CHAPTER 9

Ecce animot
Animal Turns

Jane Goldman

> *Ecce animot*. Neither 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 waiting to be put to death by its Bellerophon.[1]

Ecce cat! "*A little cat . . . truly a little cat, this* cat I am talking about, which is also a female," is in danger of stealing Derrida's show, weaving between the legs of his formidable, playful prose, which itself must further dog-leg, pussy-foot, through devoted, rigorous translations, before reaching clumsy Anglophone readers like myself with modest competence in French.[2]

> The animal is there before me, there next to me, there in front of me – I who am (following) [*suis*] after it. And from the vantage of this being-there-before-me it can allow itself to be looked at, no doubt, but also – something that philosophy perhaps forgets, perhaps being this calculated forgetting itself – it can look at me. It has a point of view regarding me. The point of view of the absolute other.[3]

Late Derrida, it seems, may be understood as his animal turn (perhaps return), "the beginnings of what constitutes one of the major directions of his whole trajectory," for devoted editor Marie-Louise Mallet.[4] She prefaces *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2003), with playful, affectionate solemnity, acknowledging his more frequent acknowledgments of his own mortality that accompany the philosopher's animal turn: "In 1997 he still had a little time, but for a long time already, well before 1997, and very often after, this little sentence came back to him: 'Life

[1] *Animot* is Derrida's neologism, introducing with "mot" (meaning word) a punning suffix to the French plural, "animaux": animality is thus not to be understood as singularizing category, "The Animal," but as multiplicitous and discursive. Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 41.
[2] Ibid., 6. [3] Ibid., 11. [4] Ibid., xii.

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will have been short.' That future perfect encounters its 'absolute usage.'"[5]

Death is even more explicitly at the fore in the posthumously published, *The Beast and the Sovereign* – two volumes of his twenty-three animal seminars delivered December 2001 to March 2002 and December 2002 to March 2003.[6] Citing his "seminars on the death penalty," Derrida confirms that the "question of the animal was also, here and elsewhere, one of our permanent concerns."[7] So it is no idle rhetorical flourish, no hyperbole, when Derrida declares: "nothing will have ever given me more food for thinking through this absolute of the neighbor or of the next (-door) than these moments when I see myself naked under the gaze of a cat."[8] In staging such an encounter with an unnamed, apparently silent cat (this is no chatty catty), is Derrida predicting the eclipse of his entire oeuvre by this late animal turn, or is he acknowledging the animal's presence in all he has thought and written? Where does that leave the "food for thinking" left on his step by all those formidable thinkers and interlocutors in his career, dead and living, namely Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Husserl, Heidegger, Levinas, Lacan, Nancy et al.? Is this a studied insult to his male human interlocutors, or a diplomatic gesture to avoid singling out one above others? Better follow the announcement of "*a little cat*" as one's messiah than a fellow man! Not "ecce homo," but "*Ecce animot*," indeed!

Certainly in literary seminars and symposia, these days, Derrida's cat often has more pedagogical traction than a cold plunge into *Of Grammatology*, say, or *Writing and Difference*. Derrida's neologism, "animot" may well come to eclipse "difference" or "trace" or "pharmakon" or "phallogocentrism" or "aporia," as a kind of signature by-word of the Derridean. Yet it, and the cat, may be manifestations of (a late ruse to reignite or restate) "*différance*," that is, that "which marks or traces out the problem of the relation between identity and difference," according to Claire Colebrook, who understands "the difference between humans and non-humans" to be a fourth way of approaching difference in Derrida's work, the first being "a poststructuralist critique of the supposedly post-metaphysical attention to meaning as generated through systems," the second, "the post-phenomenological problem of time," and the third, "sexual difference."[9] Pressing from sexual difference

[5] Ibid., xiii.
[6] See Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, trans. Geoff Bennington, vols. 1 and 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009, 2011).
[7] Ibid., 1. [8] Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 11.
[9] Claire Colebrook, "Difference," in *A Companion to Derrida*, ed. Zeynep Direk and Leonard Lawler (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 57.

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to human–animal difference is the outcome, for Colebrook, of addressing "the extent to which the concept of man – and the impossibility of this concept – has been at the heart of Derrida's complication of difference by *différance*. It is not surprising then that not only sexual difference but difference between animals and humans becomes increasingly important in Derrida's work."[10] For if the "being who is able to re-trieve and re-live the sameness or identity from which distinction emerges has always been man," she observes, "it follows then that the thought of sexual difference (a difference that cannot be traced back to some unified humanity or single cultural system) might open a new thought of *différance*. Similarly, if there were no stable identity that comprised 'the animal,' then all those features of man that had guaranteed presence – the capacity to reason, to touch, to speak, to look, to remember, to archive – would be under threat."[11]

