

LIBERATING MENAGERIES: ANIMAL SPEAKING AND “SURVIVANCE”
IN ELIZABETH BISHOP AND GERALD VIZENOR

by
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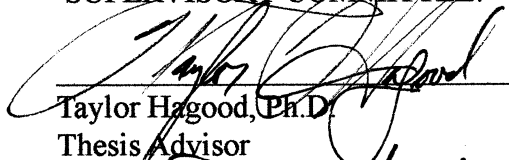
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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Dr. Taylor Hagood, Department of English, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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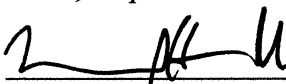

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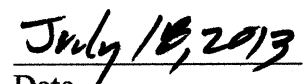
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ABSTRACT

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This thesis demonstrates the ways that nonhuman characters in the literature of Elizabeth Bishop and Gerald Vizenor subvert anthropocentrism, thereby contributing to an ongoing reconsideration of political and ethical approaches to species discourse. Jacques Derrida's work on the philosophical questions regarding nonhuman animals is combined with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's postcolonial perspective on "subaltern speaking" and representation, while Gerald Vizenor's theory of "survivance" provides the theoretical grounding for approaching literary representations of animals within this project. The authors in this study challenge false hierarchical species divisions by constructing fictional spaces that imagine the perspectives of nonhuman beings, consider the importance interspecies relationships, and recontextualize the voices and communication of nonhumans. In providing these counter-narratives, these authors establish a relationship with readers that invites them to reconsider the ramifications of their own ideology of species, reminding them that theory and practice must coexist.

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PROLOGUE: DISCURSIVE ANIMALS AND THE
CONSTRUCTION OF SPECIES IN LITERATURE

The impulse to speak for animals, to write exhaustively about animals, and to research and speculate about how an animal thinks, feels, and experiences the world would seem to be a posthuman impulse: a longing to cross the species divide, to construct a world from the perspective of a different set of experiences and senses, to escape the anthropocentric, rational, scientific, Enlightenment framework that defines one kind of humanism that posthumanists critique (Cynthia Huff and Joel Haefner, “Animalographies, Life Writing, and the Posthuman” 155).

The relations between humans and animals must change. They must, both in the sense of an ‘ontological’ necessity and of an ‘ethical’ duty. I place these words in quotation marks because this change will have to affect the very sense of these concepts (the ontological and the ethical) (Jacques Derrida, *For What Tomorrow* 64).

Myths are agents of stability, fictions are the agents of change. Myths call for absolute, fictions for conditional assent (Warwick Wadlington qtd. in Vizenor, *Trickster of Liberty* viii).

The trickster mediates wild bodies and adamant minds; a chance in third person narratives to turn aside the cold litanies and catechistic

monodramas over the measured roads to civilization. The implied author, narrators, the readers, the listeners, and the characters, live a comic and communal discourse (Gerald Vizenor, *Trickster of Liberty* xi).

Exploring nonhumans in literature contributes to an ongoing shift in ideology about animals. What is involved in studying fictional animals is no less than an analysis of ethics, culture, politics, and representation. Literature that focuses on nonhuman animals and interspecies relationships brings story tellers and readers together in a negotiation of cultural attitudes toward animals, and authors who position nonhuman characters in opposition to a long-held hierarchical world view about species difference demonstrate a progression in “ontology” and “ethics.”

Every text, by the nature of inscription by a human animal, negotiates the discourse of species. As our culture continues to advance technologically, engage in global conversations about religion and ethics, and work through the meaning of posthumanism, questions regarding nonhuman animals and their roles in society have destabilized antiquated notions about the inferiority of nonhumans to people and what responsibilities humanity has to those who share the earth.¹ Literary representations of animals have important implications for social reconsideration of the animals in the world.

Though fictional animals can be imagined in countless settings, not all of them serve as a transvaluation of nonhuman life through the vehicle of human writing. Authors like Elizabeth Bishop and Gerald Vizenor participate in the renegotiation of our relationships with other beings by representing species discourse in ways that engage animals’ voices and perspectives, challenging the false notion of a hierarchical division between human animals and other animals, recognizing interspecies relationships, and considering ethical approaches to living with nonhuman beings.

A vast number of literary texts focus on animal characters, including hybrid creatures in Greek mythology, the speaking animals in the Old Testament, and the totem and trickster animals in the stories of several Native American tribes. While many

authors have traditionally invoked speaking animals and human/animal hybrids within their narratives, people have only recently started to examine the relationship between these literary representations and the lives and voices of real animals. Speaking animals in antiquity were often interpreted as literary devices, imaginary and fictive, rather than as mimetic representations of nonhuman beings who spoke. Like the fable animal, or the characters like Chaucer's Chauncleer and Perthelote, audiences understood that these creatures appeared in the physical form of nonhuman beings, but that they spoke with human language and were narrated as human characters with aspects that were traditionally denied to nonhuman animals.² These anthropomorphized characters prefigured what Frans de Waal calls "naïve anthropomorphism": "The most common anthropomorphism, however, is the naïve kind that attributes human feelings and thoughts to animals based on insufficient information or wishful thinking. . . . The talking animals on television, the depiction of public figures, and the naïve attribution of human qualities to animals have little to do with what we know about the animals themselves" (73). These depictions of "naïve anthropomorphism" made no attempt to describe or imagine the lives of animals; instead, they "served human purposes: to mock, educate, moralize, and entertain" (73). The anthropocentric positioning of the human who has dominion over the animals is never questioned in these representations, which is why these "caricatured" nonhuman animals betray all beings in their oversimplifications and reductions.

As in any project that deals with representation, this one will not argue that Bishop or Vizenor depict "real" animals; instead, these authors provide attempts at characterizing nonhuman animals within a framework that ethically and responsibly approaches the question of real animals of our world. Both Bishop and Vizenor describe the voices and actions of nonhuman beings, allowing readers to encounter a species perspective that is "critically" anthropomorphic, by which I mean always challenging speciesism.³ These literary enactments participate in the denouncing of problematic acceptance of an a priori cultural oppression of animals by humans, and prompt readers

to think through the communication and preferences of nonhuman beings.

In literature, nonhuman animal characters, like their human character counterparts, operate in various settings and achieve specific goals set forth by their authors; nonetheless, unlike human characters, nonhumans have traditionally carried with them the weight of species difference. In our postmodern, posthuman epoch, the difference of species and the discourses of species no longer mark nonhuman characters as the monolithic other of humans. The line has become so blurred that there no longer seems to be any reason to hold onto a dyad in political, ethical, and philosophical spaces. And though we see the Edenic/Cartesian division of (hu)man from every other species slowly disintegrating in other cultural conversations, literary environments have pointed out this false division for thousands of years.

Jacques Derrida's body of work in deconstruction provides another fundamental methodology in considering the ways that "inscription" and "logocentrism" relate to nonhuman subjectivity and voice, as well as how anthropocentrism has operated throughout human language to categorize ("linguistically tame") nonhumans (*ATTIA* 37). Derrida's influence is also evident in the works of Cary Wolfe and Gerald Vizenor, two of the authors who influence my discussion here.

The imaginative hybridization of the human mind and the animal body evokes in readers a space that is productive for humans, as it allows humans to imagine embodiment within a different species. Unfortunately, though, these literary animals fall short of tracing, "following" (if I may be permitted Derrida's prodding of at least one language's concept of beings' constitution) the real animals of the world. The tradition of providing metaphors constructed to follow systematically reinforced hierarchies may be necessary to evoke feelings for readers, but this instantiation of nonhuman animals functions to perpetuate unquestioned anthropocentrism and speciesism. One of the functions of postmodernism and posthumanism has been a rigorous interrogation of subjectivity, representation, subalternity, and otherness, which has ushered in

a reconsideration of ethics and an attempt at repositioning (decentering) human subjectivity. One of the necessary facets of these philosophical and cultural movements is a renegotiation of human/nonhuman animal relationships.

An equally important practice that has accompanied the developing cultural studies perspectives on nonhuman beings is writing about those who create literary animals. Within the questions surrounding animals in literature, one must continually examine these representations of animals, and what nonhuman speaking and voice might mean, and then, one must try to parse out the human violence of attempting to write the voice of the animal. One question is therefore inevitably whether we can pull apart the act of writing enough to recover or recognize the speaking of the nonhuman animal within a specific text. I want to build my argument on a debate that stems from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's keystone discussion regarding postcolonial identity, "Can the Subaltern Speak?": Can nonhuman beings be considered subalterns? If they can, and I argue that this is possible, the next step in considering Spivak's argument is how humans engage nonhuman animal voices and "silences." The difficulties of listening to the voices of nonhuman beings in literature raise questions of postcoloniality, identity, representation ("*Vertreten*" or "substitution" and "*Darstellung*" or "re-presentation," "impersonation" or "depiction") and subjectivity that mark Spivak's discourse (*CPR* 258-59). Clearly, there are differences between the "postcolonial woman as subaltern" and nonhuman animals as subalterns, but in extending Spivak's argument to nonhumans, one recognizes commonalities between these heterogeneous groups of beings.⁴

Admittedly, Western culture has continually reinforced the identification of the animal with the feminine and the human with the masculine. Spivak notes that "the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant" (374). Similarly, I argue that the "ideological construction" of species functions in a corresponding manner that perpetuates human "dominance." The ramifications of the dominance of such an ideological construction are manifested in our culture's resistance to setting up ethical

guidelines relating to interspecies interactions of various types. If we consider Spivak's statement as analogous to species difference, we see the very notion of species as an idea set up in order to "other" and thus negate the value of the beings that fall outside of the parameters of the human species. Clearly, it is necessary for certain groups of people to perpetuate a preferential ideology of gender or species, and the undoing of the categorical importance of either gender or species would mean a drastic overhaul of what is acceptable in any culture (or subculture) that tries to exist as a place that does not value beings based on gender or species.

Although nonhuman characters operate in diverse modes, transitioning from mirrors of humanity, pets, warriors, gods, commodities, etc., I argue that these literary nonhuman animals can be categorized as functioning in one of two ways: first, the textual animals who/that enact "survivance" in what Vizenor develops in several of his theoretical works under the larger category of "manifest manners," and secondly the textual animals who serve the machinations of "dominance" (*Manifest Manners* vii).⁵ Vizenor's idea of manifest manners, an ironic play on the phrasing and concept of Manifest Destiny, is the culturally accepted extension in time and space of the dominant and hierarchical apparatuses, including politics, education, media, and science based on assumptions of "monotheism," "separation," and an ideology of social entitlement (*MM* vii). Vizenor discusses how narratives about native peoples operate textually and culturally. He applies the term "dominance" as a term for the cultural positioning that functions on an a priori hierarchy, creating an absence, and he includes predominant animal and ethnic metaphors, colloquialisms, insults, and stereotypes as examples of cultural dominance. Vizenor uses these terms to critique representations of native people and "nature," and I extend these terms to critique representations of animals in literature.

Vizenor's valuable trickster discourse undergirds the narrative form and method of much of his fiction; this discourse also works against the manifest manners that flatten and pervert the histories, cultures, and lives of the over 300 tribes of people

who lived in the space of what is now the United States of America, Canada, Central America, and South America. Vizenor's discussions also intersect with post-structural theory, postmodernist theory, postcolonial theory, and the issues of representation Spivak investigates.

Literary representations of nonhuman animals that resist "naïve anthropomorphism" and imagine interspecies relationships, trans-species identities, and non-anthropocentric perspectives create settings that "are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry" (*MM* xi). Inasmuch as voices of the oppressed are often ignored or effaced from cultural and historical discourse, literature that supports animal survivance subverts anthropocentrism, creating an ethical space for approaching animals in culture. Survivance animal literature is a relationship between readers, writers, and discourse, one that ultimately speaks of/for nonhuman individuals in an ethically responsible manner. This study provides examples of literary animals who/that speak, smell, hear, and inscribe, and in doing so, these characters challenge readers and critics to recognize that our theories must not only be logical and clear, but practical and practiced in political and academic arenas.

