# FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH: SPEECH AND SPECIESISM IN CORDWAINER SMITH AND SHERI S. TEPPER

by

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis challenges dualistic human and animal ontologies by interpreting science fiction (sf) literature, and argues that whereas words can equivocate and obscure meaning, bodies do not lie. Linguistics and semiology extend the definition of "language" to include human and nonhuman gestures and movement, and posthumanist theory expands definitions of "human" and "animal" to explore species boundaries. Scrutinizing opposing dualisms ultimately questions Western epistemology and authority, allowing for an exploration of embodied animal communications within the larger discourse on species and speciesism. This perspective results in a more comprehensive understanding of the interdependence of all species: human, animal, and "other." Although the fictional texts I employ use fantastic elements to posit hypothetical realities, current scientific research reveals that communication with nonhuman animals is indeed possible.

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## I. "THE QUESTION OF THE ANIMAL": THEORETICAL GROUNDINGS

Authors draw inspiration for characters from a well of archetypes fed by ancient myth, folklore, and fairy tales. Sometimes these characters transverse, or even erase, boundaries separating humans and animals, allowing authors to write animal characters who represent abstract ideas yet still resonate with readers on an unconscious, familiar level. Beyond fables and fairy tales, however, authors who write animals as main characters usually stay within specific genres, especially if their animal characters can speak. Horses in particular seem to face a limitation of literary lead roles. For example, Western narratives of manifest destiny feature horses as a cowboy's trusted partner, as well as his transportation. These authors may not highlight the horse's viewpoint, nor question whether he has one, but horses are still integral to the stories. Authors of children's literature write horses as main characters who partake in childhood rites of passage, and may also portray a horse's mind and speech. Fantasy and fairy tales may boast the largest population of talking horses, perhaps because fantasy, as J.R.R. Tolkien notes, is literature that meets one of the "primordial human desires…communion with other living things" (*On Fairy Stories* 13). Authors in other literary genres, however, use talking animal characters as comedic devices, or to signal the reader that either the main (human) character is not fully sane, or that other, unseen forces are at work.[1]

Even science fiction, a genre frequented by fantastic elements, has few equine characters, verbal or not. Perhaps this scarcity results from their symbolism as limited or outdated technology. In a milieu saturated with and driven by current and imagined technologies, the phrase "horse-and-buggy" describes a low-tech or pre-industrial period. However, in stylistically disparate texts published twenty-six years apart, two sf authors coincidentally feature horses as prominent characters. Both Cordwainer Smith,

a pen name for Paul M.A. Linebarger, and Sheri S. Tepper explore boundaries of the human by portraying communications with non-human animals, and use the backdrop of space travel, another kind of exploration, to examine this theme. As Joan Gordon notes, "Science fiction allows us to listen and understand the (admittedly speculative) response and reciprocation when animals speak back" ("Amborg" 459).

Because readers are generally familiar with horses, both authors amplify feelings of alienation by defamiliarizing equine actions so that they do not reflect horse imagery already familiar to readers. Additionally, both authors play language games, taking advantage of overlapping definitions for such terms as "speech," "language," and "conversation," all of which describe an exchange of ideas or a mode of communication. In each story, human characters use communication to bridge the species gap, through a reciprocal exchange of ideas or through a silence that allows the other to speak. Each text explores ontological boundaries by reframing animals and "others" as subjects. This shift emphasizes the power of embodied communications, and challenges readers' assumptions about the power and primacy of human speech.[2]

Images of an orbiting holographic horse-heaven and monstrous aliens who imitate earthly equines may sound like story lines from comic books, but when filtered through the imaginations of Smith and Tepper, these scenes help advance an ever-evolving discourse on species that has evolved beyond postmodern, post-structural literary criticism into cross-disciplinary fields such as critical animal studies. Traditional philosophy considers spoken language an exclusively "human" trait (Delacampagne 256), yet both authors grant some form of speech to their animal and "other" characters. The fantastic elements of sf literature allow nonhumans to write and to speak or communicate telepathically. Because portions of these texts present animal interests from a "zoocentric" perspective, they challenge humanist epistemologies.[3] The rediscovery of forgotten or "archaic" knowledge, along with different ways of knowing, emerge in stories that portray conversations between different species. Talking horses in both texts

illustrate how embodied communication, body language, can have more power and hold more meaning than human speech, for where words can equivocate, bodies in these narratives—whether human, animal, or "other"—speak clearly.

Considering the role of horses in these stories requires a grounding in linguistics, zoosemiology, cybernetics, philosophy, and critical animal studies, as well as sociology and ethology. In her *Companion Species Manifesto*, Donna Haraway writes that "'The species' often means the human race, unless one is attuned to science fiction, where species abound. It would be a mistake to assume much about species in advance of encounter" (*CS* 101). Increased participation in species discourse--which sounds like a small goal--becomes a grander aspiration upon recognizing the limits of Western thought in its anthropocentric epistemology. Cary Wolfe's *Animal Rites* synthesizes various philosophies in a discussion of speciesism, which, as he writes, "repress[es] the question of nonhuman subjectivity, taking it for granted that the subject is always already human" (1).

In the world of sf and fantasy literature, talking animals afford a promising setting for a discourse on species and speciesism, and may be a productive site for exploring embodied animal communication. A more fully developed posthuman epistemology can help establish realistic standards of ethical behavior rooted in empathy for all "others." As Derrida writes, "One understands a philosopher only by heeding closely what he means to demonstrate, and in reality fails to demonstrate, concerning the limit between human and animal" (*Animal* 106).

My examination of the following texts focuses on two subjects of ongoing and interrelated philosophical discourse: language and its relation to animal being. Long before linguistics confirmed the arbitrary relation of sign and signified, such transcendent philosophers as Friedrich Nietzsche questioned the ability of language to express "truth":

> A regularly valid and obligatory designation of things is invented, and this linguistic legislation also furnishes the first laws of truth: for it is here that the contrast between truth and lie first originates. The liar uses the

> valid designations, the words, to make the unreal appear as real…Do the designations and the things coincide? Is language the adequate expression of all realities? (qtd. in Leitch 876).

A simplified answer would be "no." Roland Barthes writes that "language is a kind of natural ambience wholly pervading the writer's expression, yet without endowing it with form or content; it is, as it were, an abstract circle of truths" (*Reader* 27). The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the most concise definition of language as a "system of spoken or written communication used by a particular country, people, or community" (*OED* online). Yet this definition ignores the communication that takes place in using body language.

While linguistics focuses on spoken language, semiotics—the study of signs—encompasses gestures and expressions, as well as myth and symbols as doubly-coded functions of language. Fluctuations in culture and history cause changes in the meaning of a spoken language, adding context and depth to texts considering alternative ways of "speaking." Zoosemiology focuses on communication signals that animal bodies produce using alternate channels such as taste, scent, and kinesics. Thomas Sebeok writes that "'Zoosemiotics' was coined [in 1963] to identify a rapidly expanding discipline… the intersection of semiotics, the study of signs, and ethology, the biological study of behavior" (64). Such studies validate the power of embodied communications among humans, animals, and others in Smith's and Tepper's sf texts.

While philosophy has used language to delineate between humans and animals, sf uses language to subvert conventions through such tropes as telepathy or talking animals who use human speech. Such narratives use the discourse of species as a tool to interrogate the philosophy of animal being. In this way, literary theory and philosophy have grounded my analysis of horses and language in Cordwainer Smith and Sheri S. Tepper.

Both authors use allusions, archetypes, and symbols to allow readers to identify horses from earth even as stories portray them as "aliens" in future ecologies. This

simultaneous recognition as familiar, yet unfamiliar creates a Freudian sense of the "uncanny" (Leitch 929-30). The opposition of human and animal originally framed a common theme in literary theory, the exploration of "the other," or the uncanny. As philosophy contributes a great deal to literary theory, and the texts under analysis feature animals as main characters, an examination of "human," "animal," and "other" ontologies demonstrates the flawed logic of such binary oppositions. Contemporary theorists in animal studies include Cary Wolfe, N. Katherine Hayles, Jacques Derrida, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. All shift the anthropocentric focus of Western thought, extending the conversation to include animals and "others." Linguists, semiologists, and zoosemiologists illuminate differences in form, content, and capacity of communications that separate (or unify) speech and language. Psychoanalysis provides a bridge of dreams between consciousness and the unconscious mind; dream analysis offers intuitive interpretation where reason and rational thought have no purchase. Critical animal studies and posthumanists reach across disciplines to connect theory and praxis. The resulting scholarship is not confined to literary criticism, but has the potential to be classified as activism; words are powerful tools scholars can use to make an educational impact, or at least, to inspire curiosity.

Addressing "the question of the animal" necessarily involves clarifying the boundaries of humanity. Christian Delacampagne in *History of Philosophy* cites one of "the central conceptions of Greek philosophy, namely, the supremacy of discourse (*logos*), identified with actual speech or 'voice' (*phone*) and considered as the original source of meaning" (256). Although centuries of philosophers called speech the human benchmark, different translations and historical contexts influenced individual thinkers, who created layers of bias emphasizing different meanings of the same word. The original Greek word *logos* had a broad application that included speech, words, argument, and even gesture, according to the *OED*. Plato's *Phaedrus* specifies *logos* as philosophical discourse, but by the time of the Bible's publication in Greek, the gospel of

John overlaid a theological definition, identifying *Logos* with Jesus Christ as the source of all knowledge and being. Over centuries, accretions of meaning resulted in a privileged view of speech, discourse, and patriarchal monotheism, tacitly identifying the default Western "subject" as a white Christian male.

