Stoneys," because the people were not allowed to leave the reservations without permits, Native languages and songs were forbidden, and First Nations tribes were coerced into giving up their nomadic life, living in teepees and travelling by horseback, in favour of farming. Indeed, whilst Weadick invited them to "come in your teepees," the government tried to intervene and wanted them to show off their successes as farmers. However, seeing the opportunity to gather again and pass on their cultural knowledge to their children, Crowshoe recounts how the tribes came with teepees and Pow-Wow drums regardless. Crowshoe also points out that Calgary was an important meeting and ceremonial ground long before the city ever existed, and participating in the Calgary Stampede was in fact a return "to their old camping grounds" (Crowshoe, "Doctor Elder Reg Crowshoe Reflects").

¹⁹² King writes about Sitting Bull "who, nine years after the Battle of the Little Bighorn, was touring with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show at a salary of \$50 a week, plus a \$150 signing bonus" and mentions "about thirty Indians who had been involved in the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre." He points out that, "[s]een as malcontents, they were given the choice of touring with Buffalo Bill or going to jail. An easy choice, if you ask me" (*Truth*

about Stories 87). Burke asserts that Sitting Bull joined the Wild West because he “had a large family and needed the money” (157).

¹⁹³ In some ways, King follows in the footsteps of some of the Native members of Buffalo Bill’s troupe who, during the show’s tour of Europe, managed to turn the circus and the exoticising gaze around after a visit to the Vatican, where they “laughed all the way back to the campsite” at the “idea of the Swiss Guard pretending to be warriors” (Burke 195). They also managed to have the last word when Buffalo Bill’s press agent John Burke delivered a speech in Barcelona: “He gestured dramatically toward the nearby statue of Columbus and declaimed, ‘There stands our advance agent, four hundred years ahead of us’. ‘Damn bad day for us,’ one of the Indians remarked in cultivated tones, ‘when *he* discovered America’” (Burke 192, original italics).

¹⁹⁴ “Red Dog” may be a pun on “Read Dog,” since Lionel is a “Dog” who went to university after all, and an allusion to “clever animals” circus tricks such as the famous Clever Hans horse who was believed to be able to count.

¹⁹⁵ For the significance of the phrase in, for example, contemporary pan-Indian religion, see Jordan Paper (643-4); for the Lakota specifically see Marsha Bol (102).

¹⁹⁶ Thorp would not consider *Green Grass* an enactment narrative, because, by her definition, enactment narratives are “evocations not of a pan-Indian reality, but that of the specific cultures they portray” (165).

¹⁹⁷ Gill’s comment about Native creation stories is also appropriate here to distinguish “myth” from M. H. Abrams’ definition of mythology as “a religion in which we no longer believe” (Abrams 111, 5th ed.). Gill writes:

It is common to refer to such stories as mythology or, more exactly, as creation or cosmogonic mythology. The distinctive marker of these stories, being set ‘in the beginning,’ is not a historical reckoning. It is rather a way to

designate events as beyond question and doubt, beyond precedent. Nor does mythology mean false or scientifically false, yet believed by the primitive or unsophisticated. (10)

¹⁹⁸ For a more detailed reading of the Okimasis brothers' enactment of the Ayash myth, particularly in relation to the Weetigo as sexual predator and embodiment of Christianity, see McKegney's "From Trickster Poetics to Transgressive Politics" and "Claiming Native Narrative Control: Tomson Highway on Residential Schooling."

¹⁹⁹ Abraham Okimasis' win is also, in a sense, a mythical transformation of Highway's own father's dog race victory. Joe Highway won the dog race at the Les Pas Trapper's Festival in 1951 (Moss; "Race Winners").

²⁰⁰ See also Wallen (43-4).

²⁰¹ For an account of the vulgar, shocking and sexual elements of Coyote stories, see Dell H. Hymes.

²⁰² For other symbolic meanings of the Okimasis brothers' enactments of Catholic rituals, see Sugars.