The first chapter will therefore explain in further detail how I am applying Derrida, Spivak, and Vizenor to the larger questions of the literary representations of nonhuman animals and why notions about "speaking," "silence," "hearing," "epistemic violence," "subjugated knowledges," and "cultural silencing" are useful in interpreting textual animals, as well as how literature can speak of/for animals in an ethically responsible manner. I close the opening chapter with a few comments about the value of considering phenomenology and cognitive ethology in understanding the literature about and lives of nonhuman individuals. The second chapter will show how the theories explored in Chapter One are demonstrated through the animal characters and interspecies relationships in Bishop and Vizenor's writing.

I. THE ARK AND THE COVENANT: WHAT LITERATURE OWES NONHUMAN BEINGS

This chapter discusses the discourse of species and provides a detailed roadmap to my theoretical approach focused on how nonhuman characters connect to nonhuman animals in contemporary culture. Derrida's deconstructive approach to the "questions" pertaining to animals has influenced my approach, and I am here using his theory to discuss the bodies, perspectives, voices, and communicative acts of animals in literature (*ATTIA* 11). In addition, this section extends Spivak's discussion about "speaking" and representation to nonhuman beings. I then introduce key concepts from Gerald Vizenor's *Manifest Manners* and *Fugitive Poses*, which connect Derrida's consideration of nonhuman animals and Spivak's critique directly to my argument. Finally, I explore the relationship between phenomenology, cognitive ethology, and literature.

After Derrida's Cat: Textual Animals and Deconstruction

For thinking concerning the animal, if there is such a thing, derives from poetry (*ATTIA* 7).

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—can look at me. It has its point of view regarding me. The point of view of the absolute other, and nothing will have ever given me more food for thinking through this alterity of the neighbor or of the next (-door) than these moments when I see myself naked under the gaze of a cat (*ATTIA* 11).

The animals of the twenty-first century enjoy a paradoxical cultural position

that both celebrates them as pets, athletes, and exoticized others but also demeans them as objects of scientific research, entertainment, and food consumption. In addition, the position of nonhuman animals is further complicated by the sheer number of representations available on the internet, television, cable, and movies. The older model that Derrida deconstructs asks us to imagine “the Animal” as the monolithic “other” of humans (*ATTIA* 34). The recent politicization of nonhuman animals, developments in cognitive ethology, and ethical critiques of human treatment of nonhumans in factory farming and research have changed the philosophical perspective. No one can verify particularly when human civilization started to develop specific hierarchical attitudes about their position to animals (*ATTIA* 101). Derrida vigorously interrogates the question of the animal in several texts and in *For What Tomorrow . . . A Dialogue* states the following: “However one characterizes it, the violence inflicted on animals will not fail to have profound reverberations (conscious and unconscious) on the image humans have of themselves” (64). He also takes the discourse in a challenging direction when he says that “legislation” is as good as nothing when entering into questions about human relationships with nonhuman animals and the very foundations of a world view that would consider that question so important (*FWT* 64-65). When Derrida says that he has no faith in the political system to help redirect the cultural energies with regard to this issue, one begins to list all of the other influences that shape our ideas about our own existence as a species. One obvious place that we can turn is literature. Vizenor and Bishop take into consideration their own tenuous species identity by placing animal characters in reflection and renegotiation of their relationships with human characters, and by showing these nonhuman characters overturning the techniques of dominion.

Differing attitudes divide contemporary culture into factions: those who privilege certain nonhuman animals (pets in particular) over others, those who are purely anthropocentric and privilege human animals above all other beings, and those who are trying to reimagine a different positioning for nonhuman animals altogether. In this

thesis, I endorse the latter position. Books upon books have explicated specific theories about how nonhuman animals fit into human culture, what the difference is between “us” and “them,” and what the ethical response of humans toward nonhuman animals should be. It is my purpose here to briefly examine the method and reasoning behind my approach to theorizing nonhuman animals.

Traditionally, the word “animal” itself is a means of categorization. Whether the speaker is comparing people to animals using a metaphor, is speaking of people as a species, or reflecting on a particular nonhuman animal (specific species of animals), the speaker is marking his language using a discourse of species. Derrida thoroughly engages with the problem of “the general singular that is the *anima* [emphasis in original]” (*ATTIA* 40). Derrida’s linguistic treatment of the word “animal” is an important concept in discussions of representations of nonhuman animals, but despite my recognition of Derrida’s introduction of the word “animot” to delineate theorizing of nonhuman animals, I will continue to use the terms “nonhuman animal/s” and “nonhuman beings” to refer to the nonhuman beings of the world (41). The crisis of representation that is instantiated even in the very typing out of the letters “A-N-I-M-A-L,” is admittedly anthropocentric, but that should not discourage writers from writing animals or readers from interpreting literary animals. In “thinking” through this issue, which is where Derrida leaves us, those seeking an ethical approach to speaking about, writing about, and negotiating the world with nonhuman animals are brought to a problematic nexus of language, ethics, representation, and power (29). I look at the voices of nonhuman animals and consider all of the various means of communication used by animals within the narratives I examine to be part of their voices. My project will still rely on the discourse of species that has been established, but my discussions about specific animal species always recognize the inherent anthropocentrism in even “naming” and “categorizing” the animals (*ATTIA* 29, 32).

Within Derrida’s foundational lecture series on nonhuman animals, he introduces the importance of “logocentrism” to his discussion and argument pertaining to

nonhuman animals. For Derrida, logocentrism is an inherently exclusive and human-centered belief that is “a thesis about the animal” (27), and the understanding of this prejudice against nonhuman animals is critical to my argument about animal language, preference, and communication. In “But as for me, who am I (following),” Derrida moves his discussion of logocentrism to challenge Descartes and Heidegger regarding the “response”/“nonresponse” of animals (32, 33, 53). This section provides an important link from ideological categorization to the issue of “animal language” (53) and “animal response” (79-81), the element that I am arguing exists in specific literary representations. In his rejection of the traditional philosophical mode of thinking about animal response, he challenges the dominant idea that “the animal is deprived of language. Or, more precisely, of a response that could be precisely and rigorously distinguished from a reaction; of the right and power ‘to respond,’ and hence of so many other things that would be proper to man” (32). Derrida’s repudiation of these traditional assumptions critiques larger philosophical beliefs. Once those assumptions are negated, nonhuman animal speech becomes relevant as what Vizenor calls a “historical presence” in culture and literature.

Derrida’s attention to the physical response of nonhuman animals and their capacity to engage in dialogue results in his dissent from the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment position on the animal. Thus, his project regarding “*the animal*” depends necessarily on “that of the response [emphasis in original]” (32). He indicates “that one cannot treat the supposed animality of the animal without treating the question of the response, and of what *responding* means. And what *being erased* means” (Ibid). He further develops this concept by sustaining his critiques of Descartes and Heidegger: “As we shall see, even those who from Descartes to Lacan have conceded to the animal some aptitude for signs and for communication have always denied it the power to *respond*—to *pretend*, to *lie*, to *cover its tracks* or *erase* its own traces [italics in original]” (ATTIA 33).

He points to the propensity of humans to perceive language as exclusively human,

and then shows how nonhuman inscription functions as “response” (33). “Mark, gramma, trace, and différance refer differentially to all living things, all the relations between living and nonliving” (*ATTIA* 104). In prefacing this interspecies concept of the “trace,” he argues again that at the root of the “substitution” of the “logos, sign, or signifier” for “concept of trace or mark” has been an anthropocentric exclusion of nonhuman communication (*ATTIA* 104).

The project of deconstructing “the Animal” has been taken up by such theorists as Wolfe, whose position negotiates these questions in a Derridean mode married with cultural studies. Derrida shied away from identification with and optimism for “animal rights” (*ATTIA* 26-27), but Wolfe faces this intersection with Derrida’s tools of the bricoleur. In addition to continuing the work that Derrida recognized would be followed after his death, Wolfe provides a critical lexicon that I will be using. Wolfe’s analysis of “speciesism” and “anthropocentrism” in *Animal Rites* informs my usage of these terms. Wolfe also provides a serious consideration of specific evidence from cognitive ethology and animal training and a focus on intersections between disability studies and animal studies. His examples focus on nonhuman animal communication and the integration of these cases into the philosophical discussion of the animal have provided an important model for my project.

Bark, Meow, Moo, Grrrr: Nonhuman Voices and Spivak’s Subaltern Speaking

This irreducible work of the trace not only produces an unrestricted economy of same and other, rather than a relatively restricted dialectic of negation and sublation, in all philosophical oppositions. It also places our selfhood (ipseity) in a relationship of différance with what can only be ‘named’ radical alterity (and thus necessarily effaced) (Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* 424).

I begin here with how to connect the discussions of the philosophical animal

to the issue of representation by extending Spivak's discussion of "speaking."

Representations are always fraught with questions about authenticity, but representations of nonhumans carry the weight of species difference, a difference often seen as more "radical" than that of the colonized, gendered, or racialized Other. Those who interrogate the position of nonhuman animals have been wary of the implications of "speaking for" animals. In this attitude, they parallel Spivak's own cautiousness in "speaking for the subaltern woman." In working through this portion of theory which intersects with postcolonial theory, feminist theory, Marxist theory, post-structural theory, and textual analysis, a person who is considering nonhuman animals in literature and culture needs to remain aware of these discourses and must continually question how they, and others who constitute and affect nonhuman beings, are structured and perpetuated.⁶ We must also be able to recognize the differences between the theoretical conditions that surround postcoloniality, feminism, subalternity, and oppression, and how those contrast with studies of animals. The following discussion will highlight commonalities and evidence of some beings (some surely human, some surely not)⁷ who are subalterns and why species matters in the aforementioned discourses.⁸

Spivak's discussion of the structures that perpetuate the "silencing of subalterns" serves as a model for my argument regarding the cultural, physical silencing of nonhuman animals (266-69; 308-11). Her 1999 revision of "Can the Subaltern Speak?" reverses her earlier conclusion that "the subaltern cannot speak," which is an important discussion of what "speech" is (308). Her ideas thus directly contribute to my argument about animals' voices and acts of speaking. Subalternity, strictly in Spivak's sense, means that an individual is "position[ed]" in a way that s/he has no "access to the hegemonic power structure" [that affects this same individual]; the other essential condition of subalternity is the individual's lack of access to representation, political and "artistic or philosophical" (*CPR* 256). The subaltern is only politically "represented" by those whose do not share her class interests (she invokes Marx here) (*CPR* 257). Scholars

are now studying the importance of the discourse of species in postcolonial studies and considering how postcoloniality and species intersect. Neel Ahuja writes that “there is an emerging transnational turn in species critique. Recent scholarship at the intersection of postcolonial studies, ethnic studies, and species studies acknowledge links between species, race, and transnational power structures that underlie the production of culture” (556). Ahuja indicates the shift in interpreting species and postcoloniality in relationship to both each other and the hegemonic. And though questions related to nonhumans remain outside of Spivak’s actual discussions of the subaltern, Ahuja evidences the undeniable connection between Spivak’s work in postcolonial studies and the philosophical, political questions pertaining to animal studies.

Spivak’s fastidious positioning of the “subaltern” recognizes the “sheer heterogeneity of decolonized spaces” (*CPR* 310). That same careful attention must also be exercised at every point in considering nonhuman animals. In several speeches and essays on subalternity, Spivak discusses how her sense of the subaltern has been misunderstood. For her, “the subaltern,” “the Other,” “the marginalized,” and “the oppressed” occupy different discursive spaces, and these words have often been used erroneously as synonym in discussions of Spivak’s foundational work. There is also really no rush to fall under the categorization of subalternity, which Spivak politely parodies when she notes a “working-class” man telling her that he is a subaltern. Spivak herself says that Bhubaneswari Bhaduri, is “not a ‘true’ subaltern” (308). If we can imagine a world that considers nonhuman animals’ interests, the issue of class consciousness becomes problematic. Whether nonhuman animals are engaged in class consciousness, and whether even that language is an anthropomorphic attempt at “speaking for” animals are difficult questions, but should not be roadblocks to discussion and investigation.