Derrida, poet as much as philosopher,[12] understands the unnamed little she-cat to be "animot," not animal in the "general singular, separated from man by a single, indivisible limit," in the sense of standing for all animals, or even all feline animals.[13] For "animot" poetically invites us to the scene of writing and speaking of "animaux," the plural in French, or "animals" in English. In "animot," Derrida first "would like to have the plural animals heard in the singular ... 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."[14] Derrida is in keeping with many other thinkers who have struggled with "where to cut," with where or whether we distinguish between human and animal, not least Levinas, even more so Agamben.[15] His book's title throws a spanner in the works of Enlightenment reason's cut via the capacity for abstract thought. The reviled and discarded animal elided from Descartes's "*cogito ergo sum*,"/'I think therefore I am," is perhaps restored in *L'animal que donc je suis* / "the animal that therefore I am/follow [je suis]." Yet, why not "The 'L'ani*mot* que donc je suis'"? Such a performative turn, more so than the chosen title's corrective to the Cartesian (exposing the animal that is also "I"), requires the reader's active engagement with the book itself, and the world, before "mal" may become "mot." In what world could "animot" and not "animal" become axiomatic?

[10] Ibid., 68. [11] Ibid.
[12] See Nicholas Royle, "Poetry, Animality, Derrida," in *A Companion to Derrida*, ed. Zeynep Direk and Leonard Lawler (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 524–36.
[13] Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 47. [14] Ibid., 48.
[15] See John Llewelyn, "Where to Cut: Boucherie and Delikatessen," *Research in Phenomenology* 40, no. 2 (2010): 161–87.

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Second, the "suffix *mot* . . . should bring us back to the word, namely to the word named a noun," to the "stakes involved in always seeking to draw the limit, the unique and indivisible limit held to separate human from animal, namely, the word, the nominal language of the word, the voice that names the thing *as such*, such as it appears in its being . . . The animal would in the last instance be deprived of the word, of the word that one names a noun or name."[16] The self-referring singularity of the "I" of the Cartesian *cogito* is not available to "the animal." Yet it "would not be a matter of 'giving speech back' to animals" is Derrida's third observation on "*Ecce animot*": "but perhaps acceding to a thinking, however fabulous and chimerical it might be, that thinks the absence of the name and of the word otherwise, and as something other than a privation."[17] The animal's radical alterity, untouched apparently by words, remains, then, intact but respected, even in spite of the observation that "Whoever says 'I' or apprehends or poses herself as an 'I' is a living animal."[18]

Derrida invites and performs dissection (or bisection), then, not of "animal" but "animot." Our eyes turn to "mot" as a "suffix," while nevertheless glimpsing a specter of the discarded "mal." But "mot" also makes us all too aware of the word's front end. Etymologically the stem of animal is "anima" (suffix "-al"), more properly cutting open this word at "anim," yielding its main philosophical meaning: "[t]he animating principle in living things, the soul; some part or aspect of the soul, *esp.* the irrational part of the soul as distinguished from the rational mind."[19] But under Derrida's poetic scalpel, cutting at the third letter, we now find somewhat rudely exposed the Latin "ani," multiple excreting orifices that precede, or make possible, either the "mal" or the "mot." Animals arrive arse(s) first on philosophy's pantomime stage, but "animot" opens its behind to the possibility of language. Or is there a critique here of patriarchy's asinine disavowal of its own animality, a disavowal forged in tandem with the dispossession and subordination of women?

Thus "L'animot" is a kind of admonitory emblem for the utterers of what Derrida identifies as an ill-functioning "*asinanity* [*bêtise*]":

> each time a philosopher, or anyone else, says "The Animal" in the singular and without further ado, claiming thus to designate every living thing that is held not to be human (man as *rational animal*, man as political animal, speaking animal, *zōon logon echon*, man who says "I" and takes himself to be the subject of a statement that he proffers on the subject of the said animal,

[16] Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 48. [17] Ibid. [18] Ibid., 49.
[19] Oxford English Dictionary, "anima," OED.com.

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> etc.), well, each time the subject of that statement, this "one," this "I," does that he utters an asinanity [*bêtise*]. He avows without avowing it, he declares, just as a disease is declared by means of a symptom, he offers up for diagnosis the statement "I am uttering an *asinanity*." And this "I am uttering an *asinanity*" should confirm not only the animality that he is disavowing but his complicit, continued, and organized involvement in a veritable war of the species.[20]

In the *Beast and the Sovereign* 1, Derrida waxes on the untranslatability of "bête" and "bêtise": to "seek to translate this word is only to repeat the *bêtise* within, and as the other to, thought."[21] These terms are peculiar to French: "'improper' to knowledge and judgement, *bêtise* is always, only proper to man or to the sovereign as man. Though not a modality of knowledge any more than it is a mistake in knowing, what is *bête* about thinking is the way in which the human thinks and, in thinking, assumes that mode, that way or approach to be proper, to make manifest sovereign reason."[22] For Derrida, then, these translation stakes cannot be limited "to the operation of lexicologists or academic semanticians or of literary traductology: it really is the whole of the history of the Western world that is in play in these operations of translation . . . since the relations between beast and the sovereign are also relations between an animal, a *zōon* supposed to be without reason, and a *zōon* supposed to be rational, the sovereign being posited as human, on the divine model, and as a human who naturally has reason, responsibility, etc."[23]