²⁰³ "Hee-hee-hee-hee-hee-hee-hee-hee" (Coyote qtd. in *Green Grass* 451).

²⁰⁴ "'See,' says Coyote. 'See. I can be helpful'" (*Green Grass* 422).

²⁰⁵ Thomas (*Robert Kroetsch* 108, 112), Lecker (105, 98), and Wilson ("Boundary 40) list a number of allusions to Graeco-Roman myths in *What the Crow Said*.

²⁰⁶ See Jan Horner for an in-depth discussion of Hodgins' conflation of Irish and Biblical myths.

²⁰⁷ See also Lois Parkinson Zamora and Faris (2), Angel Flores (114), or Scott Simpkins (150).

²⁰⁸ See Robin Hard and Herbert J. Rose for the myth of Lykaon (538-40).

²⁰⁹ The gender of the crow, too, is ambiguous, as Rudy Dorscht points out (76-7), and the Schmier players “couldn’t agree on the sex of the crow” (*What the Crow Said* 11).

²¹⁰ J'nan Morse Sellery also considers the crow an “animal trickster” (21).

²¹¹ If, indeed, it is actually the crow on the hull. Liebhaber is certain that it is the crow, but he never sees her/him, to verify his belief.

²¹² See Carol Langhelle’s discussion of “Maggie’s ‘triumph’ over Keneally” and the role of Maggie and Wade’s final “show of love” in connection with Christian Science beliefs (51).

²¹³ I disagree with Delbaere-Garant’s generalisation here, though, as this statement does not apply to Peter Carey’s and Richard Flanagan’s magic realist novels, for example.

²¹⁴ See also Kroetsch, *Crow Journals* (69).

²¹⁵ Jeffrey, too, notes that “beginning in the early 1960s,” Hodgins’ “sense of the real” shows “the impact of reading Mary Baker Eddy” (209). He also points out, in a biographical note on Hodgins, that “the family are conscientious adherents to Christian Science” (189).

²¹⁶ “Reality seems at least somewhat contingent upon what we can touch, taste, hear, feel, and see with our ordinary eyes” (Jeffrey 207).

²¹⁷ Eddy writes: “No one can reasonably doubt that the purpose of this allegory—this second account in Genesis—is to depict the falsity of error and the effects of error. Subsequent Bible revelation is coordinate with the Science of creation recorded in the first chapter of Genesis” (537). All citations from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* were accessed on the Spirituality.com website. For convenience, I have given the page numbers of the print version, provided on the website, in the text.

²¹⁸ “Heathen mythology and Jewish theology have perpetuated the fallacy that intelligence, soul, and life can be in matter; and idolatry and ritualism are the outcome of all man-made beliefs” (Eddy 466).

²¹⁹ “Divine logic and revelation coincide. If we believe otherwise, we may be sure that either our logic is at fault or that we have misinterpreted revelation. Good never causes evil, nor creates aught that can cause evil” (Eddy 93).

²²⁰ For Eddy, the premise is wrong from the outset, as no ailing physical body exists to begin with. See Eddy’s chapter in *Science and Health* devoted to the subject, entitled “Animal Magnetism Unmasked.”

²²¹ See also Langhelle’s discussion of *The Invention of the World* as an allegorical narrative, and the relationship between Maggie’s and Keneally’s respective stories, in the context of Christian Science (13-15).

²²² I use "it" advisedly here.

²²³ John Berger considers the objectification of animals to be the result of industrialisation, whereby “[a]nimals required for food are processed like manufactured commodities.” He discusses the “physical marginalisation” of animals, who ‘disappear’ into feedlots, or into the privacy and isolation of the family home. Berger parallels this with the animals’ “cultural marginalisation.” He writes: “The animals of the mind, instead of being dispersed, have been co-opted into other categories so that the category *animal* has lost its central importance. Mostly they have been co-opted into the *family* and into the *spectacle*.” Berger cites picture books, Disney characters and animal photography as examples. As a result, he says, “animals are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance” (Berger, “Vanishing Animals” 664-5). See also Philip Armstrong’s discussion of the connection between industrial farming practices and visual representations of farmed animals, who signify, in the end, primarily the products made from them: they are “always already meat” (Armstrong, “Farming Images” 121).