The other major plane on which Spivak negotiates the subaltern is “decolonized spaces,” which does not readily admit nonhuman individuals. It is, nonetheless, clear that nonhumans often *occupy* the bottom rung of the capitalist economic systems.⁹ What all

of this subaltern theorization means for nonhuman animals is that sometimes they share the position of subalterns, and sometimes they do not. In either case, nonhuman animals are often oppressed, othered, marginalized, and poorly represented, and that is why the other portion of Spivak's argument, which interprets acts of the body as acts of speech, is integral to my discussion on speaking animals in literature (308-11).

The act of "speaking" can involve the actual physical act of speech, talking and using a system of sign language ("speaking my mind"), but also includes the idea of "political representation" (exercising one's political voice), or an expression of one's desires (a baby is telling you she's hungry). Indeed, Derrida pointed to this paradox of wanting to speak ethically for nonhumans as one of the problematic anthropocentric positions of the "animal rights" movement (*ATTIA* 88). Before moving into my application of Spivak's "speaking," I want to qualify my discussion by noting my own frustrations and anxieties about speaking for or representing animals. It is from this position, the necessarily frustrated and anxious one, that those who are interested in nonhuman representation and voice must approach the question of the animals in literature. Without consideration of the precarious work that is involved in speaking for Others, the whole project can slip back into the dominant and dismissive discourses that my own project rejects.

Spivak writes, "The masculine-imperialist ideological formation that shaped that desire into the daughter's seduction' is part of the same formation that constructs the monolithic 'third-world woman.' No contemporary metropolitan investigator is not influenced by that formation. Part of our 'unlearning' project is to articulate our participation in that formation—by measuring silences, if necessary—into the object of investigation" (283-84). Here, Spivak's project is stunningly apt to the project of listening to the voices of nonhuman individuals. In recognizing how human cultures have come to construct nonhuman animal identity, we tend to dismiss our own culpability in the oppression and subjugation of nonhumans. However, as Spivak suggests, a study such as

hers is contingent upon coming to terms with one's complicity in the present conditions of the one being studied. Only then can we work through the speaking and silences of nonhumans.

When Spivak urges us to "measur[e] silences," one imagines that those in animal studies have a lot of measuring to do, but where do we even begin? How do we know if animals are speaking, when they are speaking, and what they mean? In order to delve into these questions, I use Spivak's discussion as a model for speaking, and then build on that theorization by incorporating Derrida's deconstruction, Vizenor's theory of survivance, and studies in nonhuman animal perspective and communication found in cognitive ethology in order to discuss the literary texts that present speaking and/or communicating nonhumans. In her discussions of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri and the Rani of Sirmur, Spivak suggests that speaking is not always easy to recognize or understand, and that sometimes speaking does not come from the utterances of the human throat, offering ways of reading those nonhumans who are marginalized, oppressed, and, thus, muted and silenced within our culture.

Spivak's discussion of Hindu law delineates different sections of a "four-part episteme" (267). She writes of "sruti" (the heard): "The origins of what had been heard and what was remembered were not necessarily continuous or identical. Every invocation of sruti technically recited (or reopened) the event or originary 'hearing' or revelation" (Spivak 267). By applying this to nonhuman animal communication, one might imagine millions of simultaneous acts of speech, which would make it almost impossible to separate non-signifying noises from signifying noises. In interpreting specific nonhuman animal sounds, gestures, and odors, cognitive ethologists have made significant discoveries that indicate that animals use all of these means to communicate. So, the croak of a frog may signify differently, and, using Spivak's concept of sruti would allow for the croak to be imagined as signifying multivalently.

One of the issues of communication and the "speech acts" of nonhumans is that

their communication is made problematic through the lack of a shared language. Often, human discourse has taken this to mean that animals do not talk. For nonhumans, the oppression that Spivak discusses is an even deeper “shadow” because of the failure of human understanding to include animal communication in “speech act” theory. By applying Spivak’s idea about *sruti*, one can re-hear nonhuman animal characters in literature. One of the obvious obstacles in undertaking a serious endeavor to listen to animals is that people always already humanize animals, even in the act of naming or hearing. Humans reappropriate nonhuman acts to the “order” that can be understood. A danger of this reordering is assuming that humans know what animals need or want. Spivak’s caution about speaking for the subaltern is complicated by the human authorship of all texts. So one criticism that I cannot avoid is that inevitably this study involves a combined act of listening to/speaking for nonhuman animals. Instead of shoving the whole project under a rug, this obstacle demands that any act of interpretation or speaking “for them” be recognized as an act of human listening, rather than representation.

Joan Gordon negotiates the paradox of “speaking for” animals when she writes:

Paradoxically, the science fiction I examine here makes a space where animals can speak back so that we understand, but these stories can only do so by speaking for animals. In fact, this is a paradox that surrounds the whole field of animal studies. Spivak makes it clear that Western intellectuals need to shut up and listen to the human others. Hearne and Haraway argue that, in the case of animal others, some people do listen, and when they speak for the animal, it is based on that listening. (“Talking (for, with) Dogs: Science Fiction Breaks a Species Barrier” 459)

Studying animals in literature for Gordon is a hermeneutic act that takes up interspecies communication as an ethical, representative, interpretive “paradox.” The “space” that she imagines opening up, the place that considers animal “response,” creates a discursive space in which to apply Spivakian speaking to nonhuman animal

communication. Gordon's other value lies in her creation of the "amborg," which is the term she uses to describe both the recognition of human animality and beings who are involved in interspecies relationships and actions:

Amborg is a word that recognizes that, while we humans are clearly our own species, we are also clearly animals, so it avoids the first problem of talking about the human/animal interface, in acknowledging that we are a subset of the larger group, not a separate category a little lower than the angels. I also mean the word amborg to represent organisms in their most liminal states, not just humans when we acknowledge our family tree, but any animals that interact with, exchange glances with, and acknowledge the presence and sentience of another species ("Gazing Across the Abyss" 191).

Gordon's extension of Spivak's argument to include the reciprocal acts of communication in interspecies and intraspecies communication, in conjunction with her recognition of the reworking of the traditional species categorizations provides an important link from speaking to representation in species discourse.

Spivak's challenge that we listen to and interpret "silences" directly engages human interaction with nonhumans. This interpretation could be supported by cognitive ethologists' studies that support the theory that nonhuman communication is also comprised of several signifiers, including vocal signifiers. Spivak invests a great amount of time setting up her discussion of the "speech act" being a "physical act that serves as utterance," a definition that does not exclude nonhuman beings and their different means of communication (Spivak 308).

In conjunction with her discussion of subalternity and representation, Spivak's appropriation of Foucault's "subjugated knowledges" plays an important role in a conversation about the "human" in relation to the "animal." Looking at nonhumans in literature offers very little by way of getting at any "essence" of a real animal. But by desedimentizing the language around nonhuman characters in literature, one finds

creatures who/that are hideous, freakish, deviant, gendered, and oppressed. They offer a movement away from the anthropocentric, patriarchal notions that subtend Western discourse's notions about the animal. Speaking is a critical act for those who wish to represent themselves; thus, when our culture continually states that in representing animals we provide a "voice for the voiceless," a maxim of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (A.S.P.C.A.), we undermine the actual voices of nonhuman animals. To access the voices of animals, layers of cultural representation must be peeled back, and these layers are so perpetually sedimented that they resist the very kind of knowing that scholars seek.

Part of the project of speaking for animals, then, relies on Gordon's insistence that we "shut up and listen," but the other side of that coin is that we must "shut up" and learn. Gordon considers cognitive ethology an integral part of listening to and speaking for animals, and though she focuses her discussion on fictional spaces, these imagined contexts have real-world parallels that are based in interspecies "relationship[s]" ("Talking" 456). Gordon employs terms from Donna Haraway's *When Species Meet* in reconfiguring human understanding of interspecies communication as a "feedback relationship resulting not in the speech of the subaltern, but in speaking between 'alterns'" ("Talking" 456). This co-communication yields "both a more generous definition of language itself and a more observant description of the ways in which humans and other animals communicate with one another" ("Talking" 456). Her insistence that we speak only after listening and considering the voices and preferences of those we represent, whether that be political or cultural, can be applied to every arena that involves interspecies interaction. Those who work through the function of literary representations of nonhuman animals simultaneously encounter discussions about the animal and the discourses that connect literary criticism and representation. Within this intersection of disciplines, the nonhuman animal characters and nonhuman animals of the world may not ever encounter each other; it is even debatable that literature can ever

reveal anything to humans about nonhumans. Jutta Itner writes, “According to Deleuze and Guattari, if understanding the animal is the story’s aim, its author is condemned to defeat, no matter its literary accomplishment. For such a story must be insufficient—if it is perfect and finished, it will ‘close in on itself’” (116). The goal, then, of writing and reading fictional animals should not be an attempt to comprehend any one nonhuman being; rather, nonhuman characters can prompt us to think about alterity, cultural muting, and modes of listening that will then --- As Gordon states, the paradigm requires that we still see the act of writing about animals as speaking for them; nonetheless, this human literary act can act to perpetuate the cultural silencing of nonhumans, or, as in the examples I will explore, it can function as a mode of informed “listening” and “speaking” about and for nonhuman beings. The make-believe animals negotiate the real lives of animals through act of human writing about them.

When a reader encounters these stories of animal lives and deaths, is the trace of the animal within the text? If the answer is no, nonhuman characters in literature would serve different narrative purposes. If the answer is yes, then the next issue to think about is what texts ethically negotiate the traces and lives of nonhuman animals.

Post-Animal “Survivance”: Vizenor’s Animals

Monotheistic creation is a separation of animals and humans in nature and literature; the common unions since then have been both domestic and aesthetic. Literal simile is a familiar disservice of authored animals on a human horizon. The more obscure tropes in literature must be closer to nature and animal consciousness than a literal simile. The authors are animals, the readers are animals, and the authored hunters are the animals in their own novels (Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses* 142).

Vizenor’s work is influenced by Derrida, though Vizenor provides a theoretical

discussion that extends Derrida's discussion of nonhuman animal "response/unresponse" and Spivak's ideas about speaking and "rehearing" specifically to American literature. In addition to providing a theoretical perspective, Vizenor is also the author of two primary texts, *Trickster of Liberty* and *Hotline Healers*, I will discuss as important literary representations of nonhuman animal voices. I will briefly explain Vizenor's ideas and how I am extending them to other moments in literature, which I will follow with a discussion of how nonhuman animals, literary representations, and voice function throughout the rest of this study. The Vizenor concepts that most significantly impact my approach are "survivance," "trickster," "presence," "literary animals," "manifest manners," and "representation," terms that Vizenor theorizes in *Manifest Manners*, *Native Liberty*, and *Fugitive Poses*. Vizenor's move from theory to function extends Spivak and Derrida by showing how animals in literature function in texts of survivance. It will be my purpose here to provide an overview of the major theoretical concepts on which manifest manners rest, and then to show how this theory intersects with critical animal studies and provides a gateway to approaching speaking and animals in culture and literature.

The position of the animal inheres in every articulation of Vizenor's concepts about survivance. Sometimes in pairs, at other times alone, sometimes as shape-shifter tricksters, and several times as transgender healers, Vizenor's funny, tricky, sensitive, revolutionary characters of survivance enact a narrative space and ethical response to approaching both the philosophical questions and cultural, ethical, and political place and space of nonhuman individuals. Survivance, which I introduced earlier in this chapter, is a linguistic product of Vizenor's foundational concept "manifest manners," which he develops at length in the book-length *Manifest Manners*. He writes, "Manifest manners are the course of dominance, the racialist notions and misnomers sustained in the archives and lexicons as 'authentic' representations of *Indian* cultures. Manifest manners court the destinies of monotheism, cultural determinism, objectivism, and the structural conceits of savagism and civilization" (vii). Vizenor interrogates this hegemonic discourse that arose

within the specific historical, cultural context of Native people; however, the ideologies that have contributed to the grand narrative of American history have also affected the perceptions of nonhuman animals in Western philosophy.