Translation, furthermore, has the transporting force of metaphor and allegory. Is it possible that "a *zōon* supposed to be rational" can think or speak of "a *zōon* supposed to be without reason" as not impoverished? Or to accede to a thinking . . . that thinks the absence of the name and of the word otherwise, and as something other than a privation"?[24] Derrida leads us to philosophy's dizzying and shifting precipice, differentiating between man and animal, but baulks at eliding or closing it. For Derrida, an "abyssal rupture [remains that] doesn't describe two edges" between Human and Animal, rather it makes for a "complicating, thickening, delinearizing, folding, and dividing the line precisely by making it increase and multiply."[25]

[20] Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 31.
[21] Maria-Daniella Dick and Julian Wolfreys, *The Derrida Wordbook* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 19.
[22] Ibid., 19–20.
[23] Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, trans. Geoff Bennington, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 338–39.
[24] Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 48. [25] Ibid., 30, 29.

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The opening of the silently pluralizing "mot" in "l'animot," paradoxically risks serving the case against closing the elusive gap to fully embrace animal personhood/subjectivity by foregrounding that our designation of animality in the first place is peculiar to the very language (of reason) that always and already voices and marks animal difference: "it is indeed a matter of a word, only a word, the word animal [*du mot "animal"*]."[26] The "poematic," his poet's playful respect for the materiality of language, is "intimately concerned with" animality, to mirror Royle's observation on another of Derrida's important neologisms.[27] What needs adjustment is received human(ist) thinking that the animal's exclusion from language, in what Agamben designates the anthropological machine, is at all "a privation." Talk of the animal's "privation" shifts focus back to the precipice or line marked out by Heidegger between man and animal ("the animal is poor in world") that Derrida has in his sights to thicken and complicate, and that comes under sustained rereading in the second volume of *The Beast and the Sovereign*.

Heidegger's famous triple thesis, distinguishing between man and animal, has become the touchstone: "1. The stone is worldless [*weltlos*]; 2. The animal is poor in world [*weltarm*]; 3. Man is world-forming [*weltbildend*]."[28] The "ironic apparatus" of Agamben's "anthropological machine" installs a shifting caesura in the narrative of the historical "passage from animal to man" where or when an animal-not-yet-human births a human–animal, and where the acquisition of language is a key indicator of that passage from animality to humanity.[29] This divide, predicated on questions of animal capacity for language, literacy, creativity, rationality and reasoning, Derrida complicates (compli-cats?) but does not close. In the second volume of *The Beast and the Sovereign*, with Heidegger's work in one hand and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in the other, he sophisticates further the edgeless rupture between human and animal by exploring, among other things, whether animals die or mourn as humans do. Animal remains aloof here, but human is leveled with animal in not after all having the capacity to die as such. Enfolded in his dazzling double reading of Defoe and Heidegger is a fascinating digression in these final seminars into the two modes of disposal of the dead – cremation or burial.

[26] Ibid., 41. [27] Royle, "Poetry, Animality, Derrida," 528.

[28] Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 176. This quote is also cited in Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, trans. Geoff Bennington, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 57.

[29] Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 37.

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The divide, wherever it falls, replicates binary hierarchized thinking and the master/slave dialectic, which sweeps up with it not only the man/animal binary but also hierarchies and power relations based on gender, race and class. In patriarchy, I have argued, "the 'passage from animal to man' where or when an animal-not-yet-human births a human-animal, occurs every time a mother whelps a son!"[30] Surely temporal and sexual differences here require the critique of *différance*. Derrida's asinanity ("*bêtise*") applies to any disavowal of the "passage from animal to man" that both always and already severs animal/woman from man yet also joins them. But where is that "*little cat . . . truly a little cat, this* cat [Derrida was] talking about, which is also a female" when we need her?[31]