Given the history of *logos*, which came to mean "reasoned speech," humanity has long been determined in opposition to animals, defining human attributes by those animals lack. Rene Descartes rigidly observed a dualistic taxonomy, in which binaries such as male/female and human/animal define each other through their differences. Scientific historian Carolyn Merchant writes that "Science's method of knowing through the disembodied mind's eye of calculation and the empirical eye of observation combines logical positivism with ocularcentrism" (xvi). Practices that rely on human sight for verification (dissection, vivisection, etc.), reinforce associations of *seeing* with truth and power. Observation, Merchant notes, "is a dominating way of knowing…Logical positivism, as the epitome of Enlightenment scientific method, is thus rooted in and dependent on the dualistic separation of a thinking subject from a passive object" (62-3). This dualism forces humans and animals apart, then encourages humanity's domination of animals (and, by extension, nature). The sf texts I examine subvert binary dualisms, posing radical alterities instead of simply offering a third option.

In an ironic way, logocentrism nonetheless must begin the discourse on species. The alignment of reason and speech as a defining quality of "the human" is an issue that preoccupied Jacques Derrida, among other thinkers (Delacampagne 256). Wolfe cites Derrida's concept of "carnophallogocentrism," which underpins his own thinking:

> In both texts the Word, *logos*, does violence to the heterogeneous multiplicity of the living world by reconstituting it under the sign of identity, the as such and in general…it enacts what Derrida calls the 'sacrificial structure' that opens a space for the 'noncriminal putting to death' of the animal—a sacrifice that (as the story of Western philosophy

goes) allows the transcendence of the human (66).

In other words, we eat animals, not people, but speciesism acquits humans of criminal wrongdoing, since it is legal to kill animals for food. This acquittal is based solely on the status of species—their deaths are legal because they are animals, not humans.

Peter Harrison writes that during the seventeenth century, "one of the most wide-ranging discussions…concerned the status of animal creation" (519). This topic may have gained support from a developing social consciousness that counterbalanced advancements in the life sciences, in which vivisection was routine practice. Harrison notes that an increase in pet-keeping "wrought new relationships between people and animals…and gave rise to further questions about the nature of animals—questions which until this time had only been asked about human subjects" (520). The increase in companion animals provides a historical context that may have caused a shift in animal treatment, as well as encouraging a new way of thinking about them.[4]

While animals once served as transportation or agricultural aids, pet-keeping also provided experiences on an interpersonal level. (Derrida addresses problems with pet-keeping, a discussion continued in my later analysis of Tepper's *Grass*.) Horses, however, do not conform to the same category of "companion animal." Susan Keaveney notes that horses present a "different kind of human-animal relationship, one in which the line between human and animal is not so blurred" (444). Unlike horses, dogs and cats often share living space with humans, and therefore socialize more with humans. As Keaveney writes, "Horse owners do not believe their horses express unconditional love…Rather, horse owners talk about having to earn the respect of their horses" (447). Horses and humans form relationships more like partnerships than companions, implying Haraway's broader definition of "'companion species' …, which is less a category than a pointer to an ongoing "becoming with" (Haraway *CS* 99). Rather than viewing animals as extensions or reflections of humans, the term "companion species" honors the "ipseity," or individuality of each animal.

Philosophers continue attempts to restructure an epistemology that separates humans, "animals," and "others," acknowledging instead their intersections, and interdependence, as well as their differences. In *Cheek by Jowl*, Ursula K. Le Guin writes that "Animals were once more to us than meat, pests, or pets: they were fellow-creatures, colleagues, dangerous equals. We might eat them, but they might eat us…They remind us that the human is not the universal" (38). Without words, animal bodies are vocal, visual, pungent, tactile reminders of our status as cospecies who share an environment.

**Animal Beings, Animal Speech**

The science fiction texts considered here push against human-animal binaries, emphasizing the resulting multiplicity of a continuum of species indicates infinite possibilities of being, interconnection, and interdependence among diverse species. Communication and feedback, through language and other modes, ensure successful interspecial cooperation. Norbert Wiener coined the term "cybernetics" in 1948 to describe his new theory of messages. In *The Human Use of Human Beings,* he explains this term as "derived from the Greek *kubernētēs,* or 'steersman'" (15). The image of the steersman reflects the study of language and messages "as a means of controlling machinery and society" (Ibid.), such as making laws. Cybernetic systems *control* or *preserve* their society or physical environment with the help of a feedback loop. The feedback of interspecial collaboration functions as a cybernetic "steersman," navigating boundaries of language and communication.

Tepper's and Smith's human and nonhuman animals employ alternate communication channels including kinesis, scent, and telepathy. They demonstrate the feedback loop's importance and the consequences of its failure. Each author privileges embodied messages (body language) over spoken words; they rely on bodies to convey deeper truths, implying that human speech cannot express the full complexity or import of messages. Haraway adopts ethnobiologist Barbara Smuts's view of embodied

communication as a kind of ritual that "takes place in entwined, semiotic, overlapping, somatic patterning over time—not as discrete, denotative signals emitted by individuals" (*CS* 110-11).

The beginning of modern thought on animal being started with Martin Heidegger's search to define human "being," (or *Dasein*, "being-there"). His concepts of "world," "comportment," and "captivation" offer useful entry points into species discourse. Matthew Calarco notes that in *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, Heidegger "addresses the issue of the animal's relation to world only to highlight, by way of contrast and comparison, what is essential to the human capacity for world-formation" (Calarco 20). Heidegger develops the following theses: stones are *worldless*, animals are *poor in world*, and man is *world-forming* [emphasis in original] (Calarco 21), and "world" refers to "some form of access to the being of other beings" (22). Heidegger clarifies that the animal's "poverty" is not a comparison to man's possession of world, but rather a lack of access to other beings *as such,* signaling animals' inability to grasp ontological difference. For Heidegger a dog cannot recognize another dog *as such*, or for its individual "dog-ness." These ideas reinforce the human/ animal binary by extrapolating conclusions about human nature from procedures using insects.

For Heidegger, animals are "open" to other beings, but instinct "encircles" the animal and limits behavior to *reactions*. In other words, as Calarco writes, "living beings open themselves to other beings, but in such a way that the other is not recognized as another being, that is, *as such*" (22). This is why the animal simultaneously "has" and yet "does not have" world. In contrast, a *response* results from human "comportment," a self-awareness reserved for humans.

Derrida questions Heidegger's theories of instinct and human comportment, as Wolfe notes that "no contemporary theorist has carried out a more searching… investigation of the animal— … that turns in no small part on an ongoing reading of Heidegger" (54). Derrida objects to Heidegger's ideas because he lacks direct

experiences with animals. Through deconstruction Derrida reads Western philosophy in ways that de-center it, "bringing to bear against it all the semantic elements that could serve to dislocate the great binary and hierarchical oppositions around which philosophy has been organized since Plato" (Delacampagne 257).

In *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)*, Derrida builds his rebuttal to Heidegger as he unravels the words "reaction" and "response": "The said question of the said animal in its entirety comes down to knowing not whether the animal speaks but whether one can know what *respond* means. And how to distinguish a response from a reaction" (8). Derrida's exploration of the word "speak" repositions the animal as subject, reinforced by his meditation on a naked encounter with his cat. He recognizes her individual response to his nudity, and recognizes that she returns his gaze; this reflection on the mutual recognition of each other's gaze is a situated example of his objection to Heidegger's definition of the animal's "response." Derrida follows his deconstruction of Heidegger's concepts with similar critiques of Immanuel Kant, Emmanuel Lévinas, and Jacques Lacan.

Marie-Louise Mallet explains that the frequent "question of 'the animal' in Derrida's work stems from…'sympathy' with the aspects of animal life that have been most forgotten or scorned by philosophy'" (ix). Derrida attributes the oversight to overgeneralization, "we are still daring, provisionally, to name in general but in the singular, *the animal*" (24). He argues that using a singular article to denote a vastly diverse animal kingdom homogenizes animal diversity. Rather than "taking into account a multiplicity of heterogeneous structures and limits" (48), reductions ignore the subjectivity of any group's members. Derrida turns the tables, calling the philosopher who makes such generalizations, "an *asinanity* [*bêtise*]," an animal who declares war on all species (31).

Recognizing how centuries of philosophical and verbal reduction have desensitized human sympathy to animal exploitation on a global scale, Derrida invokes Jeremy Bentham's historic query, which said speech or language was not an important or defining trait: "The *first* and *decisive* question would rather be to know whether animals

*can suffer*" (27). If suffering defines a subject, all beings are included. As Wolfe writes, "What makes Bentham's reframing of the question so powerful is that now 'the question is disturbed by a certain *passivity* ….What is this non-power at the heart of power?'" (42, qtd. In Wolfe, 67). Humans and animals share a lack of power in mortality, but we also share an immeasurable well of potential. Derrida notes that, like people, some animals also dream:

> If certain animals dream—but not all, and not all in the same way—what sense is there in using this noun in the singular (the animal), and what right do we have to do so wherever an experience as essential as dreaming, and hence a relation among consciousness, subconscious, and unconscious, as well as representation and desire, separates so many animal species one from the other and at the same time brings together certain animals and what is called man? (62)

Dream analysis validates subjective or otherwise questionable information through the unconscious in Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis. As Deleuze and Guattari write, "the relationships between animals are the object not only of science but also of dreams, symbolism, art and poetry" (235). Derrida too advocates animal subjectivity by emphasizing humans' similarities, a theme that Smith's stories portray by extending subjectivity to "others." This category includes such marginalized groups as his genetically engineered underpeople.