²²⁴ This cat here is of course a companion animal and not a useful animal (unlike cats who, for example, are primarily kept to catch mice). A companion animal is usually

considered irreplaceable. Conceptualised as pets, however, animals tend to be commodified and therefore often replaceable. (Keneally's two 'Thunderbirds' are an example of this.)

This, however, is determined by their relationship to humans. There is no intrinsic, biological reason why a cow, for instance, should be a useful animal, and why a cat should be a pet or animal companion. Cats can be eaten, and cows can be companions.

²²⁵ It is a fitting oxymoron that magical realist animals can be conceptualised as those kinds of representations of animals that refuse to be conceptualised.

²²⁶ See also Derrida's use of "asinine" (398), and the translator's footnote no. 22 on the same page, concerning his translation of Derrida's original "bête" and "bêtise."

²²⁷ See Kendall Thu, who describes a "shift from pasture-based and open-lot production to total animal confinement, beginning in the early 1970s" (16).

²²⁸ Margaret Atwood also writes, "the animal as victim is a persistent image in Canadian literature . . ." (79).

²²⁹ He does, however, address the environmental problems associated with logging, such the mudslide in the final chapter of *Joseph Bourne*.

²³⁰ British Columbia also has a strong rodeo culture. See The British Columbia Rodeo Association.

²³¹ Horner comments on Horseman's "supernatural" appearance (6). She also associates him with the Tuatha De Danann and Irish "peasant belief . . . that supernatural horsemen rode between the mountains" (Horner 13), and with the riders of the apocalypse (Horner 14). See also Langhelle (20). See Delbaere-Garant, who considers Horseman a manifestation of psychic realism (254), and her comment on Kroetsch's and Slemon's interpretations of Horseman (255).

²³² At the 2006 Calgary Stampede, there is \$1.6 million in prize money to be made (Calgary Stampede Rodeo, "Calgary Stampede Rodeo Action"). See also the origins of the

Stampede: “With origins as an 1886 Agricultural Fair to the world-famous attraction that it is today” (Calgary Exhibition and Stampede, “About Stampede: History”).

²³³ The American Humane Association, however, “contends that rodeos are not an accurate or harmless portrayal of ranching skills; rather, they display and encourage an insensitivity to the acceptance of brutal treatment of animals in the name of sport.”

²³⁴ See, for instance, Fiachra Gibbons.

²³⁵ All page numbers for *Life of Pi* refer to the Canongate paperback edition (2003).

²³⁶ See Douglas Johnstone.

²³⁷ Cf. Armstrong (*What Animals Mean* 179).

²³⁸ Contrary to Pi’s assertion, zoos and related entertainment forms are not only businesses, but also in some cases distinctive brand names. The San Diego Zoo, for example, which Pi highlights as a particularly good zoo (*Life of Pi* 40), appeals to potential corporate sponsors as “one of the most powerful and impactful [sic] brands in Southern California (San Diego Zoo, “Partnership Marketing”). Their advert succinctly states: “Nothing draws customers like a good cause. That’s what cause marketing can do for you. Companies can see strong sales when linking their products to saving endangered species and their habitats” (“Partnership Marketing). Apart from generating income to pay not only for the animals’ food and shelter but also the zookeepers, general staff, the board of directors, public relations officers, suppliers and, where applicable, shareholders, the benefits of being associated with zoos especially for companies with dubious environmental records is evident in such partnerships as the Auckland Zoo’s exhibit, which used to be known as the “McDonald’s Rainforest” (see McSpotlight), until the sponsor changed.