Donna Haraway's notion of humans and animals as messmates, co-shaping subjectivities[32] might be invoked to critique Defoe's famous depiction of Crusoe's asininely avowed sovereignty over animal companions: "how like a King I din'd too all alone, attended by my servants; *Poll*, as if he had been my Favourite, was the only person permitted to talk to me. My Dog who was now grown very old and crazy, . . . sat always at my Right Hand, and two Cats, one on one Side the Table, and one on the other, expecting now and then a Bit from my Hand, as a Mark of special Favour."[33] The dog eventually perishes, and having found "no Species to multiply his Kind upon," is only replaced by a new mutt miraculously supplied by another shipwreck. The cats dining here are not those rescued from the first shipwreck, who are long dead and buried, "but one of them having multiply'd by I know not what Kind of Creature, these were two which I had preserv'd tame, whereas the rest run wild in the Woods, and became indeed troublesome to me at last; for they would often come into my House, and plunder me too, till at last I was obliged to shoot them, and did kill a great many."[34] Crusoe's dining "all alone" yet with animals illustrates the "auto-affirmation of sovereignty by Robinson himself . . . the theater of an autobiography or an Autopresentation of the sovereign by himself," a path of argument that will open to Derrida's preoccupation with dying and death, of being buried alive, savaged by beasts, ingested by

[30] Jane Goldman, "Crusoe's Dog(s): Woolf and Derrida (Between Beast and Sovereign)," *Le Tour Critique* 2 (2013): 476.
[31] Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 6.
[32] See Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003) and *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).
[33] Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. Michael Shinagel (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), 108. This passage is also cited in Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 2:28–29.
[34] Ibid.

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cannibals.[35] He couples this affirmation of (violent) sovereignty over wild and domestic creatures with Robinson's sovereignty over his three human subjects: "My Man *Friday* was a Protestant, his Father was a *Pagan* and a *Cannibal*, and the *Spaniard* was a Papist."[36] Returning to that threshold somatic scene between bathroom and bedroom where Derrida stages his naked encounter with the little she-cat, we might ponder his avowed commitment to her feline singularity in the face of his patent lack of curiosity.

Is this too complicit in the violence of Crusoe's establishment of sovereignty? Is this too "the theater of an autobiography or an Autopresentation of the sovereign by himself"? "Somehow in all this worrying and longing, the cat was never heard from again," observes Haraway: "Derrida failed a simple obligation of companion species; he did not become curious about what the cat might actually be doing, feeling, thinking, or perhaps making available to him in looking back at him that morning."[37] There is a similar lack of curiosity in Derrida about Crusoe's monstrously proliferating, chimeric cats. He has eyes only for Poll the Parrot.

Haraway is scornful of Derrida's pantomime insistence that his is "a real cat . . . It isn't the *figure* of a cat. It doesn't silently enter the bedroom as an allegory for all the cats on the earth, the felines that traverse our myths and religions, literature and fables. There are so many of them."[38] But he then cites several literary cats, not least Montaigne's: "When I play with my cat [*ma chatte*], who knows if I am not a pastime to her more than she is to me?"[39] Derrida does not mention playing with or touching his puss. Elsewhere he links touching animals with appropriation and violence.[40] He does not share Montaigne's or Haraway's openness to the possibility of reciprocal figure-making in such play between species, preferring an asymmetry. To allegorize is a man's province, so Derrida makes a show of respecting the cat's radical alterity by refusing to allegorize or anthropomorphize her. Nevertheless, his utterances are open to precisely that charge.

For any inscription of the cat as metaphorical or figurative risks its "erasure," confirming it as "absent referent," as animal ethicist-feminist

[35] Ibid., 2:28, 31. [36] Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 174; Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 2:31.
[37] Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 20. [38] Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 6.
[39] Ibid., 7.
[40] See Derrida, *On Touching, Jean-Luc Nancy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005) and Marie-Eve Marin, "Worlds Apart: Conversations between Jacques Derrida & Jean-Luc Nancy," *Derrida Today* 9, no. 2 (2016): 157–76.

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Carol Adams has it.[41] Derrida certainly insists on, to the point of comedy, the presence of a "real" cat. But surely he is not following the naïve Adams here. "Could metaphor itself be the undergarment . . . of oppression?" Adams asks, since through the reifying action of metaphor "the object is severed from its ontological meaning," something that also occurs in the discourse of racism and misogyny.[42] Restoration of the "absent referent" of oppressive metaphor, witnessing its presence, would prevent its becoming the object of oppression, whether of racial violence or sexual violence or violence against animals, all three discourses of which share common metaphors.[43] But such a restoration, as the literary history of black and feminist experimental writing makes evident, is no easy matter; nor can we understand the relationship between figurative and literal (language and referent) quite so straightforwardly. Furthermore, we cannot simply abolish or censor metaphor, but it may perhaps be turned to advantage. Surely, this is what Derrida's highly sophisticated and risky "animot" turn is doing?

Derrida immediately drops this "real" cat in order to detail in a long discursive tease the literary feline genealogy to which he insists she does *not* belong: not to "Kafka's vast zoopoetics," nor to the cats of Montaigne, Baudelaire, Rilke, Buber, Lewis Carroll, Kant.[44] He protests too much. What literary or philosophical feline provenance is withheld here? Consider this teasing disavowal: "Nor does the cat that looks at me naked, she and no other, the one I am talking about here, belong, although we are getting warmer, to Baudelaire's family of cats" (*A* 7). So which literary cat, then, would be "warmer" than Baudelaire's? I give my own views on this later. But needless to say, *Ceci n'est pas une chatte*.