Deleuze and Guattari assert that "becoming-animal always involves a pack, a band, a population, a peopling, in short, a multiplicity" (239). Both Smith and Tepper portray "becomings-animal," but where Smith's human characters experience an inward, spiritual "becoming," Tepper portrays indiscernibility on metaphysical, mental, and physical levels. Wolfe clarifies these abstractions when he writes, "What Deleuze and Guattari aim to underscore is that the animal…is a privileged figure for the problem of difference and subjectivity generally, because it foregrounds how the subject is always

already multiple" (162). Just as people have multiple "selves" that are determined by the relations that help form them, like a "work persona," and a "home persona," animals are also multiple selves. For example, horses in professional sports such as horseracing, polo, or show-jumping have two names: one is their "official" or competitive name (often indicative of bloodlines), and the other is their "barn" name, like a "nickname" people use on a daily basis. This indicates that such horses have at least two "personas" (that humans can identify), professional and casual selves.

Haraway calls for "a way out of the maze of dualisms…This is a dream not of a common language, but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia" (*Cyborgs* 181). Despite new evidence of non-human communications from-among and by, Western epistemology remains firmly anthropocentric.[5] Le Guin laments that "Nobody has ever heard an animal truly speak in human language, and yet in every literature in the world animals do speak in human language. It is so universal a convention that we hardly notice it" (53). Perhaps we expect animals to speak as "humans" because we fail to listen for their own "animal" languages. Wolfe cites contemporary science and systems theory, "the work of Gregory Bateson (on mammalian communication) and Maturana and Varela (on the evolutionary emergence of 'linguistic' domains') to flesh out the cross-species possibilities of what Derrida calls 'the trace beyond the human'" (11). In other words, animal studies theorists look for "animal words" by listening, scenting, and feeling their way toward cross-species communications. These languages and communications are sometimes beyond the limited range of humans.

Moving beyond speciesist assumptions requires an epistemology that de-privileges the human subject. Although the term "posthumanism" often evokes images of cyborgs combining human and machine, Hayles clarifies an evolving idea of posthumanism, while some "point toward the anti-human and the apocalyptic, we can craft others that will be conducive to the long-range survival of humans and of other life-forms, biological and artificial, with whom we share the planet and ourselves" (291).

Hayles recognizes the need to include nonhuman animals and others alongside humans and technology in a posthuman population.

Cross-disciplinary approaches address animal rights, human rights, and biopolitics. They often seek real connections between animal interactions, language, and the abstract qualities of difference and "otherness." Theorists such as Hayles and Wolfe suggest new ways of thinking about marginalized groups (including animals, women, and other oppressed peoples), and new ways of communicating with those who lack human speech.[6] As Sherryl Vint notes, "twenty-first century thinking is rapidly coming to the conclusion that animals, too, are language users. Thus the connection between language and world-view is essential to the human/animal boundary and projects to reconceptualize it" (447).

Jung implies the untold cost of our reliance on speech for meaning: "Man's advance toward the Logos was a great achievement, but he must pay for it with a loss of instinct and a loss of reality to the degree that he remains in primitive dependence on mere words" (*Soul* 72). Elevating language and speech as benchmarks of knowledge diminishes the value of intuitive and practical knowledge and impoverishes our engagement with other species. Applying philosophy to issues of animality reveals a deficit of practical, embodied knowledge: animals operate in concrete embodiment, not abstraction. Books about riding bicycles may help, but one can only truly learn to ride by getting on the bike. Hayles calls this an "*incorporating practice*..action[s] encoded into bodily memory by repeated performances until [they are] habitual" (199). Instead of a scientific, objective approach, incorporating practices validate more subjective, heuristic methods of knowing.

In "On the Gem Planet," Cordwainer Smith's future society provides an anthropocentric backdrop for human-animal interactions within the context of a quest. In an effort to pry loose the idea of human dominion that is so deeply entrenched in Western society, Smith establishes animal "others," hybrid underpeople, as co-species. Like a decayed tooth,

anthropocentrism is dislodged, and healing and progress can begin. Smith not only imagines conversing with animals, he listens to their "feedback," lending credence to their ideas. Sheri Tepper's novel *Grass* subverts anthropocentrism from the outset of her cautionary tale. She explores different methods and motives for communication between species, establishing cognition as a property of both animals and "others." Both authors use horses to anchor the tale to the familiarity of everyday reality, the common. This makes us ask, as Smith does, whether horses might be "people" too. Each hero's success hinges on his or her skill in various modes of communication, including speech, body language, writing, and silence. Feedback is essential to effective communications, and the same fundamental concept of cybernetics underpins power systems in both texts: Characters with greater communication skills wield more power. Embodied knowledge enables Smith's hero to communicate with an "old unmodified Earth horse" and advance his quest. Tepper's heroine, a professional equestrienne, "reads" messages in the bodies of her horses, while silence best expresses the message of her non-human "others." Tepper inverts and distorts familiar horse imagery to create a "doubling" effect that amplifies an already uncanny tone when added to a tenuous sense of familiarity.

Although the tone in each is fairy tale or fantasy at first, sf or speculative elements seep through the narrative fabric. In a chapter from *Edging Into the Future*, Gary K. Wolfe notes: "A writer who has made something of a career out of conflating genre protocols is Sheri S. Tepper…[she] uses sf concepts to generate what appears to be a fantasy environment and then gradually reveals…science fictional underpinnings…" (22). Tepper's allusions and symbolic names introduce a layer of fairy tale that then becomes satire. Gordon elaborates on Tepper's style: "Not only do these novels offer the childhood delights, never outgrown (at least in my case), of magic, witches, and talking animals, they also offer the power of rationality, reveal the social and ethical underpinnings of fairy tales, and critique the genre" (9). Both authors feature horses whose bodies and actions are interpreted by telepathy or "read" by decoding their somatic signals.

Also in both, horses de-center anthropocentrism, re-framing human speech as

an arbitrary, alien system of communication. While human words deliver meaning to human readers, non-human languages require translation. Smith's and Tepper's fantastic talking animals and others explore new ways of thinking about about animal identity and subjectivity, and telepathy allows both authors to portray "the species discourse" as actual conversations between different species. Human, animal, and other characters communicate over multiple channels, their actions and bodies replacing and sometimes augmenting human speech.

Smith's non-human characters offer models of heroism and help humans exceed their limitations. In contrast, Tepper's animals and others humble her human characters, as a deadly plague virus tops the food chain, reminding them of their ecological fragility. She portrays a world that refuses human rule, human language, or human reason.

Most characters in both texts occupy liminal roles and/or bodies, and also act as mediators.[7] Their "in-between" status highlights the process Deleuze and Guattari call "becoming-animal," which pushes against the human/animal binary by emphasizing a continuum of species. Smith and Tepper both use animals and others to help marginalized characters move toward insight. Both authors champion the "common" in every nuance of meaning; commoners uphold the common good, and the commons is a repository for all knowledge (common sense, horse sense) which belongs to everyone. The recurring motif in all these concepts is the middle position, the median, the compromise, the in-between spaces. They are not advocating mediocrity, however. Both authors endorse the common as the absence of absolutes; instead of black or white, everything—including species—exists in infinite shades of gray, "colored" by contexts. Extreme representations (marginal figures) inhabit dangerous territory and risk falling from the edge; mediators help them return to liminality, the place of "becomings," where they are integrated—accessible, relatable, and available to all human and non-human persons. A community of commonality binds species together through various "becomings."

Although prejudice may prevent some readers from seriously contemplating

animal characters as meaningful participants in the discourse of species, we can still reclaim the wisdom of talking horses in both Smith's and Tepper's texts by seeing such tropes as avenues to insight. It is time to recognize the faces of those who have always been face-to-face, returning our gaze like Derrida's cat. Of her feline stare, he writes that "nothing will have ever given me more food for thinking through this absolute alterity… than these moments when I see myself seen naked under the gaze of a cat" (*Animal* 11). By recognizing his cat's otherness, Derrida can recognize himself as the object of her sight and offer *her* the role of subject. Perhaps instead of speaking back to animals who have so often been used in fable and myth, we should invite them to participate in the discourse of species.

## II. CORDWAINER SMITH: THE HORSE JUDGES US

Although Cordwainer Smith, a pen name for Professor Paul M.A. Linebarger, may not have planned his science fiction as a contribution to the discourse on species, many of his stories explore human nature in relation to animals and "alien others." In Smith's future history, "true men" comprise the topmost echelon of society, and every class below humans exists in varying degrees of servitude to humans. Yet many characters, human and animal, act and speak in ways that subvert this hierarchy and suggest a continuum of species. Smith also pushes against certain conventions by inverting them. He uses the tension between mind and body to further complicate the distinctions between words and actions, and compares embodied communication (body language) to words and socially constructed meanings.