As Vizenor notes, manifest manners “simulate” a representation that depends on the intersections between a nexus of religious, anthropological, economic, philosophical, racial and political discourse.¹⁰ In the preface to the reprint of the text, Vizenor explains how he first came up with the concept of manifest manners in response to educators who “were wise, dedicated, generous, and sensitive to native students” (*MM* xi), but who also “endorsed the idea of ‘cultural deprivation,’ [and] thought that natives were not as capable of abstract reasoning as other students” (xi). He writes, “I named their ‘educated’ views, manifest manners” (xi). In looking for a way to undo, or at least theorize the undoing of, manifest manners, Vizenor coined the term “survivance,” which he explains as the active condition of both surviving and resisting. Vizenor writes, “Native survivance is an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction, however pertinent” (*Native Liberty* 85). Survivance becomes a critical term in recognizing the cultural and literary arguments Vizenor presents regarding Native people and animals.

My extension of manifest manners considers the ways that well-meaning “animal lovers” fall victim to the cultural authority of people associated with organizations like kennel clubs, breeding facilities, zoos, research laboratories, and agribusiness consortiums. I will not be able to move through the details of these organizations’ erroneous, unethical discourses, but will say that such organizations police bodies of the animals who/that serve their interests and also police the ways that they are perceived in dominant culture. My interpretation of manifest manners follows Vizenor’s original trajectory, but I extend it to animals in a new way. Vizenor does not so much investigate what the overturning of manifest manners looks like in relationship to the real animals who/that live in a world operating on the very hegemonic discourses that police and

marginalize nonhumans. So my close reading of the theory in application to nonhumans is different from his original object of investigation, native cultures.

Vizenor, like Spivak, investigates and theorizes cultural representations of a specific group of people, and rigorously documents events that have been left out of the traditional historical narrative. Manifest manners function via the “epistemic violence” and “subjugated knowledges” that Spivak points to, and similarly to the way that Spivak explains the problems of representation, manifest manners depend upon these *mis-representations* in order to continue operating. As becomes almost immediately apparent, Vizenor includes nonhuman animals in his interrogation and dismantling of manifest manners. He writes:

Natives are the stories of actual motion and, at the same time, the visionaries of transmotion the motion of creation, imagic memories, and totemic associations; ontic or real existence, and a phenomenal existence of the senses. Decidedly, the stories of human motion and virtual conversions of animals and humans are native modernity (*MM ix*).

Here, he gestures to the importance of the relationship of human animals to nonhuman animals. At the same time, his use of the word “and” in linking humans to animals suggests a shared space of ontology. He then writes that “stories were never the same either; oral stories arose as imagic memories, not as the mere recitation of liturgy” (*MM ix*). Vizenor rightfully looks at the importance of the oral tradition and the ways that, in Spivak’s words, “retelling” and “rehearing” convey cultural histories and traditions that have been largely devalued or completely unrecognized in the Western narratives of philosophy and epistemology. He also denies the wrong notion that the oral tradition is a ritual, ossified cultural practice. He insists that an overturning of manifest manners can only happen through re-educating, re-imagining, and recognizing that the dominant discourses must be challenged.

The importance of trickster discourse becomes apparent in the close readings of

Vizenor's fiction, as he writes characters that cross gender and species divisions in name and being. For Vizenor, these are socially constructed, albeit blurry, lines that need to be crossed, and that have always been permeable in several Native cultures.

Vizenor points to a literary history of "dominance" and shows examples, including some of the fiction of Louise Erdrich, of how literary representations of nonhumans and their actions are used as "similes" for human behavior and comportment (*FP* 139-40). He then demonstrates how postmodernism has created a new narrative space that directly engages manifest manners. This is not to say that no other textual encounters resist manifest manners, but the literature I'll be presenting (aside from the way that Bishop is sometimes clustered into the end of Modernism, which I believe to be a mistake in categorization) falls into this literary epoch. Vizenor also includes Linda Hutcheon's ideas about "testimony[y]" and "witness," two key terms in working through representations and historicization of any "event" (Hutcheon qtd. in Vizenor "Ruins" 8; Hutcheon 150).

Clearly, Vizenor is concerned with "human rights" (86); however, he does not approach survivance in an anthropocentric manner. Like any deconstructive approach, Vizenor's theory can be applied to critical animal studies; his ideas depend on a reconsideration of the division between humans and nonhumans. In addition to interrogating this division ("separation" in Vizenor's words), Vizenor also negotiates the problems of representing others and being represented by others in culture and literature. By extending Baudrillard's argument about simulation with a distinctly Derridean quality, Vizenor navigates the likely impasse of representation and reality.

Vizenor presents the concept of "survivance" in relationship to the groups of people who have come to be referred to as Native Americans. He writes:

Theories of survivance are elusive and imprecise by definition and in translation. The practices of survivance, however, are obvious and unmistakable in native stories. The nature of survivance creates a sense of narrative resistance to absence, literary tragedy, nihilism, and victimry.

Native survivance is an active sense of presence over historical absence, the dominance of cultural simulations, and manifest manners. Native survivance is a continuance of stories (*Native Liberty* 1).

Vizenor's "survivance" is easily extended to nonhuman beings, and my use of his terminology does not in any way violate his own parameters for the concept. For Vizenor, survivance is also "an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry" (*FP* 15). In thinking about the representations of animals that so often position animals in cultural places of subordination, horrible violence, and cultural objectification, literatures of animal survivance function in the ways that Vizenor indicates and pressure dominant cultural notions regarding nonhuman individuals. The "sense of presence" is not Vizenor's version of a transcendental signified that can physically rewrite historical discourse. His blending of the terms "presence" and "absence" are not concepts that should be considered as existing on a linear plane. Vizenor is discussing a specific "narrative presence" that "shadows" (*FP* 15) a "historical absence." This combination tempts readers to imagine both the narrative and history as existing in the same universe, but Vizenor is overtly pulling them apart, showing in Derridean fashion the layers of representation that inhere within culture and literature.

Vizenor's assertion that "the *indian* [is a] simulation with no referent" extends to a problem in representation and language for nonhuman animals (*FP* 25). At one junction is the question of what relationship the animals in representation have to animals within the world; the second, and more problematic because of the limitations of language, presents significant complexities because so often the concepts regarding the "radically different" lives of [animals] becomes lost in the word "animals," a problem that I considered in the earlier discussion of Derrida. The vocabulary issue that fails to get at "animals" can be broadened to serve the cultural shift in attitudes about nonhuman beings of the earth, and to recognize that a literary representation of animals and the lives of *real* animals are always being negotiated separately. Derrida attempts to work through this problem in

language, but the terms he employs lack functionality for my own project. The intricacy of Vizenor's Derridean methodology becomes problematic for those who want any type of easy solution to what he refers to as "the ruins of representation" (*FP* 27). Those working in the field of animal studies are already familiar with problems of nonhuman animal representation, and by combining Spivakian speaking with Vizenor's unpacking of "native liberty," "manifest manners," and "trickster" discourse, we are able to recognize that in literatures of nonhuman animal survivance, the animals speak, but only after, as Gordon indicates, we listen. The specific task of writing the animals involves this duty, and scholars in critical animal studies are negotiating the levels of communication and existence involved in the description, theorization, and characterization of nonhuman animal representation.

Cognitive Ethology, Phenomenology, and Literature: Reconciling Literary Representations and Zoography

[A] redefinition of our being-in-the-world is needed in the contemporary discourse, and that this requires a reconsideration of our being with and our being for others, particularly non-human animal others; for only then may we establish a world that is worth living for every living being [emphasis in original] (Corinne Painter and Christian Lotz, *Phenomenology and the Non-Human Animal: At the Limits of Experience* 10).

Many animals display their feelings openly, publicly, for anyone to see. And when we pay attention, what we see outside tells us lots about what's happening inside an individual's head and heart. As we'll find, careful scientific research is validating what we intuitively understand: that animals feel, and their emotions are as important to them as ours are to us (Marc Bekoff, *The Emotional Lives of Animals* 1).

Because we then speak for the animals who also speak, but whose “speech acts” we cannot ever completely or understand or recognize as speech, the work of critical animal studies necessarily becomes a project of representation. We speak for the animal whose preference is not fully comprehended as a codified system of language. In Husserlian terms, while it may be very clear that a nonhuman being is engaging in an “intentional act” of speaking, it may be impossible to access the “intentional content.” The misunderstanding and failure to fully understand is clear in several human negotiations as well, but language obfuscates the misunderstanding. With animals, the content often remains unresolved, but many times the communication may be successful. The cloudiest, but most accessible version of this interaction, is present in relationships between humans and their “pets.” While different dogs may whine for many reasons, a person in a relationship with a specific dog will often come to recognize all of the different whimpers and noises that his specific dog companion makes.¹¹ One whimper may signify pain, another stress, another the need to go out, and another impatience in wanting a specific toy or wanting to be picked up or held. The person is often able to recognize a specific dog’s whimper or bark because the person knows the behavior of the dog and is aware of the environmental context in which the dog is behaving.

Certain contexts provide even clearer evidence of the *ability* of various species to intentionally communicate with humans (on human terms). Our society has recently seen an increase in animals that/who are trained to assist humans in various tasks and situations. These relationships span from dogs in war, which has been a well-known historical role of animals in human civilization, rescue dogs, and sniffer dogs, who have seen a rise in employment since 9/11, to the more recent inception of therapy dogs for hospital and nursing facility patients, guide dogs for non-seeing people, assistance or service dogs for people with disabilities, alert dogs for diabetic and epileptic patients. All of these interspecies relationships rely upon an augmented communication system, one that requires interspecies communication. Scientists have now proven that there are

differences in specific canine vocalizations, and they have been able to record and slow down canine “utterances,” pointing to the meaning in differences of pitch, duration, tone, and frequency. “Closer evaluation of dog vocalizations with respect to social environment reveals developmental factors that lead to both frequent barking and barking in many contexts. Additionally, spectrographic analysis indicates that bark structure varies predictably with context, suggesting that barks can be divided into contextual subtypes and may be a more complex form of communication than given credit (Yin 189). What makes literature about animals so important is that it allows writers to discuss their “lived experiences” with animals and to imagine the experience of animals. As Corinne Painter and Christian Lotz note in the introduction to *Phenomenology and the Nonhuman Animal*,

[I]f animal others are also ‘Egos,’ which simply means they have a *unified, experienced perspective* on the world, then we must come to the conclusion that humans and animals not only partially or ‘accidentally’ live alongside each other; rather, we fundamentally *share* with each other the *objectivity* of what we call ‘world.’ Put simply, to live in a world that is “there” for everyone—including nonhuman animals—intentionally implies and *presupposes* ‘a community of Egos existing with each other and for each other.’ Undoubtedly, most commentators of Husserl’s phenomenology have overlooked this *radical* ‘trans-species’ spirit of Husserl’s thoughts in the 5th *Cartesian Meditation* [emphasis in original] (4).

In working through how different nonhuman characters might “experience the world,” the writer nudges readers gently toward an ethical approach. Like human speech acts, the intentionality of any animal utterance is open to interpretation, which makes the recording and retelling, as Spivak discusses in her rigorous explication of speaking, of that specific utterance an onerous duty. Part of the speaking process involves the transmission of a perspective. Jonathan Balcolombe reminds us of the importance of recognizing that a human perspective is not necessarily the only way to see the world or

the only way the world is being experienced in any given moment:

It is a fantasy of mine to have the power to become another animal in order to experience life from their perspective. I generally choose to retain my own mind but within an animal's body, and I tend to favor birds and fishes as the subjects of my metamorphoses. The German ethologist Jacob von Uexkull also thought about what it would be like to be another creature. Around 1905, he coined the term "umwelt" to refer to an animal's sensory world. . . .Dogs, for example, see mainly in black and white, but their acute sense of smell allows them to discern a kaleidoscope information (32).

Balcolmbe points to a significant intersection between phenomenology and ethology in the various ways that different animals communicate their experiences and how different animals' experiences of the world can be.¹³ A valuable point to keep in mind is simply that we, as human beings, are always representing animals--even in talking about them, let alone constructing them in fictional narratives—from the specific perspective of a human.

The layers of representation involved must present frustration and anxiety about approaching these texts and the theories and questions that accompany them, yet the acts of interpretation required to reckon with various words that are supposed to refer to specific animals in a language system require an interpreter to also work through all of the experiences that construct the form of that specific animal. In this moment, the moment when a reader comes to understand the animal character within the text, there will be a significant number of variables that will inform the understanding of that character/work. The reader's understanding may or may not correlate to the writer's idea, and within the reader's and writer's negotiation, there is this animal voice that has to be considered. This is not a thesis that will focus on which vocalizations or body movements can or should be considered "intentional acts," as this definition would, within a narrative, largely depend on the writer's intent for the character.