Meanwhile, Haraway remains unimpressed by animot antics: "Even if the cat did not become a symbol of all cats, the naked man's shame quickly became a figure for the shame of philosophy before all of the animals."[45] Haraway sees through Derrida's ruse to the extent that she recognizes a sharing of agency between species in the figuring that Derrida is flagrantly flaunting here. After all, what is his chimerical feline ani*mot*, if not a figure that presents itself as such? Derek Ryan, following Erica Fudge, urges a defense: "Derrida originally presented the material about his cat where

[41] Carol Adams, "The Rape of Animals and the Butchering of Women," in *The Animal Ethics Reader*, ed. Susan J. Armstrong and Rachel G. Botzler (London: Routledge, 2003), 211.
[42] Ibid., 209, 213. Adams draws on Marjorie Spiegel, *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery* (Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1988).
[43] Adams, "The Rape of Animals and the Butchering of Women," 211–12.
[44] Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 6–9. [45] Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 23.

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he 'asks his audience, who are fast becoming his spectators, to view him as a body, and worse, as a *naked* body. In discussing his embarrassment at being embarrassed Derrida embarrasses himself.'"[46] By this logic Derrida has retreated into the limelight by presenting the cat as an allegory, however affectionate, of his students. How like Crusoe's "how like a king" he lectured "all alone with" his disciples. This reminds me of a true story concerning the late professor Philip Hobsbaum of the University of Glasgow, formidable pioneer literary theorist, critic and poet, who named his dog Roddy after one of his students, since Roddy the dog, like Roddy the student, had winning big brown eyes; and just like Roddy the student, Roddy the dog had never read *Paradise Lost*.

Derrida's scene of feline figure-making haunts his later chapter probing Levinas's "famous story of Bobby the Kantian dog," where the bark of a stray dog in his daily greeting restores to Levinas and his fellow "Jewish prisoners of war" the subjectivity that the Nazi guards, and "the other men, called free, who had dealings with us," have robbed them of.[47] "We were" to the oppressors, Levinas observes, "subhuman, a gang of apes."[48] But a "wandering dog," whom they come to call "Bobby," "would appear at morning assembly and was waiting for us as we returned, jumping up and down and barking in delight. For him, there was no doubt that we were men."[49] The appearance and conduct of this passing, stray dog, with no fixed origin or identity, are the means by which the prisoners have their subjectivity affirmed. For Levinas, this dog "was the last Kantian in Nazi Germany."[50] Derrida finds it "necessary to limit straightaway the scope of this hymn to Bobby," most seriously with regard to "Levinas's hastening to add, in the same sentence, in order to take back from this Kantian dog everything he has just so generously given him, moreover with an explicit consciousness of that generosity: 'The last Kantian in Nazi Germany, without the brain needed to universalize the maxims for drives, this dog was the descendant of the dogs of Egypt'" (Derrida's modified translation).[51] That devastating addition in fact renders Bobby "anything but Kantian," explains Derrida: "Reckoning only by measure of what we glimpsed in a certain unconscious of pure practical reason, namely, the cruel and merciless war that a virtual 'fascist' (in Adorno's terms) Kantian idealism declares on animal life, calling Bobby a Kantian is no compliment."[52]

[46] Derek Ryan, *Animal Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 95–96.
[47] Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 107.
[48] Emmanuel Levinas, "The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights," in *Difficult Freedom*, trans. Sean Hand (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 152, 153.
[49] Ibid., 153. [50] Ibid. [51] Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 114. [52] Ibid., 115.

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If Levinas "intends to speak . . . of a particular dog, the one that responds to the name Bobby: this one, Bobby, without allegory, fable or theology," then, for Derrida, "the opposite occurs . . . this dog is but the figure of a Kantian dog, since he is lacking the essential thing that would be demanded by a Kantian morality that took into account the dignity (*Würde*) of a rational being capable of universalizing the maxims of his actions."[53] The more Levinas protests – "But enough of allegories! . . . the dog is a dog. Literally a dog!" – the more emphatic becomes Derrida's insistence that "despite what he says about it, Levinas's text is at once metaphorical, allegorical, and theological, anthropotheological, hence anthropomorphic, and it remains that . . . at the very moment when Levinas proclaims, claims, *prétend*, by exclaiming the opposite."[54] The animal restores humanity to the human in Levinas's story of Bobby, as Ryan observes: "Levinasian ethics may come before being, but it is oriented towards humanity. By contrast, Derrida suggests that animals demand a response even as they are turned away from the human, even as they cannot be recognized as having a 'face' or language. Truly addressing the vast scope of cruelty to animals requires an unrecognizable ethics that responds to that which cannot speak, that which never faces toward us."[55] Yet we might finesse this last point to underline the acknowledgment in Derrida that the "that which cannot speak, that which never faces toward us" is the "as if" of the Cartesian utterers of asinanities. It is not "sufficient," Derrida declares, "for an ethics to recall the subject to its being-subject, host or hostage, subjected to the other, to the wholly other or to every other. More than that is required to break with the tradition of an animal without language and without response."[56] Allegorical animals, such as in fables, only speak insofar as their allegorical status *depends* upon the very fact, or at least on the received asininity of consensus that "in reality," and being "poor in world," they *cannot* speak. To break with such an enduring, fixed "tradition" requires rethinking and returning "the animal" to "l'animot."