In "On the Gem Planet" (1963), Smith puts "the animal" at the center of the story with the first line: "Consider the horse. He climbed up through the crevasses of a cliff of gems; the force which drove him was the love of man" (451). The lack of a definite article implies the horse is not searching for a *specific* man ("the" man), but seeks to rejoin his "herd": humanity. The phrase also places humans into a larger, homogeneous category like the animal. Additionally, Smith's phrasing echoes the Sermon on the Mount, "Consider the lilies of the field" (King James Version, Matthew 6:28), which suggests the need for spiritual faith. As Carol McGuirk notes, however, "Allusion does not…constitute either a testament of faith or a pledge of allegiance: these stories are not allegories but ambiguous existential parables" ("Rediscovery" 168-9). Smith's introduction extends similar "considerations" to include humans, animals, and planets—a gestalt of beings in various stages of transition that illustrates Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "becoming" on individual and collective levels. McGuirk highlights Smith's emphasis on "the impact

of change on the human subject…a category that Smith does not restrict to members of *homo sapiens*. This focus on character not only places him ahead of his own time, but has much to teach the genre today" ("Rediscovery" 162). An earlier verse in Matthew indicates a need for broader consideration of existence; it summarizes the larger issue of speciesism as well as the specific question of Smith's horse by asking, "Is not the life more than meat?" (Matt. 6:25).

Gary K. Wolfe and Carol Williams examine the backstory in Smith's writing:

> the Instrumentality of Mankind is the all-powerful, ultimately sufficient universal government that serves as the agency of man…[but] 'instrumentality' becomes a pun, meaning not only agency, but also instrumentation—the works of man as opposed to the works of nature (57).

The Instrumentality's panoptic forces map the smallest details of human society and create a class of genetically engineered animal-human hybrids called "underpeople" as slaves. Yet McGuirk notes, "in Smith the underpeople have an advantage, grasping better than human beings the common ground of an earthborn heritage and the essential meaning of 'being' itself" ("Renegade" 287).

Instead of modifying animalistic traits, Smith uses them to augment and improve his human characters. As Haraway writes, "What counts as human is not, and should not be, self-evident. The same thing should be true of machines, and of nonmachine, nonhuman entities in general, whatever they are" (*CS* 64). Although some underpeople are physically indistinguishable from his human characters, Smith's strictly defined class structures set up unabashed anthropocentrism as the cultural norm, providing a backdrop that shows the underpeople's actions in sharp relief and questions essentialism.

In later stories following the underpeople's revolution (like "Gem Planet,") the Instrumentality reintroduces unpredictable natural forces that lead to the rediscovery of mankind (also the title of Smith's anthology). McGuirk notes that "Smith shows the human spirit liberated by (and into) speculation. The point is not to arrive at a destination

or conclusion, but to begin a process of coming into knowledge … of one's true humanity—self-aware connection to others" ("Rediscovery" 172). This "rediscovery" is another becoming at the political level, a preferred liminal state between totalitarianism and chaos. As Deleuze and Guattari write:

> For everybody/everything is the molar aggregate, but *becoming everybody/everything* is another affair, one that brings into play the cosmos with its molecular components. Becoming everybody/everything … is to make a world [emphasis in original] (279-80).

Liminality, or a state of in-betweeness, is a recurring motif amid Smith's larger themes. As an ideal (and impossible) utopian state, there is extreme government control, extreme prosperity, but also extreme suffering among the underpeople. Reintroducing unpredictable, chaotic forces of nature restores the median, or the process of negotiation between two extremes. Smith's animal and other characters act as mediators to keep humans from drifting too close to "extremes," or becoming marginalized, or separated from society. They also serve as judges or arbiters who gauge human characters' progress in becomings-animal.

**Plot: The Puzzle of the Horse**

In "On the Gem Planet," hero Casher O'Neill travels the stars to save his home planet Mizzer, but success rests on his ability to solve the "problem" of a lone, runaway horse on the gemstone planet, Pontoppidan. Because real animals have been extinct there for centuries, the sight of a horse imported from another planet—a "plain, unmodified animal from Old Earth"—running wild through the valley of the Hippy Dipsy becomes a disruptive event (Smith 456).[8]

For O'Neill, the horse is not a "problem," but a reminder of his home planet Mizzer (the "Sand Planet"), where horses are common. O'Neill is his uncle's sole heir—Mizzer's dictator Kuraf, deposed for his questionable morals and illicit habits. Now the dictator Col. Wedder rules in O'Neill's rightful place, but O'Neill seeks only freedom for his people, not

power for himself. The Instrumentality has granted O'Neill unlimited travel access to seek aid in restoring Mizzer's independence (452,4, passim). This rare privilege provides unrestricted freedom of movement, a physical freedom horses often symbolize.

When O'Neill arrives on Pontoppidan, all his previous appeals have failed. His hopes fade further as he watches the planet's inhabitants overreact to an abandoned horse, mistaking their excitement and wonder for a lack of sophistication, noting: "They were concerned about little things…Who worries about one horse?" (453). Hereditary Dictator Philip Vincent rules for his young niece Genevieve, whom O'Neill describes as "peculiarly [for] intelligence and charm. She was girl, girl, girl, all the way through; but she was also very smart and pleased with being smart" (457). She combines the fresh perspective of youth with a mature approach to the duties of her station. Genevieve and her uncle are scandalized to learn O'Neill's uncle is Kuraf, a "slobbering old libertine" (454). To win their support, he must allow Vincent, a telepath, to read his mind and reveal his true motivation. He must also help decide the horse's fate, as his experiences with horses comprise a rare skill set. O'Neill's contract with Vincent is verbal, but actions, not words, determine success. His prize is a large green ruby, which Vincent explains can help build a laser to aid his quest.

Genevieve narrates the horse's story. A dying man paid great sums to guarantee privacy even after death, and built a cabin on Pontoppidan to "live alone, except for his non-human friend" (459). This "friend," an old palomino stallion, escapes after the man's death, seeking the company of people.[9] An emergency camera recording allows O'Neill, Vincent, and Genevieve to watch as events unfold. The horse becomes trapped as he scrambles out of the gemstone valley and whinnies in terror.

A well-intentioned tiger-man offers to jump the crevasse and lift the pony up and out of danger.[10] Although "authorities had not bothered to put [the tiger-man] into human cosmetic form…he must have had a carefully re-done mouth, because the utterance of human speech came to him clearly" (462). To a horse without telepathic powers, the

tiger-man still looks and moves like a predator, even if his intentions are not predatory. As the tiger-man leaps, so does the horse—as a prey animal avoiding a predator. He cracks a hoof and wakes in a human hospital.

Genevieve and O'Neill visit the horse and request a vegetarian telepath to communicate with him. Remembering that dogs and horses "used to go together" (466), the human doctor introduces an old dog-woman who anchors a telepathic link, connecting each to the others. Genevieve and O'Neill learn that despite massive doses of the longevity drug "stroon," the horse's heart is failing. He says: "I have been dying since I came here" (467). Even with a failing heart, the horse refers to the death of his spirit, not his body, a reminder that the Latin root word for spirit, *animas*, is also the root of "animal." The lack of a herd or any meaningful work has slowly drained his will to live. After watching the horse's suffering, O'Neill's first thought is to put him down. He notes the old pony stallion is "no longer fit for breeding…Its only use was to be cut up and fed to the racing dogs" (460). O'Neill believes he offers kindness by asking if the horse wants to die. The old pony's reply indicates his self-awareness: "To no-horse? Yes, if this room, forever, is the end of things" (468). Yet it also indicates he desires a better *quality* of life.

Genevieve asks the horse what he would like *best*, moving beyond the binary of life or death. The horse desires to run on "the good land" again, carrying his rider. The dog-woman comprehends, and "barks" orders for a "prescription" that fulfills the horse's wishes. Per her instructions, the horse gallops on a treadmill in gravity-free orbit with a cadet on his back, the weightlessness easing the strain on his heart as a holographic "drama cube" (468) reproduces the "good land" of Mizzer, reviving his spirit. O'Neill wakes from the telepathic link as the dog-woman finishes her orders and abides by her recommendations, trusting the underperson's wisdom. Upon learning the value of rare, authentic horse meat, the council favors euthanization to avoid the cost of supporting the orbiting horse, but Vincent and Genevieve overrule in favor of the dog-woman's instructions.

**Animal Evaluations: Reframing Body, Mind, and Heroism**

Smith's use of a familiar horse as "the alien other" challenges readers to recalibrate their perspectives; he uses O'Neill's assumptions about Pontoppidans similarly to question socially constructed values including sophistication. The story title indicates the planet's gemstone composition, making arable soil and a breathable atmosphere luxury items to its inhabitants. This inverted value system further comments on the shifting contextual meaning of "value" and both inversions provoke readers to question their own systems of judgement. The horse is a barometer for humaneness, in that how a character decides to treat the old pony reflects his or her civility. McGuirk notes that "To come into their humanity (their "heroism"), [Smith's] heroes must first shed their social programming-stop believing what they have always been told and begin to think and act for themselves" ("Rediscovery" 182).

As a child on Mizzer, O'Neill learned about horses through horseracing, a sport often cited as an example of animal objectification. Focused on their physical qualities, he describes horses to Vincent and Genevieve as "four-handed beings…with only one finger on each of the four hands. The fingernail is very heavy and permits them to run fast" (Smith 452). Here, Smith continues to alienate familiar horse imagery by comparing equine physiology to humans, establishing a tone of the uncanny. O'Neill's focus on the horse's body as the story begins heightens the contrast to a later emphasis on his mind. Lacking direct experiences with "real" animals, inhabitants of Pontoppidan base assumptions about the horse on their experiences with underpeople. For example, Vincent asks Genevieve if she has talked to the horse, doubtful of the knowledge she claims to have about the runaway; he is surprised to learn it is not an underperson and does not talk (456). Where objectification and sport comprise O'Neill's experience with horses, Vincent assumes that (like any underperson) the horse can talk, granting him some level of personhood.