Vicki Hearne discusses the importance of the concepts of “responsibility” and “relationship” in considering interspecies relationship in the world of training (18-21). What I hope to have made clear here is that writing and reading about nonhumans is also a relationship engaged in all of the philosophical and political questions related to a discourse of species; writers who engage the questions of the animal in the manner of survivance liberate animals fictionally and unbind readers and themselves from anthropocentrism.

Conclusion of Theory

The critics who inform my approach to the discourse of species within literature come from different areas of specialization, but I incorporate each of them because they provide essential pieces to my explication of the animal characters of Bishop and Vizenor. In brief, Derrida provides the grounding for my theoretical approach to “what they call an animal” or “the so-called animal” (*ATTIA* 62, 64). His critique of logocentrism’s traditional exclusion of nonhumans, consideration of nonhuman “trace” and “response,” recognition of the atrocities that many nonhumans face because of the actions of humans, discussion of the power of naming and categorizing, and rejection of Cartesian thought regarding species figure importantly in the following literary analysis. Spivak then provides a way to “speak” for those who lack representation, but only if that act of speaking involves listening, an act of reciprocation that Gordon applies to interspecies communication. Spivak also shows the way that cultural silencing functions and how it can be reversed. Vizenor provides the final theoretical contribution in his subversion of the dominant representations of native peoples in America. Vizenor links Derridean methodology to the undoing of cultural silencing in his theory of manifest manners and survivance, and I apply his ideas specifically to species discourse. Yet none of these theories would serve any practical purpose if they were not applicable to the world in which we live. The brief consideration of cognitive ethology and phenomenology shows

the larger context for my project, thus reconciling a cultural and literary response to a relationship with nonhuman beings.

II. MUTE, UNMUTE: BEYOND METAPHORICAL SPEAKING

This chapter focuses on the animal and interspecies relationship in the writings of Elizabeth Bishop and Gerald Vizenor. By considering both authors' characters in terms of the discourses of species defined in the prologue and first chapter, I highlight the dialogue, actions, appearance, environments, and metaphors that sustain animal survivance in these texts. The characters in Bishop's texts, which seem "realistic," and the speaking canines and species shifters in Gerald Vizenor's fiction function as cultural links to the sociopolitical, environmental conditions of animals; a shift in dominant ideology about animals; the consideration of animal communication, perspective, and preference; and ethical approaches to coexisting with animals. As mentioned in the previous chapter, billions of animals spend their lives in cages or in other deplorable conditions in order to fulfill the needs of humans who benefit monetarily by exploiting them for agribusiness, scientific research, and entertainment. And several species who are fortunate not to be of use within these spaces are losing their natural habitats to deforestation and human populations. On one side of the spectrum, we see atrocities happening to animals, but there has also been a cultural recognition in the importance of animals' lives and in the philosophical undoing of the human/animal divide. Part of this renegotiation of the human has been the development of scientific fields of study that attempt to understand our role as co-animals of the earth. Major figures in cognitive ethology, such as Jane Goodall, Frans de Waal, and Marc Bekoff, have shown that the primacy of humanity is as much a fallacy in scientific thought as it was in philosophical, religious ideology. In their connections to these important conversations involving the lives of all animals, including the human ones, the texts I explore challenge long-cherished beliefs about human sovereignty, and mock or metaphorically destroy the machines and discourses that subjugate nonhuman beings.

In thinking about literary representations of nonhuman animals, the brain can spin over the number of creatures that might come flying, swooping, slouching, and creeping through the pages of cultural narratives. Science fiction often imagines nonhuman animals as agents of political change, anarchists decrying the system, and monstrous human/animal hybrids created by new technologies. Both Bishop and Vizenor place their nonhuman characters politically, but the SF genre “literalizes,” as Gordon states, the more radical cultural perspectives (“Talking” 457). In “Science Fiction’s Renegade Becomings,” Carol McGuirk provides examples of science fiction stories that present challenges to the traditional species hierarchy:

The discussion that follows considers how human languages and their offspring, human ideas and human histories, figure in science-fiction plots of animal—and other—becomings. Deleuze and Guattari italicize their statement that “*Becoming is an antimemory*” (294). SF tales of becoming are also “anti-histories,” challenging what we think we know about species dominion. Notwithstanding the “abyssal” difference between language-based consciousness and that of the other species (Derrida 399), sf often imagines shifts or cracks in paradigms (282).

McGuirk’s quotation focuses on two points that are important to my discussion: language and “anti-histories.” The stories she discusses challenge anthropocentrism and logocentrism by showing humans and animals in communication with each other, and by providing a narrative that includes nonhuman perspectives. A similar fictive demonstration of a paradigm shift happens in the interspecies relationships and nonhuman characterizations of Gerald Vizenor and Elizabeth Bishop.

In addition to negotiating the question of the animal, both Vizenor and Bishop raise questions about exploitation. By inverting metaphors, resisting taxonomical categories, disrupting stabilized gender pronouns, and creating animal characters who have political and cultural identity and history, they exploit what Derrida terms “slippages” in language and play in the abyss from “*logos*” to voice. Vizenor and Bishop portray their animal characters by narrating

their vocalizations and other bodily messages without making either one privileged. Further, the species of these characters are not positioned in the traditional “Chain of Being.” In other words, the barking dog does not function as simply a diminished version of a speaking man.

Elizabeth Bishop: The [un]Master of [un]Silence and Nonhuman Persons¹⁴

It is important to me to know that, through most of her life, Bishop was critically and consciously trying to explore marginality, power and powerlessness, often in poetry of great beauty and sensuous power. That not all these poems are fully realized or satisfying simply means that the living who care that art should embody these questions have still more work to do (Adrienne Rich, “Eye of the Outsider: The Poetry of Elizabeth Bishop” 16).

American poet Elizabeth Bishop has been widely recognized for her ability to create meticulous literary environments that integrate the physicality of specific locations with the social and political contexts of her characters. She has been lauded not only as a preeminent poet of her time alongside contemporaries Marianne Moore and Robert Lowell, but also as a source of material for feminist theory, queer theory, postcolonial studies, disability studies, and more recently animal studies. Consciously or not, Bishop offers several representations of nonhumans who/that are marginalized yet able to *speak* physically and culturally. Some of these characters speak (in the physical manner of humans), but more often than not their communicative acts, “an action that serves as an utterance,” in Spivak’s terminology, do not come through words (2120). By combining these modes of speaking, Bishop troubles the dominance of human speech. Many feminist theorists and ecotheorists have discussed the animal as “Other” and as “inferior” or “oppressed”; these theorists offer means of exploring nonhuman animals through academic discourse. Adrienne Rich has explicitly placed Bishop within the realms of this conversation: “I believe she deserves to be read and valued . . . for the way she locates

herself in the world [. . .] What I value is her attempt to acknowledge other outsiders, lives marginal in ways that hers is not” (17).¹⁵ And although Rich does not specifically name nonhuman animals as part of her body of work that “explore[s] marginality, power and powerlessness,” it would be the height of anthropocentrism to exclude nonhumans based solely on their species (17). My analysis includes “At the Fishhouses,” a poem about a speaker’s contemplation of the concept of knowledge as she encounters a man and a seal at a fishery; “Pink Dog,” a work that brings together the cultural lightness of a Brazilian carnival with the seriousness of a canine mother whom Bishop compares to addicted, disabled, unvalued humans; “Lullaby for the Cat” and “In a Room,” two pieces that take up the topic of Bishop’s own feline companion in political, social, and domestic spaces; and “The Riverman,” also a Brazilian narrative, but set on the Amazon River and focused on the dream-like adventure of a man, a dolphin, and a river spirit. All of the Bishop poems I critique figure animals in the cultural spaces that I introduced earlier, participating in a reevaluation of nonhuman life. In my examination of Bishop’s nonhuman animals, I show the ways that Bishop’s literary animals “survive” and “resist” the pitfalls of anthropocentric hegemony. Bishop’s relationships with Beppo, a childhood canine friend, Minnow, her cat, and numerous other experiences with nonhumans emerge in her representations of interspecies and intraspecies relationships and communication. Her nonhuman characters also allow readers to contemplate the voices and bodies of animals. Bishop’s animals permeate the boundaries often related to species difference, and their political, gendered, abused, loved bodies challenge readers to reconsider our attitudes and actions toward nonhuman beings.

Bonnie Costello writes that “Bishop’s misfits frequently exist within a background of unruly nature and come to represent a creative relationship to their environment. They are ‘eyesores,’ like the deviations of nature itself, in a cultivated garden. But they also possess mystical knowledge or power. They are not strictly antithetical but rather live within the community, not across some well-defended boundary” (81). In considering

the human/animal boundary, Bishop places nonhuman characters in positions that show them in environments in which they are politicized, marginalized, and commodified, but her animal characters, like their real-world counterparts, resist the social structures that so often confine them. In creating this discursive space, Bishop resists “the literature of dominance [that] maintains the scientific models and tragic simulations of a consumer culture” (Vizenor *RR* 9).

Bishop poses a famous question at the end of “Country Mouse”: “Why am I a human being?” (*Collected Prose* 33). Musing similar to this much-quoted question is sustained throughout her body of work, but the question is never answered. Nonetheless, Bishop’s characterizations negate speciesism and respond to the already mentioned dominant ideological positioning and policing of animal bodies. Priscilla Paton argues that Bishop’s work mixes both “anthropocentric assumptions that underlie sympathetic depictions” with “spontaneous attraction to animals” (197). In Paton’s view, these two positions are paradoxical, yet often held in present-day culture. One person claims that her dog is there to serve her, but then argues vehemently that she loves this dog and considers this dog her very best friend and maybe even her family member. The dog “owner” cherishes a position of mastery, which assumes many anthropocentrisms, while claiming to understand and care for her dog in a relationship paradigm. My critique of Paton is not that she mischaracterizes Bishop’s work in referring to it as “anthropocentric,” but that she does not consider delving further. For Bishop incorporates animal characters as examples that question anthropocentrism.

Human authors cannot make any real claim to a zoocentric position; authors who would make such a spurious claim would always be met with Gordon’s inevitable critique that we, as humans, cannot *de-humanize* ourselves to become a different animal, nor can an author ever escape the human as animal (190-93). My real concern with Paton’s claim is that she gives Bishop no credit when she claims that Bishop “may try to escape ‘conventional definitions’ through animal ‘protagonists,’” but instead demonstrates

“stereotypes [that] confine the poet, and warp the understanding of real and literary animals” (199). My goal here is to think through Bishop’s nonhuman characters as more than simply anthropocentric anthropomorphizations.

Any accusation of attributing “human” qualities to nonhumans assumes an a priori division between humans and every other species, and the accusation of anthropomorphism can stem from an underlying supposition that humans and nonhumans cannot share certain characteristics. Frans De Waal’s neologism “anthropodenial” is useful in recognizing the prevalent default cultural and theoretical viewpoint that humans cannot rightfully be animalized:

The Western world’s historic lack of exposure to monkeys and apes has only reinforced its sense of human uniqueness. Ever since Descartes, the air has been filled with warnings against anthropomorphism. The charge is that we love to project thoughts and feelings onto animals, making them more humanlike than they are. But getting rid of anthropomorphism is neither easy nor risk-free. By changing our language as soon as we describe animals, we may be concealing genuine similarities (De Waal 36).