²³⁹ Unlike the Paris launch of the International Polar Year, which was well attended by reporters, only a handful of media outlets appeared at the Berlin launch, which competed with a veritable media circus at the Berlin Zoo. (Information supplied by Bettina Kaiser,

Chair of APECS [Association of Polar Early Career Scientists] Germany, and Education Coordinator of the New Zealand Youth Steering Committee of the International Polar Year).

²⁴⁰ Knut is such an “ambassador.” See “Respect Habitats. Knut.” Also cf. Malamud (44) and Schwalm (96).

²⁴¹ See Berger (“Vanishing Animals” 664).

²⁴² This is especially relevant when neoteny comes into play and elicits, more or less strongly, an instinctive attraction. This is illustrated by the common promotion of newborn animals by zoos, for example.

²⁴³ It also strongly suggests that Martel looked up theories or discussions related to magical realism and decided to address the broad consensus of what defines magical realism; otherwise, it is uncanny how this formula of sorts for magical realism, repeated and discussed by critics in many variations, is so explicitly addressed.

²⁴⁴ As Huggan, referring to Root, writes: “. . . the objects of [exoticism’s] gaze are not supposed to look back (*Postcolonial Exotic* 14).

²⁴⁵ Almost every third person (32%) in Montreal was a religious worshipper in 2001, including Buddhists, Sikhs, Muslims, Christians and Hindus (Todd).

²⁴⁶ A similar mechanism is at work in the “cultural sharing” between Maasai and the San Diego Zoo (see San Diego Zoo, “Maasai Culture Share Program”; M&C Saatchi, ““San Diego Zoo’s Wild Animal Park—Journey into Africa: Masai”). The term “share” really clouds the fact that zoos have a history of exhibiting peoples from countries deemed exotic by the West. It seems that in this context the idea of “culture share” can really only be considered genuine if a contingent of US Americans will follow up by going to a Kenyan zoo, in order to demonstrate, say, scrap-booking, quilting, and burger-flipping, to tell stories of mass produced turkeys and pet dog fashion, and to allow Saatchi and Saatchi to produce a glossy advert making fun of ballroom and line dancing.

²⁴⁷ See Edemariam.

²⁴⁸ Martel comments on his process of becoming a writer: “You must have masters to imitate first before you become a writer yourself” (Interview with Mishal Husain).

²⁴⁹ Since the hyena is primarily a “function,” as Martel explains, “it” seems appropriate.

²⁵⁰ See also Martel (“How I Wrote *Life of Pi*”; Interview with Mishal Husain).

²⁵¹ See also Amanda Onion, who writes about the difficulty of drawing attention and funding to insect conservation, because “[b]ig and pretty animals get all the glory.”

²⁵² Seeing hyenas in their natural habitat is quite a different experience, which makes Pi’s preoccupation with the hyena’s perceived lack of beauty seem rather trivial.

²⁵³ I am borrowing and reversing the argument of Turner and Ash here, who write, in relation to Balinese art and tourist kitsch: “Many aspects of Balinese culture and art are so bewilderingly complex and alien to western modes that they do not lend themselves readily to the process of over-simplification and mass production that converts indigenous art forms into tourist kitsch” (qtd. in Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic* 7-8).

²⁵⁴ I am referring back to Foucault’s phrase “impossible to think,” of course.

²⁵⁵ Indeed, boredom can be a form of terror itself, as torture methods such as sensory deprivation and prolonged solitary confinement, or even the behaviour of zoochotic animals demonstrate. If Pi, however, amused himself by being bored, that would be an oxymoron.

²⁵⁶ Under such circumstances, an animal can hardly be considered a “who.”

²⁵⁷ Allende, Isabel. *Das Geisterhaus*. Suhrkamp, 2004.

²⁵⁸ That is, aside from being safeguards that prevent visitors from becoming dinner for carnivores.

²⁵⁹ Urry is referring to MacCannell’s discussion of the signage provided to frame tourist attractions.