Trapped in a crevasse, the horse vocalizes his fear but his body transmits the urgency of his message: his splayed legs tremble, signaling his weakening condition. "He

was obviously watching the men, and was firmly persuaded of their friendliness to him. His large, tame,yellow eyes rolled wildly in the light of the searchlight and every time the horse looked down, he seemed to shudder" (461). This passage focuses on the horse's emotional state: his familiarity with humans, his strong desire to reconnect with them, and his growing panic about his precarious position. Although the Pontoppidans do not recognize his "words," Smith describes how clearly the horse signals distress through his body language, and the narrator emphasizes the horse's faith that humans will help him. Smith increases the tension, eliding mind and body through the horse's embodied communications. McGuirk notes:

> Smith's heroes, like Odysseus or Dante, journey into hell, experience its terrors, but then recuperate-return to tell their story. Even simple beasts enact this ancient epic pattern: the horse of Pontoppidan…in struggling, persisting, and finally 'climbing out of ... hell to get back to people' (Smith 467, qtd. In "Rediscovery" 190-1).

Placing the horse in a human hospital emphasizes his marginalized status outside Pontoppidan's social "norms"; he is not an underperson, so instead of treating him at the hospital for the under class, authorities grant him temporary "human" status by admitting him to the human hospital. His cracked hoof physically limits his mobility, and metaphorically signals an obstruction along the heroic path. He is physically and metaphysically "stuck" without the help of a mediator(s), a role humans and others perform. O'Neill whistles to the old horse as he once did to his own horses, demonstrating his embodied knowledge of nonverbal communications. Recognizing the sound, the golden pony's eyes "rolled at him so imploringly that he expected tears to fall from them" (465). Again, Smith emphasizes the emotions common to both horses and humans instead of obvious physical differences. The horse's body is not just de-emphasized, it is immobilized; he can only communicate with his eyes and his (mediated telepathic) thoughts. This scene illustrates, as McGuirk writes, how

"Smith is encouraging readers to focus on the inner space of characters' consciousness" ("Rediscovery" 164). Instead of focusing on his body, telepathy allows O'Neill to recognize the horse's mind, possibly for the first time.

The human doctor explains that the dog-woman telepath speaks clearly, "but she is so sympathetic that she upsets the patients by loving them too much" (Smith 466). This underperson recalls another pivotal character, the little dog-girl D'Joan from Smith's earlier story, "The Dead Lady of Clown Town"; both characters effect change with their capacity to love.[11] Here, Smith hints at humans' defamiliarization with emotions like love, while underpeople and animals have grown more proficient. He focuses on collaboration, called "life-with" in the earlier story, by invoking the ancient partnership of dogs and horses. The dog-woman seems to know horses on a genetic level, and speaks with the horse like a long-lost friend. The horse also recognizes her "dog-ness," and calls her "Goo-oo-oo-ood dog!" (468). The telepath leads the horse and the humans into a discursive space of reciprocal communication; her powers mediate the horse's thoughts for humans, translating what Henri Bergson calls "attunement," sympathy, or "'what it is to be *with* the other'" (qtd. in Despret 128). The narrated "voice" of the horse shows horse-like thoughts, indicating his opinions and reason: evidence that the palomino patient in the human hospital possesses a "mind," if not a name. Gary Wolfe suggests that the underpeople's telepathy can be viewed "as an evolutionary step away from man's biological origins toward a condition of pure mind" ("Mythic" 148). Although telepathy is one of the factors that make Smith's underpeople seem more evolved than humans, their social status is still literally *under* people. They originate from both species, but belong fully to neither category.

Through their telepathic link, the horse states he is "dying," despite his near-immortal status. His statement seems paradoxical, but Susan Keaveney clarifies his meaning: "Horses are herd animals: their primary attachment is to the herd, within which they fit into a strict social hierarchy" (445). The horse had been alone with the man for many years, deprived

of any herd. While his physical body cannot die, he suffers from deep loneliness, a possible reference to some of Smith's earlier stories as the "'pain-of-space (a zone of total unreason)" (McGuirk "Rediscovery" 182). Characters from "Scanners Live in Vain," and "Think Blue, Count Two" share suffering similar to the horse of Pontoppidan. Smith's biographer, Alan C. Elms, notes these stories address "how…the protagonist [can] best deal with severe psychological pain" (274). Though the pain the protagonist in "Scanners" suffers is a side-effect of space travel, the symptoms of pain and loneliness are the same in each story. Elms notes that "people are saved from psychological pain…through the intervention of other living beings" (Ibid.). On Pontoppidan, humans and non-humans save each other from the psychological pain of isolation.

The horse imagines his own bleak future, but wishes for physical and mental freedom. He is liminal, trapped between thresholds of life and death. O'Neill's experience with racehorses desensitizes him to possibilities beyond the duality of life or death, but Genevieve has only experienced underpeople and speaks to the pony as she would an underperson. Her query bypasses the limitations of dualism and suggests a multiplicity of options, recognizing him "as such," and honoring his autonomy and agency. McGuirk notes that Smith's definition of the subject is more inclusive, that "humanity…means 'humane behavior' more than 'human beings': cyborgs and 'underpeople' (genetically-enhanced animals) are just as likely to be his heroes" ("Rediscovery" 162).

Smith further problematizes the species boundary with O'Neill's silent acceptance of a dog-woman's authority, recognizing the truth in her words. Here, O'Neill's "becoming-animal" coincides with "becoming-woman," reflecting Deleuze and Guattari's recipe for "becomings," which "always pass through a stage of becoming-woman" (291). The underperson reassures him: "I'm not going to give you any more suggestions… you can forgive us dogs anything, except for being right. It makes you feel inferior for a few minutes." (Smith 468). O'Neill accepts the dog-woman's judgment, even though Vincent had appointed him to solve the puzzle of the horse. Yet the telepathic exchange

renders him unconscious, leaving the dog-woman to decide the horse's fate. After touching the old pony's mind, O'Neill can no longer define the horse by his body; his past (anthropocentric) experiences have no bearing on this decision. By allowing him to recognize the horse's emotions, the underperson challenges O'Neill's definition of "person," and inspires him to complete his own quest through his own becoming-animal. As McGuirk writes, "Smith's characters become heroes precisely at the moment that they shed their conditioning and begin to think for themselves" ("Rediscovery" 162). The underperson and the horse model positive behavior, illustrating Nietzsche's concept of animals "elevating" human behavior.

The horse risked his life to re-join his human herd, yet is willing to sacrifice his body for the sake of his mental/emotional health. Smith resolves the mind/body tension by presenting a synthesis of differing viewpoints, including humans and underpeople of Pontoppidan, O'Neill's embodied knowledge, and the horse's own opinion. The dog-woman's telepathic link reveals the horse as an individual with needs and desires—more "life" than "meat,"—and human surgeons obey her instructions to revive the renegade palomino pony in both mind and body with an orbiting "horse heaven." Humanizing the other (the horse) complicates the council's vote to sell him for meat, which would yield a handsome profit. Genevieve and Vincent override the council as an object lesson in civility, explaining that their actions toward the horse determine their humanity:

> The Dark Ages weren't dark because people lost techniques or science. They were dark *because people lost people*. It's a lot of work to be a human, and it's work which must be kept up, or it begins to fade. Gentlemen, the horse judges us…If we kill this horse we are wild. If we treat this horse gently, we are tame. (470)

McGuirk highlights this scene as another example in which "becoming woman/becoming animal are conjoined, for it is adolescent Genevieve who coaxes her uncle into making this argument for civilization *as* kindness" ("Renegade" 286). The horse

illuminates the path of civilization for Pontoppidan, in that treating him with respect teaches their community to respond to animals, aliens, and "others" with similar respect, instead of labeling those who are different as inferior. Agamben cites Foucault when he writes that "the modern state…began to include the care of the population's life as one of its essential tasks, thus transforming its politics into biopolitics" (15). Both Genevieve and Vincent perceive their ethical responsibility to care for the horse as a fellow citizen, and recognize that their actions declare Pontoppidan's creed of humanity. As Vint writes, "better futures for humans and animals alike can come from critically interrogating the species boundary and rethinking both governance and ethics from a new premise of species continuity" ("Biopower" 444).

**Warrior for Peace**

Wolfe and Williams elaborate on the nom de plume under which Smith publishes sf "as symbolic of the dual concerns that consistently characterize his work–'cordwainer,' the shoemaker, worker in leather, shaper of animal skins into something resembling human form; and 'smith,' the worker in metals, maker of tools, technologist" (53-4). While he clearly embraces humans as members of the animal kingdom, the name also suggests an evolution toward human-animal interdependence, a suggestion of "becomings-animal." Smith's hybrid name marks his sf stories as part of the larger discourse of species in which human heroes can only survive through mutual cooperation or direct assistance from non-human animals and "others." McGuirk notes that "Smith's overriding focus on subjective experience gives his imagined universe (however strange the dilemmas encountered by his heroes) a certain verisimilitude; it resembles in some ways a reader's cognitive sphere" ("Rediscovery" 164).