The dining passages in *Robinson Crusoe* prompt Derrida's "initial reconnoiter . . . around one word" in his reading of Heidegger's famous triple thesis (cited earlier). In this very turn of attention from the stone, the animal and man to that "one word," he most productively complicates and thickens philosophy's shifting line between man and animal. *Walten* is "a recurring word that . . . is given too little attention in Heidegger in

[53] Ibid., 116. [54] Ibid. [55] Ryan, *Animal Theory*, 135.
[56] Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 118.

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general." He draws out its violent valences, its "sense of sovereign and superhuman violence": "humans themselves are dominated, crushed under the law of this sovereign violence. Man is not its master, he is traversed by it . . . dominated, seized, penetrated through and through by the sovereign violence of the *Walten*."[57]

The *Walten*, Derrida makes explicit, "produces nothing less than the difference between Beings and beings; i.e. everything that is going to organize more or less indirectly in this seminar on the difference between man, between human *Dasein*, and the animal: the animal is unable to accede to the as such of beings, i.e. the difference between Being and being."[58] He returns at the close of the second volume of *The Beast and the Sovereign* to demonstrate how the *as such* of Dasein or the "*als*, the *als Struktur* that distinguishes man from the animal is thus indeed what the violence of *Walten* makes possible . . . All of this does not depend on a . . . power, on a faculty that man has at his disposal, but consists in taming and joining . . . forces or violences (*Gewalten*) that come to grip man and thanks to which beings are discovered *as such*."[59] Thus man's historicality becomes possible, "the historicality reserved to Dasein and to Being, denied to the animal and to the other forms of life." It occurs "only where the *Gewalt* of this *Walten* irrupts to make beings as such appear, in the middle of which man is gripped by violence."[60]

Derrida presses that for Heidegger "violence characterizes not only [man's] acts, his action, but his existence, his Da-sein, the there of his being there . . . he is violent in as much as he is exposed to the violence of *Walten*, of beings, and in as much as he is in a position to exercise this violence himself, to do violence."[61] Derrida ominously concludes that "the idealism that then dominates Western metaphysics through and through is a determination of violence. Ideology . . . and idealism are not innocent, one must recognize their violence." He asks us to consider "a single, final quotation from Heidegger . . . as you watch the war on television, in Iraq, but also closer to us," and this was a war, if ever there was one, certainly predicated on a death dealing "as if" (as we all now know): "(There is only *one* thing against which all violence-doing, violent action, violent activity, immediately shatters). . . . '*Das ist der Tod*' (it is death)."[62] Death is now, on the final page, Derrida's dominant question: "To whom is this power given or denied? Who is capable of death, and through death, of imposing failure on the super- or hyper-sovereignty of *Walten*?"[63] Derrida draws on Freud

[57] Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 2:39, 41. [58] Ibid., 105, n. 25. [59] Ibid., 288, 289.
[60] Ibid., 289. [61] Ibid., 287, 288. [62] Ibid., 290. [63] Ibid.

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to counter Heidegger's distinction that whereas men die as such, animals merely perish.

Yet folded (invaginated, carried) into Derrida's seminar is the possibility – "a discreet intrusion [*à pas de loup*]" – of a shared status of human with animal, indeed with stone.[64] He finds an opening in Heidegger where he draws out of *Walten* the (Freudian) sense of a birthing drive (*Trieben*): from "toward this Being as a whole . . . it is that toward which we are driven (*getrieben*) in our nostalgia." Derrida concludes that therefore the world "is where we are not at home." This justifies our saying "that we are also *without* this world, or poor in world, like the stone and the animal." Does Derrida, who understands the gaze of the animal, open a world to which we can have no epistemological access waver here? Or is the isolation increased? Here Derrida intrudes a compelling but truncated reading of a poem by Paul Celan, "Grosse, Glühende Wölbung" ("Vast, Glowing Vault") (1967), the last line of which serves as a haunting contrapuntal refrain throughout his seminar:

> Or else as Celan says . . . "Die Welt ist fort, ich muss dich tragen." [The world has gone, I must carry you] . . . This poem can be read as a poem of mourning or of birth (the final "ich muss dich tragen" signaling either toward the dead one that, as one mourning, I carry or must carry in me, or toward the child to be born and still carried by its mother, or even toward the poem and the poet himself who would also be called, familiarly apostrophized by the *dich* of "ich muss dich tragen."[65]

To sum up, from Heidegger's *Welt* and *Walten*, Derrida, with the forceps of Celan, induces a kind of whelping:

> beyond all the imports I've already tried to count here or there of this unheard-of double proposition, of this performative lodged like a pearl in the oyster of a constative, like a still unborn child, to be born, to be carried to term in the uterus of the origin of the world as it is, there would be today the import of a declaration of love or of peace at the moment of a declaration of war.[66]

The Iraq war erupted early in 2003 when he was delivering these seminars. Derrida's is a devastating exegesis of *Die Welt ist fort*, indicting "the armed word of politicians, priests and soldiers [as] more than ever incompetent, unable to measure up to the very thing it is speaking and deciding about, and that trembles in the name 'world,' or even in saying good-bye to the world." He continues: "what there is to bear, as the responsibility of the

[64] Ibid., 2. [65] Ibid., 287, 288. [66] Ibid., 259.

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other, for the other, must be borne where the world itself is going away by going into absolute disaster of this armed word that I shall not even call psittacist, so as not to insult Poll, Robinson Crusoe's parrot (*psittakos*), first victim of the humanist arrogance that thought it could give itself the right to speech, and therefore to the world as such."[67] But why is Crusoe's parrot "first victim"? Surely that honor goes to all those proliferating cats whose culling is deemed necessary in the violent world-making, establishment of his sovereignty.

Furthermore, closing his final seminar, and his exquisite reading of the ethics at stake in the translational, vehicular impetus of Celan's "I must carry you," Derrida, quite startlingly, resorts to a Kantian "as if" in presenting the stark choice between the only "two things" that Celan's imperative can be. The first option is that we must "carry the other out of the world, where we share at least this knowledge without phantasm that there is no longer a world, a common world: I carry you then in the void."[68] His second hypothesis steps out and back in a long incantatory sentence occupying a superbly paced paragraph in its lyrically iterative, accretive clauses, beginning with a hypothetical "world" and ending with a self-erasable "trace":

> Or else, second hypothesis, that where there is no world, where the world is not here or there, but *fort*, infinitely distant over there, that what I must do, with you and carrying you, is make it that there be precisely a world, just a world, if not a just world, or to do things so as to make *as if* there were just a world, and to make the world come to the world, to make as if – for you, to give it to you, to bear it toward you, destined for you, to address it to you – I made the world come into the world ["*poetically*" Derrida adds in the session], as though there ought to be a world where presently there is none, to make a gift or present of this *as if* come up poetically, which is the only thing that – during the finite time of such an impossible voyage between two non-shores where nothing happens – the only thing that can make it possible that I can live and have to let you live, enjoy or have or let you enjoy, to carry you for a few moments without anything happening and leaving a trace in the world, that belongs to the world, without a trace left or retained in the world that is going away, that will go away – which, before even going to go away, is going going away, leaving no trace, a world that has forever been going to leave and has just left, going away with no trace, the trace becoming trace only by being able to erase itself.[69]

This "conditional *as if*" inaugurating this fictive – poetic – worlding is Kantian, even if "Kant said some terribly seismic things about the 'als ob.'

[67] Ibid., 260. [68] Ibid., 268. [69] Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 2:268.

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The *als ob* (as if) is the essential modality in which is presented the regulative idea of the world, the world as regulative idea of reason. The world is a regulative idea of reason and it hangs by a mere *als ob*."[70] Yet let's say Derrida says an introductory performative Kantian "as if" in his saying "Let's say, as I did in *Rogues*, that I'm sometimes tempted to act 'as if' I had no objection to Kant's 'as if's.'"[71] But where is that "cat that looks at me naked, she and no other" who does not "belong, although we are getting warmer, to Baudelaire's family of cats"?[72] Let's say that I am tempted to read Derrida with his tempting Kantian "as if," as if that little she-cat were a fictive figure after all, one capable of transporting us to the very place and text and interlocutor that, in his third chapter of *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, "And Say the Animal Responded?/to Jacques Lacan," he makes as if he has no intention of "reopening." This is their notorious "debate concerning 'The Purloined Letter'" by Edgar Allan Poe: "*But an animal does not pretend to pretend . . . Nor does an animal cover up its tracks, which would be tantamount to making itself the subject of the signifier*" (Derrida's italics).[73] Yet Derrida is hiding this ancient but unchanged debate with Lacan in plain sight.[74] His devastating exposure of Lacan's purloining of Poe is so pertinent, whereby Poe's story is shoehorned into serving Lacan's closed allegory ("the displacement of the signifier is analyzed as a signified, as the recounted object in a short story").[75] The "wolf is named where you don't yet see it coming; it is still absent save, for its name," I must warn you: "It is looming, an object of apprehension; it is named, referred to, even called by its name; one imagines a figure, a myth, a fable, a fantasy, but always by reference to someone who, advancing a pas de loup, is not there, not yet there, someone who is not yet present or

[70] Ibid., 269.