In literary contexts, any “similarity” between human and nonhuman characters is traditionally read as animalizing the human or humanizing the animal, yet for De Waal, these polarizing positions gloss over common ground (emotional, physical, and/or intellectual). In our haste to categorize specific actions as either part of the human condition, part of the animal side of humans, or part of the humanity of animals, we make a false division between hu(man) and every other species. Bishop’s poetry and prose emphasize the blurring species line(s), placing her in opposition to portrayals of bulls and steers in Ernest Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* or Jack London’s Buck in *The Call of the Wild*, naïvely anthropocentric anthropomorphic representations that place bulls and steers as symbols of the narrative focus on masculinity in the former, and a canine who is a subservient and dominated other in the latter. London’s opening description of Buck

sets up the narrative of logocentrism, dominance, and separation: “Buck did not read the newspapers, or he would have known that trouble was brewing, not alone for himself, but for every tide-water dog” (9). In the scene where Buck’s new *master* breaks him, London acknowledges the human dominance involved in the use of animals for physical labor:

As he [man in red sweater] spoke he fearlessly patted the head he had so mercilessly pounded, and though Buck’s hair involuntarily bristled at touch of the hand, he endured it without protest. When the man brought him water he drank eagerly, and later bolted a generous meal of raw meat, chunk by chunk, from the man’s hand. He was beaten (he knew that); but he was not broken. He saw, once for all, that he stood no chance against a man with a club. . . . [T]he lesson was driven home to Buck: a man with a club was a lawgiver, a master to be obeyed, though not necessarily conciliated (13).

Buck enacts the aforementioned cultural ambivalence, and in that way London gestures toward the emotional and “moral lives of animals.”¹⁶ Though London’s attempt moves readers to a place of contemplation of the complexity of canine lives, Buck enacts the separation and subordination of a withering ideology.

Bishop’s narrative environments push back against the narratives of dominance of authors like Hemingway and London. Her characters are never far removed from the questions of the animal(s). These constructions work through Bishop’s negotiation of nonhumans, even when these characters do not have a narrative presence. In other words, the writer’s environment is always occupied by nonhuman beings; these creatures may indeed be microorganisms, insects, birds just outside, or animals whom/that the author knows personally and intimately.

In the examples I provide, she troubles the constructed binary between humans and “animals”; in using speaking animals, she clashes with manifest manners and enacts survivance. Bishop’s texts provide moments that show humans acknowledging the

subjectivity of nonhumans. Bishop demonstrates her awareness of the importance of representations of politicized, revolutionary animals. The fish, seal, dolphin, dog, and cat are part of a cultural conversation, and my readings of these characters might then be extrapolated to other pieces.¹⁷

In “At the Fishhouses,” Bishop writes of the narrator’s encounter with a seal, and engages with the idea that “knowledge is historical” (83). The linking of patriarchy, narrative voice, episteme, and the gaze of the animal, are apparent throughout a major portion of this text. I will include here the sections that most directly relate to my argument:

One seal particularly
I have seen here evening after evening.
He was curious about me. He was interested in music;
like me a believer in total immersion,
so I used to sing him Baptist hymns.
I also sang “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.”
He stood up on the water and regarded me
steadily, moving his head a little.
Then he would disappear, then suddenly emerge
almost in the same spot, with a sort of shrug
as if it were against his better judgment (49-59).

and

If you tasted it, it would first taste bitter,
then briny, then surely burn your tongue,
It is like what we imagine knowledge to be:
dark, salt, clear, moving, utterly free,
drawn from the cold hard mouth
of the world, derived from the rocky breasts

forever, flowing and dawn, and since
our knowledge is historical, flowing, and flown (76-83).

At the beginning of the lines that include the narrator's depiction of an encounter with a seal, Bishop, having placed the conversation in the context of fish, gives readers two separate interspecies experiences. Bishop uses olfactory images: the smell of the fish and the smell of the Lucky Strike the man "accepts" (7, 32), placing the encounter with the seal inside an unconventional space that connects to the information in the latter part of the poem, which is focused on knowledge. People know the smell of a cigarette and the smell of fish bodies; Bishop builds on these sensory images, connecting them to the "taste" of the line "our knowledge is historical," which recalls Spivak's discussion of "subjugated knowledge" and "epistemic violence." In her recognition of the systems of cultural knowledge, Bishop gestures to eventual ending or transformation of an epistemology that ignores the knowledge of animals.

Additionally, Bishop's placement of the seal as a conscious character so close to the closing lines about "our knowledge" connects her discussion of the constructs of epistemology to the communication of the seal. In connecting seemingly disparate discourses, knowledge and a seal, Bishop creates a textual animal who/that readers necessarily connect to epistemology. Vizenor writes that "[t]he novelist creates a presence of animals and nature with metaphors and lyrical descriptions that are not bound to the modes of scientific causation of objective representations" (*FP* 126). Bishop's text links her literary seal to the narrator's recognition of the "flowing and flown knowledge" (83). Bishop's recognition of "our" episteme being, at best, extremely tenuous and amorphous, juxtaposed against that of a seal who/that is "curious" and "interested in music," inverts the cultural hierarchies of Western tradition. Bishop's seal "resists tragic victimry" and "false closure" in a setting that is based on the commodification and physical violence involved in catching and eating fish. Rather than submitting the seal to the will of a hunter or trainer, Bishop constructs a nonhuman character who has knowledge and cultural

preferences of his own, and in doing so reminds readers of the perspectives and desires of the nonhumans who are often either ignored or systemically abused within our culture.

One of Bishop's most radical animal characters is the "Pink Dog" in her poem of the same name. This poem, set during Carnival in Rio de Janeiro, portrays the narrator's imagined address to a "naked," "pink" female dog (5, 21). As the narrator watches the beach in Rio de Janeiro, s/he notes the rainbow of colors that is interrupted by the entrance of the Pink Dog (1-3). The narrator considers this canine's life on the streets. Bishop's canine character is afflicted with scabies and is hairless, or as Bishop describes, "naked." The Pink Dog also has "hanging teats," a physical indication of her recent pregnancy (10). This character is, as Costello points out, "marginalized" (186), given Bishop's physical and social descriptions.

Bishop plays delicately with the assumption that this physically different creature is perceived by others as dangerous and deadly when she writes that the beachgoers are worried that the dog has "rabies" (7-9). Of course, rabies would mean that the Pink Dog poses a physical threat to others and would potentially deteriorate into a state of "mad"ness and then death, but the narrator has knowledge that the others watching the Pink Dog lack, and knows that she actually suffers from "scabies" (7, 8). Costello argues that this skin condition is a mirror for Bishop's well-known eczema condition: "Bishop herself suffered from eczema and other skin ailments, and as a schoolgirl was sent home for open sores. She had the constant sense, then, of physical betrayal" (87). And while Costello's claim about the skin condition seems likely, the argument that follows her observation about the skin afflictions carries with it an all-too-familiar statement about the meaning of the poem's main character: "Yet a dog without hair is a reductive image of any human form" (87). Others may, however, choose to read this character not as a "dehumanized image of the body," but instead as a different *image of the body* (Costello 87). In other words, both dogs and humans can suffer from skin conditions, so there is no real reason to think that the Pink Dog needs to be humanized or "dehumanized" in

order to have a skin problem that is like the one Bishop had. Itchiness and scabs are no more *human* than urinating or eating. However readers choose to read the nakedness, the gender, and the act of begging that the character engages in, it seems presumptuous to wholly dismiss the *caninity* of the Pink Dog by simply stating that this character is in any way a diminished form of a human.

Catherine Cucinella provides a thorough examination of the “femininity,” “the grotesqueness,” and “deviance” of the Pink Dog. I would extend the ideas that Cucinella focuses onto the actual physical species of the character, whose species identity shapes her as a political being when Bishop writes of others who share the Pink Dog’s social position: Didn’t you know? / It’s been in all the papers, / to solve this problem, how they deal with beggars? / They take and throw them in the tidal rivers / Yes, idiots, paralytics, parasites / go bobbing in the ebbing sewage (13-17). In the next stanza she writes: “If they do this to anyone who begs, / drugged, drunk, or sober, with or without legs, / what would they do to sick, four-legged dogs?” (19-21). Bishop connects her nonhuman character to other characters that would be considered subalterns. She poses the question concerning the chemically dependent and homeless and then discusses how the cultural policing of those beings can be applied to the Pink Dog. Bishop poses the Pink Dog in several intersecting sociopolitical contexts that allows readers to sift through the connections between ugliness, femininity, species importance, and class. In placing her Pink Dog within these contexts, she forces readers into such consideration. Interestingly, Bishop does not give us the perspective of the Pink Dog, a narrative point of view she offers in “Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics,” in which she writes from the imagined perspective of a Giant Toad, a Strayed Crab, and a Giant Snail (*Collected Poetry* 139-42). There could be several reasons for not providing the point of view of the Pink Dog, but the most relevant to this study is that this poem that is so politically entrenched enacts the reality that we can never actually access the other’s perspective. This inability to fully get to another being’s frame of mind does not excuse us from not considering that being’s preferences.

Bishop provides an interesting parallel in Minnow from “Lullaby for the Cat” and “my cat” from “In a Room.” Jonathan Ellis acknowledges that both characters are indeed based on Minnow, a cat Bishop writes about in her prose and personal letters: “[S]he went back to Europe later that summer, she attended a meeting at the Albert Hall for Spanish Civil War orphans, evidence that she no longer saw Spain as simply the home of Communists and bullfighters. In the same year, she also completed two poems — ‘The Hanging of the Mouse’ and ‘Lullaby for the Cat’ — which finally feature the ‘curious cat’ alluded to in ‘In a Room’” (10). In the manuscript version of the poem “In a Room,” there are four handwritten inclusions of the phrase “my cat” that never make it to the typeset version of the poem (*Poems* 266). Bishop’s cat is present within the writing environment, and even, to a certain extent, on the page, and the feline trace, the “absence of the presence,” though not always recognized or perceived, persists. Her poem for Minnow, the name of one of Bishop’s feline companions, includes these lines: “Darling Minnow, drop that frown, / Just cooperate, / Not a kitten shall be drowned / In the Marxist State” (5-8). These lines show a feline character, like the Pink Dog, as subject to political conditions. The Pink Dog and Minnow are put in political and social contexts shared by groups considered politically oppressed and even subaltern, though these categories are not limited to a specific species. Bishop allows us to imagine a world in which nonhuman beings figure importantly within these social settings, thus, creating a literary relationship of responsibility and collaboration, instead of oppression and victimry.

In “The Riverman,” Bishop creates a poem about a man who connects with an aquatic environment in an interspecies encounter about the perceived connection of spirituality to animality. Bishop’s character changes species, seeks the communion of a dolphin character named “Dolphin,” and literally engages in “language” “interception” with his fellow water dwellers. The most resonating section from this piece comes from the Riverman’s depiction of that communication: “She complimented me / in a language I didn’t know; but when she blew cigar smoke into my ears and nostrils / I understood

like a dog, / although I can't speak it yet" (48-52). In those verses, Bishop forces readers to try to understand without understanding; she pushes the limits of what we as humans have come to understand as "language" and "understanding." Terri K. Borchers argues that "perhaps in this dramatization of linguistic comprehensibility, Bishop again prefigures Derrida and deconstruction" (65). One can really only guess at what Bishop was suggesting when the narrator says he "understood like a dog" (51). I am imagining that the issue she is indexing is that we, as humans, cannot ever really know how it feels to "understand" like a dog, and where our lack of access to a canine perspective might have traditionally been perceived as a dog having a lack of understanding and cognition, we now see the canine perspective as important despite, and perhaps because of, our lack of access to it.

Bishop follows Gordon's suggestion that part of the responsibility in "speaking for" animals is that we "shut up and listen." For Borchers, Bishop's writing "often disclose[s] the terror of such estranging moments through recognition – a re-cognition or rethinking of the constantly shrinking, constantly changing global community that cannot adequately be mapped in a way that separates self from other, or a reader's or writer's present from the past, in a discursive and performative post-modern world" (59). Borchers concludes that "perhaps map-maker Bishop constructs for her readers some yet to be realized haven of freedom and equity – like the one the American framers imagined – so that all the unhomely others like herself cannot be possessed or appropriated, or colonized, oppressed, or silenced, by anyone or anything and, least of all, her own poems" (66). Her discussion then focuses on how Bishop's characters are mirrors of the poet/author, but even if we stop short of the mirror, these characters are valuable in that they demand our attention and care. It matters less that these characters are somehow valences of Bishop and more that she describes, as Borchers argues, a fallow ground of nurturing for a growing repositioning of all animals, human and non.