Elms writes about Linebarger's roles as a scholar, military intelligence expert, and a father. His own father helped finance the Chinese revolution led by Sun Yat Sen, and as a result the family spent a great deal of time in China. "He became Professor of Asiatic

Politics at the newly formed School of Advanced International Studies in Washington… and continued to produce scholarly works on the Far East" (Elms 265-7). As a scholar and a U.S. military officer and advisor during World War II and the Cold War, he sought to understand the "other," and through this understanding, to seek peaceful resolution. Smith emphasizes the importance of communication across borders, proposing that humanity's success depends more on compassion and compromise – qualities he associates with the "animal"—than military technology, a human by-product. As McGuirk notes:

> Smith…conducts an intense critique of postwar US culture, including… science fiction. He represents unreason as a test of heroes, a condition to be overcome, thereby challenging enthusiasm and indoctrination, forces he saw as aligned with Nazism, fascism, and Soviet and Chinese communism ("Rediscovery" 162).

His plots are "unusual for their Cold War era in emphasizing negotiation, conspiracy, and ad hoc liaisons rather than open aggression or high-tech weaponry" (Evans 309). While other sf authors focus on future technology, Smith portrays the emotions and everyday lives of his characters. Elms writes that "Several recurrent themes throughout his fiction were highly personal in significance… indeed the personal issues that troubled him most were in a sense matters of basic human existence" (270). During childhood Linebarger lost an eye after a wire pierced it, and as Elms writes, "the loss of one eye had increased the importance of the other, and of vision in general" (275). The trauma of his experience may account for recurring imagery or plot points involving eyesight. In "Gem Planet," Smith repeats scenes where humans return the runaway horse's gaze, focusing on the imagery of the horses's expressive "rolling eyes" as silent embodied messages.

Vincent's niece Genevieve may reflect further autobiographical elements, as she shares the name of Smith's second wife, who was helping Smith with a great deal of his writing by this time (Elms 279). Smith writes the romance between O'Neill and

Genevieve in furtive glances and subtle body language, but as political figures, both place duty before dreams. As Wolfe and Williams write, "[Smith's] best stories…seek to find some unifying principle between romantic dreams and mundane reality, between personal stories and vast political movements" (52). Genevieve, though beautiful, is comfortable in her position of power. Her character reflects not only Smith's personal story, but also acknowledges historical contexts and changing social norms with the second wave of feminism. As Mc Guirk writes, "it is women who emerge as the best of "true men" in many of [Smith's] stories" ("Rediscovery" 173).

Through Vincent, who condemns Kuraf's (O'Neill's exiled uncle) salacious lifestyle, Smith suggests that ideas can be more destructive than actions, but concedes that personal choices often limit damage to an individual. Greater danger lurks with ideological zealotry that drives crusades and kills millions. Vincent's words reflect Smith's own diplomatic and military expertise in psychological warfare, as well as his personal code of ethics. Vincent echoes this code when he explains to O'Neill, "We don't have weapons here and we don't believe in them, so I won't give you a weapon" (455). He still offers the power to liberate his people, but discourages direct confrontation. O'Neill must devise his own strategy to liberate his home world, but readers get no resolution from this story. Smith's character-driven writing style, as opposed to a plot-driven style, may frustrate readers accustomed to technology-laden tales that characterize much sf. McGuirk notes that "The element in sf critical tradition most hostile to the rediscovery of Cordwainer Smith is probably its expectation of logical extrapolation-full exposition of plot premises and a consequent tidy closure or suture of the various narrative threads" (McGuirk "Rediscovery 166).

Though Smith's characters drive his stories, he also takes obvious pleasure in weaving in different layers of allusion and intertextuality throughout his stories. As McGuirk notes, "Smith uses words, as poets do, to double-think, luxuriating in metaphor, oxymoron, contradiction, and equivocation" (167). For example, Vincent offers to reward

O'Neill's success with a (contradictory) green ruby, found only on the Gem Planet. In *The Science Fiction of Cordwainer Smith*, Karen Hellekson notes that the introduction to *Norstrilia* highlights influential outside sources, indicating that "*Quest of the Three Worlds* (published as a single text in 1966) was inspired by the Chinese text *Quest of the Three Kingdoms*….Suffice it to say that Smith was widely read and well read, and possessed of a keen intelligence that could put the literature he read to good use" (4). Taking into consideration that Smith's nonfiction publications include the standard military textbook, *Psychological Warfare*, it is likely that he deliberately constructed descriptive language in his sf to trigger specific images for his readers. Wolfe and Williams note that "the key to Smith's use of future history…is to impart to his tales the distancing of true myth…a world-view, colored and distorted as if transmitted by oral tradition" (60).

In writing about a palomino stallion, Smith may have been attempting to access familiar American cultural symbols; two popular television "stars" from the 1960s were Trigger, Roy Rogers' famous palomino partner, and Mr. Ed, the eponymous talking horse, also a palomino. However, given his upbringing, Smith was no doubt familiar with legendary horses of Chinese myth and history as well. Paul Kroll writes that the famous "Heavenly Horses of Ferghana sent to the Han court in 101 B.C….are perhaps the best known historical prototypes of all horses *extraordinaire* enjoyed by Chinese emperors" (249-52). The Heavenly Horses inspired countless Chinese poems, artwork, and fables. Madeline Spring writes:

> Horses were important in China from early antiquity; by the Han dynasty there was considerable interest in obtaining and breeding exotic foreign horses…For centuries of Chinese history, horses had been considered animals capable of performing feats requiring exceptional strength and endurance…horses have been used allegorically to represent extraordinary people (180).

One legendary steed that may have carried over into Smith's Instrumentality was

"Flying Yellow," as Paul Kroll describes: "Flying Yellow (Fei-huang) was a marvelous horse…in epochs of ideal government, he is 'submissive in the fold,' and it was said that any cavalier lucky enough to gain a ride on him was assured a thousand years of life" (Kroll 255 ). He notes that texts disagree on the number of years Flying Yellow awards his rider; some claim up to three thousand, which might be possible in Pontoppidan's orbit with enough "stroon." An ancient breed now known as the Akhal-Teke claims the "Heavenly Horses" of the Han Dynasty as part of their heritage. Known for the characteristic metallic sheen of their coats and prized for their loyalty, Akhal-Tekes usually bond with one person, an unusual characteristic in herd animals (but not in legends).[12]

**A Horse With No Name: Poetics of Indiscernibility**

McGuirk writes that "The sf genre, situated in the deep space between philosophy (the exploration of ideas) and poetry (the fabrication of word-worlds), has varied in its renditions of 'becoming-animal'" (Renegade" 281). In "Gem Planet," many of Smith's nonhuman characters are indistinguishable from humans; most underpeople physically resemble humans, blurring—almost effacing—the species boundary while providing another category of "others." None of Pontoppidan's inhabitants—human, hybrid, or robot—know how to *inter*act with animals—they can only *react*. Robots do not recognize the horse as a "correct form" (Smith 459) and ask humans whether or not to destroy him. External physical boundaries defining humans, animals, and others vanish in Smith's future, making O'Neill's personal interaction with real, "unmodified" horses seem a valuable knowledge resource.

Smith emphasizes the value of O'Neill's experience with horses, recalling Hayles' concept of "incorporation," or actions "encoded into bodily memory by repeated performances until it becomes habitual" (199). This kind of "muscle memory" results from O'Neill's direct, repeated interactions with horses. Yet O'Neill's experience with horses is rooted in their physical objectification; they are more "meat" than "mind," an

unreliable (and outdated) paradigm for a quest that begins on a planet populated with sentient, telepathic underpeople. Smith's animal-derived hybrids are not "captivated" or "taken" by their environments as if entranced, thereby negating Heidegger's idea of *captivation*, as Calarco writes, "[Heidegger] is willing to grant the animal a certain amount of responsivity, but wants to limit such responsivity to the level of instinct" (24). The underpeople make calculated, complex decisions, demonstrate "comportment," and make themselves "available" to other beings, human as well as non-humans. Smith portrays their minds as free from physical restrictions.

While underpeople represent a hybrid heritage of human and animal, O'Neill is a liminal figure as a traveler from a far planet. Similarly, the runaway horse has no place on his new planet after the death of his owner. Yet McGuirk writes that "In this story the horse comes first, serving as a model of heroic resolve for a human being also struggling against the odds" ("Renegade" 288). Both characters are quest heroes who share a deep-seated resolve, either to return to, or to restore what each considers their "tribe." A shared motivation to move (or act) contributes to their indiscernibility, or imperceptibility, in becomings-animal while pursuing individual goals. As Deleuze and Guattari write, "Movement has an essential relation to the imperceptible. It is by nature imperceptible" (280). The story's entangled species distinctions suggest increasing indiscernibility in keeping with the concept of becomings on several levels. Because real, "unmodified" animals are even rarer than real, unmodified humans, the planet's inhabitants portray a "post-zoologism" in addition to the post-humanity of robots, underpeople and genetically modified humans. The Pontoppidans fail to recognize the old horse as an animal, furthering his indiscernibility, and Smith's underpeople extend the category of "other" beyond animals, suggesting their *literal* indiscernibility from humans. In addition, Haraway echoes a more simplified, embodied proposal when she writes that "what counts as human and as nonhuman is not given by definition, but only by relation, by engagement in situated, worldly encounters, where boundaries take shape and categories

sediment" (*CS* 64). The progression of time, cultural shifts, and their effect on language and meaning are additional movements toward imperceptibility. Just as O'Neill's experience of horses changes after the horse of Pontoppidan, individual encounters help define (or erase) species boundaries or the lack thereof.