²⁶⁰ Pi (and/or possibly Martel) makes this mistake two more times: “I wondered whether this algae would ever cease to amaze me with its botanical strangeness” (*Life of Pi* 278); “A fish-eating algae that produces fresh water?” (*Life of Pi* 294).

²⁶¹ For a detailed discussion of the exhibition in zoos of people deemed exotic, for example, Rothfels’ *Savages and Beasts*.

²⁶² See also Martel (“How I Wrote *Life of Pi*”; “Exclusive Interview—Life of Yann Martel”; “Conversation”; Iris Alanyali; Luke Harding.

²⁶³ Carsten Würmann, who interviewed Martel in the Berlin Zoo, paraphrases the author as saying that the “defence of zoos” in the novel was “undoubtedly exaggerated” (“*Im Roman habe er das Plädoyer für den Zoo sicherlich übertrieben.*”) (“Der mit den Tieren schreibt,” my translation). However, Pi reflects, in essence, the opinion Martel puts forward in regard to zoos. See, for example, Martel’s “A Giraffe in a Cage is worth two on the Box.”

²⁶⁴ For an extensive argument critical of zoos, see Malamud’s *Reading Zoos*.

²⁶⁵ In fact, zoos are better compared to old-fashioned mental asylums than to hotels (see Malamud 115-6).

²⁶⁶ Pi reflects an observation made by Masson and McCarthy: “[I]t has been argued that if all an animal’s needs are met, it will not care whether it is free or not” (144).

²⁶⁷ In any case, despite having cages and enclosures, Trivandrum Zoo, for example, where Martel did much of his research, is evidently unable to stop people from harassing the animals by “frequently lob[bing] things at the animals to wake them up” (Harding).

²⁶⁸ The Whovi Game Park in Matobo covers a fenced area of around 105 km² (approximately 25,946 acres) (Rachlow and Berger 102). In comparison, the San Diego Zoo’s Wild Animal Park has “[o]ver half of the Park’s 1,800 acres [approximately 7.3 km²] . . . set aside as protected native species habitat” (San Diego Zoo, “About the Zoological Society”).

²⁶⁹ Masson and McCarthy comment on the difficulty of determining whether “good zoos” exists:

Can there be a good zoo? Since animal behaviour is so often flexible, it seems that this ought to be possible, but then most animals are not held captive by people who are asking what it would take to make the animal happy. They ask what it would take to make the animal docile, or to make a good exhibit, or to breed. We do not study the art of making zoo animals content, thrilled or joyous. (146)

Arguably, “enrichment” experiments study just that; however, since the outcome is never compared with wild populations provided with the same tasks and opportunities, it is difficult to prove that the so-called enrichment sufficiently meets the animals’ needs, as Masson and McCarthy point out in the context of animal acts (see 143-4), which are often represented as better for the animals’ welfare than regular zoo captivity.

²⁷⁰ See Martel (“A Giraffe in a Cage is Worth Two on the Box”).

²⁷¹ This is the point where Pi and Martel differ, as Martel insists the best place for animals is their natural habitat.

²⁷² “*Martels Lieblingsbeschäftigung im Zoo ist, den Tieren in die Augen zu sehen.*”

²⁷³ Zoos, arguably, teach children not to respect animals, but to see them as commodities at our disposal (cf. Malamud 43-4). In any case, the experience of seeing wild animals compares in no way to the experience of seeing them “in the flesh” in the zoo or circus.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Schwalm (91).

²⁷⁵ Malamud comments that the argument that “[z]oos are better now than ever” veils the many shortcomings of contemporary zoos (46-49).

²⁷⁶ For the ideological underpinnings of and justifications for circuses, see Schwalm, “No Circus without Animals?”

²⁷⁷ “Taming” is really a euphemism when it means subjugation by intimidation, instead of teaching animals to overcome their fear of humans by demonstrating that there is nothing to fear. Pi employs the euphemism; another instance of mythical speech (see *Life of Pi* 164, 165, 181).

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