The Bishop characters I have presented function as part of the continuing

negotiation of ethical and political responsibility of human beings toward nonhuman beings. Species is important to Bishop in many ways—politically, socially, and epistemologically—that are only now coming to the forefront in our own cultural discussions about the lives of animals. Bishop also shows that our understanding of nonhumans and our relationships with them are not less important than our understanding of those with whom we share a species category. In presenting animals within these imagined spaces, she challenges readers to contemplate our own relationships with animals, be they in our homes, in our grocery stores, or simply in a momentary crossing of paths.

Gerald Vizenor and Literary Animal Liberation

Animals are created in nature, narratives, and economies; animals are translated, compared, and interpreted in literature and culture. The animals of literature are twice their nature: the real in visions and environments, and the authored animals of a narrative creation. The authored animals are as diverse as the real, the species of creation and evolution; animals wild, transmuted, captured, and fantastic, are healers and eternal favorites. Language, then, is one of the real environments of the authored animals—the names, memories, manners, metaphors, and the totemic presence of animals in narratives (*FP* 132-3).

The trickster is comic nature in a language game, not a real person or “being” in the ontological sense. Tribal tricksters are embodied in imagination and liberate the mind; an androgyny, she would repudiate translations and imposed representations, as he would bare the contradictions of the striptease (*TL* x).

Prolific professor, novelist, poet, and theorist Gerald Vizenor has contributed

over 20 books that confront the problems of the various cultural representations of marginalized groups and individuals. As I discussed in the previous sections, Vizenor's critical analysis is evident throughout his fictional works. Writing later than Bishop, he engages the sociopolitical arena of the animal with his explication of "survivance." In his fictional *Hotline Healers* and *The Trickster of Liberty*, Vizenor gives us several characters and figures who also resist any single interpretation. These characters, often tricksters, resist dominance and staunch human-centered endeavors that are based in and result narratively in violence toward nonhuman characters. Vizenor writes, "Many contemporary native novelists present the imagic consciousness of animals in dialogue and descriptive narratives, and overturn the monotheistic separation of humans and animals" (*Native Liberty* 10). That "monotheistic separation" remains a foundation for the routinized oppression of nonhumans, a philosophical and cultural structure that stems from an increasingly questioned grand narrative. Vizenor uses Lyotard's ideas in *The Postmodern Condition* to comment on the relationship of postmodernism to grand narratives: "I define postmodernism as incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard qtd. in Vizenor "Ruins of Representation" 8). Vizenor applies Lyotard to representations of natives: "Science, translation, and the discoveries of otherness in tribal culture, are the histories of racialism and the metanarratives of dominance" (9). Nonhuman cultures, organizational systems, and knowledge have just recently become relevant in different disciplines, and as Vizenor's counternarratives expose and dismantle manifest manners, writers and researchers who provide counternarratives about the lives and histories of animals weaken the dominance of anthropocentric speciesism.

Many native cultures had a comprehensive understanding of how humans and animals existed in the world, and books, essays, and novels have engaged the tribal trickster in several corporeal incarnations, which have long been standard stock in the children's department of many public libraries and bookstores. It is interesting to me that the texts produced for children often portray a caricatured version of trickster. When we approach

these figures with the imagination and passion of children, the characters in these texts can destabilize the culturally constructed division that separates humans from other species, decentering human subjectivity. Characters that are able to transcend one corporeal form and exist as more than one gender or species function as magnets pulling away from our proclivity to declare ourselves exclusively “sovereign subjects.” Additionally, these movements destabilize other positions that are thought of as concrete and binary, such as gender, ethnicity, and sexuality.

When Vizenor’s tricksters face systematic oppression, they often protest against powers that have disempowered humans and nonhumans. In *Trickster of Liberty*, subtitled *Native Heirs to a Wild Baronage*, Vizenor introduces readers to the Browne family, a group of mixedblood tricksters who live on and off a reservation space. The novel takes the form of short character vignettes of different family members and friends. Three of the essential characters Vizenor develops are canine mongrels who/that accompany their human family in various acts of cultural resistance. Pure Gumption, Chicken Lips, and White Lies collaborate with each other and humans, speak, and heal throughout the text. Therein they enact nonhuman animal survivance. In addition to functioning in these specific narrative modes, these three canine characters appear in several of Vizenor’s fictional works. They are part of an ethic of “native survivance,” a reversal of manifest manners. These nonhuman characters are often similar to companion animals that we know, but their actions repeatedly work in tandem with other tricksters to create conflict and resist “tragic closure” (*MM* 15).

Throughout Vizenor’s novels, his reoccurring mongrels, Chicken Lips, White Lies, and Pure Gumption antagonize the people who enact manifest manners. Pure Gumption, “the shaman mongrel [. . .] glowed and healed with her paws and tongue, inspired the priest more than dead letter supplication and absolution” (*TL* 103). And White Lies is described as “he” in several passages and then as “she” in a following passage. This pronoun play, almost so subtle that it could go unnoticed, allows White Lies position of control over the culturally restrictive binary of gender. In breaking two

existing cultural binary opposition, White Lies and Pure Gumption function as agents that work against the perpetuation of tyrannical powers of speciesism and sexism. Vizenor creates specific characters who are either permanently aphasic, rendered physically “voiceless,” or are transformed from speechless to being able to speak. White Lies urinates on the research laboratory that has devocalized its canine research subjects; and Chicken Lips responds to the words of N. Scott Momaday, an author Vizenor celebrates for his understanding of nonhuman characterizations. In the chapter “New School of Socioacupuncture [NSSA],” Vizenor describes an interspecies act of resistance involving Tune Browne, a human mixedblood trickster, and his canine companion, White Lies. Vizenor creates an interspecies collaboration that results in the disruption of a university lecture and the freeing of canine research subjects. In constructing parallel narratives of higher education and vivisection, Vizenor indicates the link between scientific discourse and the violent treatment of nonhuman beings. In showing how the academy and violence against nonhuman beings are connected, he indicates that those within the academy can change the course of history and, indeed, that the shift in ideology will affect people and animals.

Vizenor describes Tune Browne’s plan to disrupt anthropology Professor Alan Dundas’s university lecture on “the tribal earthdiver” at the NSSA: “One morning the trickster waited outside the classroom with the mongrels and promised that the ‘mongrels would overturn the best academies’” (52). The lecture becomes a laughingstock when the mongrels and Tune take over and shut down the speaker (53). Right after this episode, human and mongrel tricksters collaborate in their “liberation” of research dogs. During the laboratory raid, Tune says “Free the mongrels, liberate the mongrels in life sciences” (56). Vizenor’s description works particularly well in the research laboratory scene; his positioning of these radically opposed characters fused in the same literary space serves the underlying and overt argument of this thesis. He writes that “there were wild creatures snared in concrete over the south entrance and animal death masks decorated the laboratories” (*TL* 56). The humans, of course, need the olfactory senses of the mongrels to

find the caged subjects. It is essential in this text that readers note that collaborative effort of the interspecies effort. One moment that seems to directly indicate both the linguistic and physical violence that befalls animals is the “liberation of the mongrels.”

When Tune is asked by one of the scientists about his position on “utilitarianism” (an all too common hypothetical justification of vivisection/animal research) in a question about a cancer cure, Tune responds, “Free the mongrels [. . .] and save these scientists from cancer and their wicked research” (58). Just after Tune verbally addresses the utilitarian argument (one that Derrida vehemently attacks), Tune “threw open the cages and the mongrels licked his hands” . . . White Lies raised his leg and pissed on the blond [scientist]; the other male mongrels, in turn, declared their territories on the scientists” (58-59). This powerful scene turns “manifest manners” around and “reverses” them, as in Vizenor’s theoretical works. At the end of this chapter Vizenor writes, “The liberated mongrels with no barks became the most honored breed at the University of California” (59). This inversion of an apparent “disability” to a reason to be “honored” makes a relevant statement about perspective and dignity. Vizenor writes, “The coherence of natural reason is created in personal stories, and in the elusive unions of shamans with birds, animals, and ancestors. These natural unions are heard in the shadows that outlast translations” (*MM* 98). The “coherence” emerges in the “tricky” stories of “liberation” and, thus, grants the animal characters agency. And in *Manifest Manners*, “The trickster is reason and mediation in stories, the original translator of tribal encounters; the name is an intimation of transformation, men to women, animals to birds, and more than mere causal representation in names [. . .]trickster hermeneutics is access to trickster stories, and the shimmer of a tribal presence in simulations” (15). One comes to realize that this trickster discourse is a vehicle for further discussion about the validity of nonhuman animal bodies as agents. In other words, the texts provide an affable resistance to nomenclature/categorization and to the violent act of “appellation.”

Such representations contribute to the legacy of problematizing the philosophical

and, ultimately, sociopolitical issues surrounding these celebrated, constructed binary oppositions. In addition, Vizenor confronts the “ruins of representation” and the parallels between the literary representations of native people of animals. In *Native Liberty*, Vizenor writes about the negative effects of the perceived relationship of native culture to nature:

Commonly, natives have been represented and associated with nature and totemic animals. That attribution, however, is more nostalgia for animism in the commercial world than an imagic sense of nature a sense of native presence, and animals as a narrative voice in literature. Many culturists fashion natives and nature as an absence, as a tragic, nostalgic closure of the enlightenment, and straitened by victimry (10).

These simulations of “absence,” extensions of manifest manners, are perversions that function as a problem for *postindian* studies; these images that pose as realist depictions present a parallel and similarly dangerous situation for critical animal studies. These simulations stand in for, and come to be seen as, “real.” We are now brought back to Spivak’s discussion of representation (*darstellung*). These simulations operate to reenact the idea of the noble savage who is not fully human, but in the same moment, they further perpetuate as accurate erroneous representations of nonhumans. “The novelist creates a presence of animals and nature with metaphors and lyrical descriptions that are not bound to the modes of scientific causation or objective representations....The most inscrutable animals are tamed in the authored familiarities of human nature, the inescapable consequences of reason, iconic silence, and the philosophies of grammar; at the same time, certain animals are memorable characters with their own manners, consciousness, and points of view in literature” (*FP* 126-27). Vizenor reinforces this claim about the fiction writer in his own novels by resisting “mutant caricatures of anthropomorphism” (*FP* 128) that oversimplify and flatten the complex and diverse lives of nonhuman beings.

Nonhuman beings express their desires, communicate through physical movements and vocalizations, and act to attain physical and emotional satisfaction.

Cary Wolfe addresses how human understanding of nonhuman cultures is continuing to shape our perspective about how to approach different philosophical and physical places that animals inhabit. Wolfe writes that based on our new knowledge, “it seems clear that there is no longer any good reason to take it for granted that the theoretical, ethical, and political question of the subject is automatically coterminous with the species distinction between *Homo sapiens* and everything else” (1). Vizenor’s mongrels enact similar moves that frustrate and in some ways exert momentary control over those positioned as oppressors. Authors who construct characters who resist boundaries help readers *desedimentize* the cultural ideologies that perpetuate false assumptions about marginalized beings, human and nonhuman.