While maintaining an uncanny tone by defamiliarizing horse imagery, Smith also emphasizes elements of the romantic sublime with the structure and style of the quest tale. Wolfe and Williams note that in many of Smith's stories, "there is always the distancing; we are always told that this is a story, a ballad, a film, a legend, that it is not quite real" (69). The Pontoppidans view the horse as a mythical creature, but in this case, however, the horse's "legend" is real. As O'Neill views the recording he briefly shares their sense of wonderment, but notices flaws in his appearance that de-mythologize the horse. Focusing on the horse's eyes, he seems to recognize them, or at least to remember his own horses on Mizzer. The scene recalls Derrida's reflection on his cat's gaze: "As with every bottomless gaze, as with the eyes of the other, the gaze called 'animal' offers to my sight the abyssal limit of the human" (*Animal* 12). Smith describes an animal familiar to the reader; however, emphasizing his strange and alien appearance to the Pontoppidans allows readers to "see" the horse through the eyes of characters viewing a live horse for the first time.

When O'Neill first sees the horse, he is spellbound, like the rest of the viewers. "*What a face!* thought Casher O'Neill," noting the horse's "tame, companionable eyes," and "ridiculous ears" (Smith 459). The phrasing of the passage also recalls Derrida's objection to reducing heterogeneous groups by using the singular definite article: "*The* animal, what a word! [emphasis added]" (*Animal* 23). However, by referencing the horse's eyes, the passage emphasizes O'Neill's return of the animal gaze, or rather, his *recognition* that the horse is capable of looking for him and at him. This correlates to Derrida's critique of Lévinas, for whom "the subject of ethics, the face, remains first of all a fraternal and human face" (106).[13]

Derrida wonders how Lévinas can place "the animal outside of the ethical circuit," skeptical of such a conflicted ethical system: "If I have a duty—something owed before any debt, before any right—toward the other, wouldn't it then also be toward the animal, which is still more other than the other human, my brother or my neighbor?" (106-7). Smith's stories of the underpeople seek a middle ground to reconcile the separation of humans and animals; they serve as evidence of his ethical opposition to Lévinas, who reserves ethics for humans or those with faces. Clearly, O'Neill recognizes the gaze as well as the *face* of the horse.

Derrida also challenges the philosophical position that denies animals speech when he states that they are "deprived of language. Or, more precisely, of response, of a response that could be precisely and rigorously distinguished from a reaction" (*Animal* 32). Smith represents equine vocalizations, or "speech," through onomatopoeia: "Whay-yay-yay!" (460) is the first instance of the horse "speaking." However, Smith writes the palomino stallion's panic as repeated cries (or whinnies), a clear demonstration of response, or rather, of a call waiting for a response. This portrayal of equine anxiety challenges Heidegger's thoughts on *Dasein* by indicating the horse's recognition of humans *as such*, and his clear resolve to overcome his environment and reach them. One could argue that, contrary to Heidegger's theory, the horse's mourning over the loss of his friendship demonstrates human comportment, which, coupled with the man's benign neglect, holds the horse captive, and not the "inhibiting rings" of his environment (Calarco 28). However, by making escape difficult, the deep canyons and gemstone composition of his environment probably contribute to his captivity, albeit passively, since stones are "worldless."

In *The Nature of Horses*, Stephen Budiansky notes that "Vocal signals are not only less necessary…they are actually less effective, too. There is little question who the intended recipient is when a horse swings its head or raises its hoof at another; a vocal threat…is far more ambiguous" (128). Closer to animals than his human characters, the

underpeople in Smith's stories are more keenly aware of embodied communications. Therefore it is no surprise that an underperson receives the old horse's message first, when a cat-woman interprets the horse's "words" as urgent, and reports an emergency: "He's asking for help. Any idiot can see that, even if we don't know his language" (Smith 461). Her comment disregards class distinctions—since human bystanders make no move to help, they are the "idiots" to whom she refers. This passage also emphasizes that the horse's body makes his message clear, not his "words."

O'Neill notices the horse's scars that mark him as unfit to ride; they may contribute to his despair, as Keaveney notes that "When a horse is ridden, horse owners recognize it as work for the horse. Many are quite proud of the work ethic of their horses" (449). This passage also illustrate's O'Neill's ability to "read" the horse's body, marked by gender as a stallion, by disability (old age) as scars and worn teeth, and by ethnicity as non-native to Pontoppidan. These markers on the body are what Hayles calls "inscriptions," as she writes, "Like the body, inscription is normalized and abstract, in the sense that it is usually a system of signs operating independently" (198). The messages written on and represented by the horse's body subvert its separation from the mind, since the body and the message are *imperceptible*. Deleuze and Guattari write that "Perception will no longer reside in the relation between a subject and an object, but rather in the movement serving as the limit of that relation" (282). Humans earn the horse's trust by recognizing him as a fellow inhabitant of the planet—his imperceptibility from other inhabitants—and O'Neill earns Vincent's respect by allowing the dog-woman to speak for him. His silence is an embodied message that acknowledges her agency and her authority as a superior judge of the horse's fate. McGuirk notes that "In Smith, animal consciousness displays a strength of purpose that eludes the human heroes so often called by him, with more than a hint of irony, 'true men'" ("Renegade" 287).

Yet the council opposes the expense of caring for the old horse; members argue that without a name the horse has no identity, but this lack automatically superimposes

the identity of "meat." Cat Yampell notes that "The animal is significant [to the council] only because of its use-value" (212). Smith further highlights the species boundary by juxtaposing the nameless horse with the council's emphasis on speech: "You cannot reproach me for using my voice when I am trying to help you, Sire" (469). The councilman's words express his desire to help Vincent, but his proposed actions, selling the horse for meat, reveal his true motive as profit instead of charity.

In contrast, the horse's embodied communications express honesty and hope. Telepathy reveals his mind, which resides in his body, and without which he could not communicate. His dearest wish is the freedom of movement: running is his embodied expression of joy. Alphonso Lingis explains a similar concept from Nietzsche, that an "upsurge of excess energies [in the body] is felt inwardly as exhilaration. Joy is natural; it is not in self-conscious consciousness only but everywhere in Nature and in our nature, inasmuch as we are natural. Joy is expansive and active" (7-8). Perhaps, then, "jumping for joy" is a universal embodied expression of human joy. As Deleuze and Guattari write, "Movements, becomings in other words, pure relations of speed and slowness, pure affects, are below and above the threshold of perception" (281). Perhaps it is the similarity, or the imperceptibility, between movements of different *species* that allows us to understand their embodied communications, too.

Though old age, the human technology of stroon, and space travel nearly kill the horse, Smith uses technology to save his life. In the process, he also creates origin stories for the future legends of both the horse and O'Neill within the Instrumentality. The nearly-immortal golden horse assumes a mythic role among the constellations and becomes a literal "Heavenly horse." Some may also interpret that either the divine, or good fortune, symbolized by a horse of gold, is preserved among the stars - accessible to the future, if they are capable of recognizing it. Perhaps the horse represents a new process of "becoming-archetype," as Deleuze and Guattari note that "the relationships between animals are the object not only of science, but also of dreams, symbolism, art

and poetry, practice and practical use" (235).

Symbolic images and language such as these elicit emotions and highlight intertextuality. In "Producing Signs," Umberto Eco specifies that symbols are "not types of signs but types of semiotic functioning" (177). Because the horse in his story has no name, he has not been marked with the "trace" of mortality, as Derrida writes, "Whoever receives a name feels mortal or dying, precisely because the name seeks to save him… receiving a name for the first time involves something like the knowledge of being mortal" (*Animal* 20). As the horse is enriched to near-immortality with stroon, readers can ascribe their own symbolic or cultural associations to Smith's golden pony. He embodies liminality in his weightless, orbiting satellite, in-between life, death, destinations, and holding his human rider between heaven and earth. It is hard not to imagine him as the mythological "Flying Yellow," as Derrida notes, "thinking about the animal draws not on philosophy but on poetry" (*Animal* 377).

Paul Loeb comments on a Nietzschean view of the human-animal divide:

> Memory—or the suspension of mere animal forgetting—is what forces the human will to hold onto the past, to fix the past, and thereby to recognize an immovable "it was" in order to liberate itself, therefore, the human animal must employ this same memory to recover the past so deeply and so completely that it is led to forget the past in a new and *übermenschlich* sense—that is, to let go of the past, to unfix the past, and thereby to recognize that the "it was" is not immovable after all (83-4).

Smith's human characters only "remember" their *animas* with the help of animals or others. Their interaction criticizes the lack of human ethics, both in our treatment of animals, and our response to unfamiliar humans or non-humans. Definitions and boundaries are not as important as attempts to mediate communications across them, moving from the boundary edges to the common area of "becoming-animal." As Derrida writes, "to the other, *leave or give its* own time" to participate in the

conversation [emphasis in original] (*BS* 232). In order to do so, it is more important to observe; listening and watching for all signs of audible, corporeal, or other methods of communication. As Lingis notes, "For Nietzsche the human species is a transitional species in the course of evolution; the question what man entails is the question what he can *become* [emphasis mine]" (8). Acknowledging the content of embodied animal communications may be a step toward our own "becomings-animal."