[71] Ibid., 271. See Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

[72] Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 7.

[73] Lacan, quoted in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 130. For the original quotation, see Jacques Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 305.

[74] See John P. Muller and William J. Richardson, eds., *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

[75] Jacques Derrida, "The Purveyor of Truth," *Graphesis: Perspectives in Literature and Philosophy, Yale French Studies* 52 (1975): 48. See also Jacques Lacan, "Le seminaire sur 'La Lettre volée,'" in *Écrits* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966), 11–61, translated by Jeffrey Mehlman as "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" *French Freud: Structural Studies in Psychoanalysis, Yale French Studies* 48 (1972): 38–72. For more on this debate, see Muller and Richardson, eds., *The Purloined Poe*, and Donald Pease, "Marginal Politics and 'The Purloined Letter': A Review Essay," *Poe Studies* (June 1983): 18–23.

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represented; you can't even see its tail; as another proverb says: 'When you speak of the wolf, you see its tail.'"[76]

Derrida's late animal turn is a resourceful companion for my work in progress, *Virginia Woolf and the Signifying Dog*.[77] I am reading her canine novel, *Flush: A Biography* (1933), in one hand and Derrida's chapter on Lacan in the other, but with a finger too in the earlier chapter where he seems to stage his mirror scene with a little cat, precisely in order to reopen (did it ever close?) "the Purloined Letter Debate":

> The same question then becomes whether I should show myself but in the process see myself naked (that is reflect myself in the mirror) when, concerning me, looking at me, is this living creature, this cat that can find itself caught in the same mirror? Is there animal narcissism? But cannot this cat also be, deep within her eyes, my primary mirror?[78]

Following Derrida with a canine calling on Woolf, I also trace a genealogy of his little cat via Baudelaire's translations of Poe, and via Poe's own play with the lynx-eyed characters in "The Purloined Letter," which silently linked, or touch the mortuary "lynx which dwelleth forever in the tomb [who] came out therefrom, and lay down at the feet of the Demon, and looked at him steadily in the face"[79] in Poe's "Silence – A Fable." Derrida glancingly mentions Poe with regard to burial and animality in the first volume of *The Beast and the Sovereign*, but the uncompromising gaze of Poe's fabled lynx is surely figuring in his staging and turning back to a certain asymmetry a more reciprocal opening available in Woolf's much pored (pawed) over, and even more challenging mirror scene in *Flush*.[80]

Nevertheless, Derrida's animot, a figuration of his heroic dedication to complicating, thickening, enfolding the "as if" of the human–animal caesura, intervenes in my reading of the sentences where Woolf explicitly addresses the caesura between mute dog and speaking woman: "Between them lay the widest gulf that can separate one being from another. She spoke. He was dumb. She was woman; he was dog. Thus closely united,

[76] Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 2:5.

[77] See my "' Ce chien est à moi': Virginia Woolf and the Signifying Dog," *Woolf Studies Annual* 13 (2007): 49–86.

[78] Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 51.

[79] Edgar Allan Poe, "Silence – A Fable" (1842, 1845), in *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott & Company, 1905), 33.

[80] See Derek Ryan, "The Question of the Animal in *Flush*," in *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory: Sex, Animal, Life* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 132–70; and Jane Goldman, "*Flush*," in *A Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. Jessica Berman (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 163–76.

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thus immensely divided, they gazed at each other."[81] The full stop dividing brief monosyllabic utterances ("She spoke. He was dumb.") suggests an unyielding linguistic boundary. The woman speaks, but the dog *cannot* speak. Yet the semi-colon dividing but also uniting the human and canine clausal zones of the next sentence ("She was woman; he was dog.") performs the paradoxical concept of the reciprocal gaze between species that understands woman and dog, simultaneously "closely united" and "immensely divided." If the dog's presence before the mirror serves the woman, as women in patriarchy serve men "as looking-glasses" magically capable of "reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size,"[82] does the dog remain subordinate? Or does the dog too lay claim to a "universal" subjectivity only recently claimed by or extended to human beings such as this woman poet? "Was not the little brown dog opposite himself? But what is 'oneself'? Is it the thing people see? Or is it the thing one is?"[83] When the poet-philosopher Derrida, naked and "all alone" in the presence of his cat, cries "animot," it is Woolf's tail I glimpse.

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[81] Virginia Woolf, *Flush: A Biography* (London: Hogarth Press, 1933), 27.
[82] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Hogarth Press, 1929), 53.
[83] Woolf, *Flush*, 46.

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