In the collection that focuses on Almost Browne, *Hotline Healers*, Vizenor reintroduces Pure Gumption as being “one of the mighty mongrels at the barony,” and “a true healer” (12). In one of his turns of hierarchy, Vizenor’s narrator ascribes agency to the mongrels in the following passage: “we wondered if our shouts into panic holes were trickier than the eternal barks of the mongrels, and who was the first shouter, man or mongrel?” (12). Vizenor’s direct connection to Derrida’s critique of logocentrism and the primacy of human trace marks his discursive construction of panic holes. A panic hole is a space, but it is also the tribal name of Almost’s grandfather, Luster Browne: “His native nickname, it turned out, was an insecure translation of three *anishinaabe* words, *wanaki* or *danakii*, to live in peace, *waanikaan*, a hole, and *babaamendan*, to worry, and, to obscure the stories evermore” (*HH* 11). Vizenor’s narrator admits that some of the term’s meaning is lost in translation, and this unstable definition is characteristic of Vizenor’s trickster characters. Even when pinned down in an interview, Vizenor gives a somewhat ambiguous response that expands on the earlier definition: “Panic is creation, and the hole is a trickster story. Shout into a panic hole and listen to creation, shout at the earth and the seasons change. Panic is natural, and the shout is survivance. The earth, plants, birds, and animals love to hear our shouts, and we are much wiser for the sound of our

game. Shout, shout into panic holes, and the earth restores the balance” (Lee and Vizenor 109). Within his narratives, Vizenor places no primacy on the human shout, and, instead, positions it as parallel or secondary to the canine trace. The baronage is constructed as a decentered place, a place that shifts human sovereignty and extends the theories that I am engaging in this thesis. Vizenor states: “Natives are stories of *actual* motion and, at the same time, the *visionaries* of transmotion, the motion of creation, imagic memories, and totemic associations; ontic, or real existence, and a phenomenal existence of the senses. Decidedly, the stories of human motion and the virtual conversions of animals and humans are native modernity” (Preface ix). If we are to follow this line of thinking, we should come to understand that these spaces in literature provide resistance to the “separation” of *dominance*. The land given to Luster Browne at the beginning of *Trickster of Liberty* is described as a “muskeg” (4). Throughout many of Vizenor’s texts, tricksters shout and bark into panic holes. These spaces, incongruous, paradoxical, and essential, provide a place for tricksters to engage the earth. Every action that the tricksters, human, canine, and avian, engage in is related to Vizenor’s revelations about trickster ontology, and his understanding of this fundamental shift in our understanding of ontology, one that I referenced early on in my discussion of Derrida, acts as a reevaluation of the very structures of being that are so critical to species discourse.

Vizenor’s description indicates a negotiation of an ontological position that is not limited by species. “No one has ever denied the stories that some of my relatives were easy crossovers with various animals at night. My cousins have arisen as beavers, brothers came out as sisters, our fathers dance as mothers, and the best nights are the heart dances of sensuous motion, erotic animals, and almost a natural harmony” (*HH* 53). Humans often have an illusion of physical and cultural control, and Vizenor’s characters complicate that illusion. His narrative blurring of the boundaries between human and other species further contributes to a questioning of unsubstantiated anthropocentrism. These stories are, to be sure, far from the “simulations of dominance” commonly found in

cultural representations of nonhuman animals. Animals of pornography, hunting trophies, circus shows, and amusement park exhibitions are particularly telling portrayals of anthropocentrism and its justification of violence against animals.

CONCLUSION

In their representations and explicit reference to the “oral tradition,” Bishop and Vizenor provide tools for audience memory, multiple narrative perspectives, and language maneuvers that play with context, physicality, and translation. Additionally, within these various portrayals of familiar scenes or stories, characters reveal their own versions of the “truth” about the “event” they are recounting.¹⁸ But since the stories continue across more than one text, it is probable that many readers will only encounter the one narration. The discourse about writer responsibility in fiction is an important one, but one should not ignore the responsibility of readers. Niigonwedom James Sinclair summarizes Kimberly Blaeser’s interview with Vizenor on audience and writes, “By participating in the lives of stories, imagining them, and incorporating them into personal perceptions and expressions, [. . .] Native and Anishinaabeg audiences become participants in this collective process of knowledge creation and dissemination” (23). This collaboration should be acknowledged as necessary for all responsible audiences and authors. Without the implication of both parties, texts may be understood in terms of “manifest manners.” In focusing her attention on the very epistemological process and constructions involved in these cultures, Blaeser points to one of the same areas of study that is central to Spivak’s discussion of subjugated knowledges and epistemic violences.

Vizenor and Bishop confront readers with the question of species within their literary environments. While Bishop gives readers a character like the Riverman, who understands “like a dog,” Vizenor depicts dogs who actually literalize the metaphors of animal liberation. In Bishop’s portrayals of her companion felines, she figures them both politically and domestically, a move that Vizenor also makes when his dogs “shout” and “bark” into panic holes, “heal,” and shift genders and species. These authors challenge

readers to think about our own physical and philosophical relationships with nonhuman beings who are often seen only as commodities—Bishop’s fish and Vizenor’s devocalized canines—and show other animals as able to resist human exploitation. These authors also point to the importance of interspecies relationships and collaboration, while their literary animals allow us to imagine communication that transcends logocentrism. These literary constructions, therefore, participate in the blurring of an already troubled, false human/animal division, which, when blurred or recognized as nonexistent, leaves humans with no excuse to continue to approach other species with an anthropocentric ideology.

Derrida speaks of the possible reaction of invoking ideas about the obviously horrid conditions at industrialized farms: “If these images are ‘pathetic,’ if they evoke sympathy, it is also because they ‘pathetically’ open the immense question of pathos and the pathological, precisely, that is, of suffering, pity, and compassion; and the place that has to be accorded to the interpretation of this compassion, to the sharing of this suffering among the living, to the law, ethics, and politics that must be brought to bear up this experience of compassion” (*AA* 26). The characters that have comprised the focus of this thesis are literary inventions that construct a bridge to important discourse about those with whom we exist. I hope that these characters, their significant relationships, and their negotiations of different species-related obstacles serve as reminders to how we can live with difference, to our level of sensitivity when we approach our own relationships with creatures of varying species denominations, and how we operate as scholars in fields that are often dominated by division and false closure.

NOTES

1. From the natural rights theory of John Locke and Tom Regan to the utilitarianism of Peter Singer and the feminist model that Carol Adams presents, writers have expounded on why nonhuman animals ought to be granted some form of rights. Many theorists have made outstanding contributions that are not only necessary and logically sound regarding the war against the identity of nonhuman animals as meat products or commodities, but also for recognizing the ties that all oppressed groups share. I include the importance of the argument and textual representations in Marjorie Spiegel's *The Dreaded Comparison* and Mary Midgley's *Animals that Matter* in this acknowledgment of studies on these ideas. This list does not include the postmodern theorists that will later contribute to my argument.

2. See *The Emotional Lives of Animals* and *Wild Justice: The Moral Lives of Animals*, by Marc Bekoff; *Second Nature: The Inner Lives of Animals*, by Jonathan Balcombe; and *Visions of Caliban*, by Jane Goodall for specific documented evidence of nonhuman animals who exhibit traits that directly refute the Cartesian model.

3. I first came upon this terminology while reading Priscilla Paton's "You are Not Beppo: Elizabeth Bishop's Animals and Negotiation of Identity," but it is now prevalent in literary and scientific discussions.

4. Spivak argues that the "colonized subaltern subject is "irretrievably heterogenous" (270). The differences involved in this understanding of heterogeneity mirror Derrida's call for a linguistic term that indexes the problems of referring to all nonhuman animals with the collective term "the animal" (*ATTIA* 31).

5. "Manifest manners are the course of dominance, the racialist notions and misnomers sustained in archives and lexicons as 'authentic' representations of Indian culture. Manifest manners court the destinies of monotheism, cultural determinism,

objectivism, and the structural conceits of savagism and civilization” (*MM* vii).

6. Spivak speaks often of her training as a literary critic.

7. To clarify even further, I include the following quote from Leon de Kock’s 1992 interview with Spivak: “The next point: everybody thinks the subaltern is just a classy word for oppressed, for Other, for somebody who’s not getting a piece of the pie. The definition of the word ‘subaltern’ that I use is given in the essay. We are scholars after all. If they are networking in the most non-phallogentric way, and it has failed, the subaltern cannot speak. Let us at least use the hegemonic discourse as well, scholarly discourse. I give the definition, I quote the definition, the definition has a scholarly history, and that is forgotten, so that at both ends my critics are just kind of going to town, failing at both ends. Now, the word ‘subaltern’ as one knows is the description of a military thing. One knows that Gramsci used it because Gramsci was obliged to censor himself in prison. One also knows that the word changed in its use when Gramsci presciently began to be able to see what we today call north-south problems, sitting in prison in Italy, because he was talking about the southern question, and he realized that if one was talking on southern Italy, just class-formation questions were not going to solve anything. And so then the word ‘subaltern’ became packed with meaning. How extraordinary ‘subaltern’s’ provenance—a word that comes out of censorship and therefore is a classic catachresis, because of this incredible political situation, and we run with it. The subalternist historians take it from Gramsci and change it. They define it as the people, the foreign elite, the indigenous elite, the upwardly mobile indigenes, in various kinds of situations: everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern—a space of difference. Now, who would say that’s just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It’s not subaltern. It’s in capital logic, you know what I mean? So, to that extent, you can only... then I’m talking Gramsci. I mean, do we understand metaphoric use of words that are like minimally metaphoric. When you say cannot speak, it means that if speaking involves speaking and listening, this possibility of response, responsibility, does not exist in the

subaltern's sphere. You bring out these so-called subalterns from the woodwork; the only way that that speech is produced is by inserting the subaltern into the circuit of hegemony, which is what should happen, as subaltern. Who the hell wants to museumize or protect subalternity? Only extremely reactionary, dubious anthropologicist museumizers. No activist wants to keep the subaltern in the space of difference. To do a thing, to work for the subaltern, means to bring it into speech" (45-6).

8. My language here is aware of, but not invoking the particularities of Mary Midgley's important text *Animals and Why They Matter* and Marianne DeKoven and Michael Lunblad's *Species Matters: Humane Advocacy and Cultural Theory*.

9. In a recent lecture at UC Berkeley, Angela Davis commented on including nonhuman animals as beings considered part of the 99% in the Occupy Movement.

10. Vizenor writes about anthropologists throughout his fiction and theory. In this quote, he alludes to Roy Harvey Pearce's *Savagism and Civilization*.

11. See Donna Haraway's *Companion Species Manifesto* and *When Species Meet* for detailed examinations of these interspecies communication acts.

12. See *Animals and War: Confronting the Military-Animal Industrial Complex*, edited by Anthony J. Nocella II, Colin Salter, and Judy K.C. Bentley; and *Animals in War*, by Jilly Cooper for extensive ethical and cultural studies of nonhuman animals in (human) warfare.

13. Temple Grandin interrogates any heterogeneity in the idea of a shared human experience of the world. She explores this topic in *Thinking in Pictures* and *Animals in Translation*. Wolfe critiques this concept in "Learning from Temple Grandin; or, Animal Studies, Disability Studies, and Who Comes After the Subject"

14. In the film *Elizabeth Bishop: One Art*, Octavio Paz calls Bishop the "Master of Silence" (Janows).

15. Extended passage from Adrienne Rich on Elizabeth Bishop: "This is a white woman's attempt—respectful, I believe—to speak through a Black woman's voice. A risky undertaking and it betrays the failures and clumsiness of such a position. The personas we

adopt, the degree to which we use our lives already ripped-off and violated by our own culture, the problem of racist stereotyping in every white head, the issue of the writer's power, right, obligation to speak for others denied a voice, or the writer's duty to shut up at times, or at least to make room for those who can speak with more immediate authority—these are crucial questions for our time, and questions that are relevant to much of Bishop's work. . . . In selecting the poems I have discussed here, in limited space, I have reluctantly neglected the marvelous Nova Scotia poems, as well as many others even better known, such as "Roosters," "The Fish," "Visits to St. Elizabeth's" (also a seriously political poem), "In the Waiting Room," "One Art." But it seems to me that Bishop's value for us is more complex and multi-faceted than we may have been aware, and I have wanted to suggest new ways of entering her work. Moreover, it is only now, with a decade of feminist and lesbian poetry and criticism behind us, and with the publication of these *Complete Poems*, that we can read her as part of a female and lesbian tradition rather than simply as one of the few and "exceptional" or token outsider is praised for her skill and artistry while her deep and troubled connections with other outsiders are ignored. (This is itself part of the imperative to be assimilated.) It is important to me to know that, through most of her life, Bishop was critically and consciously trying to explore marginality, power and powerlessness, often in poetry of great beauty and sensuous power. That not all these poems are fully realized or satisfying simply means that the living who care that art should embody these questions have still more work to do."

16. Also the subtitle of Mark Bekoff's *Wild Justice*.

17. Many scholars have already written about "The Fish"; "The Moose"; and "The Manmoth." Other titles that could be part of this study are "A Word with You"; "Lullaby for the Cat"; "Sonnet" (1979); "Five Flights Up"; "Crusoe in England" and "Santerem."

18. Linda Hutcheon's "Poetics of Postmodernism" gave me the vocabulary to distinguish "fact vs. event."

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