## III. SHERI S. TEPPER: BECAUSE OF THE HORSES

Where Smith's animal characters teach a culture of diverse species with insight and kindness by helping them remember forgotten virtues, their counterparts in Sheri S. Tepper's novel *Grass* are a collective warning enfolded in an admonition, with animals as teaching aids. Like Smith's tale, *Grass* is a quest for knowledge, but Tepper delivers a strong critique of the human abuse of nature using caricatures and inverting social norms. The planet's name, Grass, evokes abundant, harmonious ecological interconnection. Such false assumptions involve a wishful thinking, however. The magnificent grasses that cover the planet camouflage a nightmarish secret born of Nature's own worst ecological psychopaths.

Tepper does not simply push against conventions; she distorts them into grotesque reflections. Like Smith (but with less subtlety), she exploits the tension between mind and body to illustrate the arbitrariness of language and meaning, relying instead on the truth of embodied messages. Touch or gesture, not language, reveal a message's underlying *intent* as well as its content. In the novel, the meaning of "language" includes various communication modes often used by non-humans. Though human characters use speech, humans and non-humans alike find that communication modes such as gesture, scent, and sometimes silence deliver more information. In this way, the story privileges embodied messages over speech and highlights the frailty of words as vessels for meaning.

### Becoming Interconnected, Becoming Available

Like Smith, Tepper also explores human nature through interspecial relationships. Rooted in feminism, she critiques humans who seek to dominate nature instead of forging partnerships. Her characterizations indicate the marginalized status shared by women and nature (often symbolized by animals) within the larger discourse of species.

Merchant fortifies this concept, noting that "Historically, nature and the female have been conflated, and cultural ideology has legitimated the domination of both" (61). Dominating other species denies humanity's status as co-species, increasing the distance between humans and nature. The growing distance creates indifference, which often results in the destruction of ecological systems. In contrast, promoting the interconnection among diverse species can strengthen an ecology, and reunite humans and non-human nature. As Carol J. Adams writes, "it is not simply that we participate in a value hierarchy in which we place humans over animals and that we must now accede rights to animals, but that we have failed to understand what it means to be a 'being'" (129). Tepper narrates the struggle for understanding among humans, animals, and other beings through inter-special communications, yet in this tale interconnection meets obstacles in almost every mode of communication. On the remote planet Grass, non-humans called "Hippae" challenge conventional modes of language, including speech, writing, and body language. While Smith refers to heroic horses from Chinese myth and American popular culture, Tepper's Hippae reflect monstrous horses of fairy tales and folklore. [14]

Concerns of species diversity and interdependence that the novel reflects also correlate to Deleuze and Guattari's "rhizome"; their response to binary models of knowledge, psychoanalysis, and philosophy. They break with dualism in favor of less structured methods, and use the root structures of trees and rhizomes to illustrate their unrestricted approach. The "arborescent," tree-like roots are linear, hierarchical systems representing a controlled environment that limits possible outcomes. In contrast, a rhizome's multiple offshoots represent decentered lateral and circular systems that increase potential results. For them, trees are rigid and predictable, but rhizomes present unlimited opportunities, as well as greater species diversity, in ecological terms.

Deleuze and Guattari note that rhizomes are usually weeds or grasses that grow in wild or uncultivated areas. They write that "Grass is the only way out…. The weed exists only to fill the waste spaces left by cultivated areas. *It grows between*, among

other things" (*TP* 19). One of Tepper's recurring themes (liminality) reflects Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on "between," which recognizes the constancy of change—as movement, growth, time, context—all facets of *becoming*. As James Urpeth writes, "the theme of 'becoming-animal'…insist[s] on the priority of becoming over being, of the kinetic and verbal over the static and nominal. Flux, change, and relation are…more real than permanence, stability, and identity" (102).

Several characters in *Grass* connect with the concept of "becoming-animal," a metaphysical idea Deleuze and Guattari describe as a process of growth through continual movement. While people do not *physically* become animals, they might imagine themselves as an animal to construct an animal's perspective. Cary Wolfe explains that "the unconscious is first and foremost a power of multiplicity and becoming" (*Rites* 170). In these terms, a person may become aware of different identities, or an animal sense within his or her unconscious. As Brian Massumi notes, "A human subject…is a superindividual composed of a multitude of subindividuals " (81). Humans are "multiplicities," and as members of the animal kingdom, we share this trait with other animals. As Deleuze and Guattari write, "A becoming-animal always involves a pack, a band, a population, a peopling, in short, a multiplicity" (239). The story highlights a character's liminality as the first step in "becomings-animal"; this state of in-betweenness indicates a character's "availability" to experience other beings subjectively. Becomings-animal facilitate a more intuitive understanding of animal being, like a sense of attunement. Tepper also portrays perverse becomings-animal as "animalized" characters; instead of growth, they regress into what Derrida calls "bestial" behavior as a result of physical or emotional trauma.

As a metaphysical process, becomings affect the participants' beliefs, and Tepper makes fine distinctions between the meanings of "truth" and "belief." The story demonstrates how characters who are willing to interact with other beings can change unreliable beliefs (opinions) into truth. Vinciane Despret notes how such subjectivity can

redefine belief:

> If you define a belief in terms of 'what it is', you always run the risk of ending up with notions of error, deception: the world is full of people believing that others (wrongly and passively) believe. By contrast, if you define 'beliefs' in a pragmatic way, in terms of…'what they make', the scene…becomes a site full of new active entities that articulate differently…a belief is what makes entities 'available' to events (122).

Defining "belief" as a truth one experiences creates opportunities for becomings by making beings "available," or open to the influence of another being. Characters must determine truths, either as objective facts, or as beliefs they have verified with their own subjective experience. The difficulty in distinguishing between these truths and traditional belief (an idea someone *wants* to be true) contributes to unsuccessful communications.

Tepper highlights the importance of reliable messages and messengers through dysfunctional (or absent) feedback loops and frequent substitutions of missing facts with "filler": information compiled from assumptions, rumors, traditions, or all of the above. This substitution of unreliable messages feeds rationalizations people create to make the information they *hope* is true seem factual, even if it is false. Without honest, reciprocal communication, a person can verify the truth of informations through subjective, interactive experience. Participating subjectively—in relationships, scientific experiments, or life in general—allows people to experience results and determine truth independently instead of blindly accepting another's truth.

**The Hero and Her Quest**

The ruling theocracy, which calls itself Sanctity, provides an Orwellian political backdrop for a future Earth. Tepper's Sanctity exhibits a Foucauldian "carceral continuum," in which "the authority that sentences infiltrates all those other authorities that supervise, transform, correct, improve" (Foucault 1643). In the novel,

human ambassadors travel to Grass to cure a deadly plague and thwart an intergalactic apocalypse. Ultimately, their greatest weapon is a reliable translation.

Overpopulation has forced the colonization of hundreds of planets, all threatened by a plague that Sanctity officially denies, even as it destroys their Hierarch, Carlos Yrarier. Rumors of a cure on the planet Grass prompt the elderly Hierarch to forge an alliance with his nephew Rigo and implore him to find a cure, "For mankind. Because of the horses" (Tepper 44). This phrase, "because of the horses," forms one end of the narrative frame for an intricate and complex story.

Aristocrats known as "bons" control diplomatic relations on Grass. They cultivate the mystery surrounding their planet by physical isolation and restricted communication. "'They were separatists to begin with, more concerned with maintaining the privileges of their rank than with any human concerns…full of pretensions'" (88). The bons live for something called "The Hunt," so Sanctity presumes that "'The whole of Grass is horse-mad, …Horse-mad and class-conscious'" (85). Marjorie, the story's heroine (Rigo's wife), spent her childhood in England riding to hounds and Carlos believes that her fox hunting experience among English gentry is their best chance of diplomacy with the bons, despite past failures.

Marjorie arrives on Grass with an open mind, willing to participate in a new culture in an effort to stop the plague. Though she makes herself "available," bons are uninterested in her or her quest, convinced that the plague does not affect them directly. They actively keep information from outsiders and make themselves "unavailable" for emotional interaction. This signals their inability to "become" anything more. Like Sanctity, the bons on Grass have performed their traditions for so long that they consider questions heretical. Hayles comments on how such performative rituals become "incorporated knowledge…[that] is deeply sedimented into the body and is highly resistant to change" (205). This passage indicates the power of embodied communications for humans and non-humans. Both the bons and Sanctity (with some

exceptions) illustrate static, passive notions of belief; they refuse questions, dismissing inquisitors as sinners, low-class, foreigners, or somehow other. Their assumptions set the quest up for failure, until Marjorie begins to redefine her beliefs.

A mysterious group called "Moldies" opposes Sanctity's search for a cure, and want to use the plague as a virus-borne Spanish Inquisition, resurrecting a select few with their vast DNA storage banks afterward. They will destroy any cure in order to carry out their plan. The long-dormant virus is unstoppable, scientists are "able to isolate the monster but utterly incapable of stopping it once it had invaded a human host" (Tepper 45). The plague virus illustrates an uncontrollable "becoming" that is more like a military invasion than metaphysical attunement. Deleuze and Guattari' describe how human ideas (multiplicities) change, similar to viral proliferation "by contagion, epidemics, battlefields, and catastrophes" (241). Although the virus demonstrates the multiplicity of animals as packs or "swarms," there is no human progression; the plague destroys humans, turning their bodies against themselves.

While "becomings" involve perpetual movement for transformation, for many animals, particularly horses, movement itself is language. Marjorie, a professional horsewoman, has won Olympic gold in dressage, and puissance jumping, sports that require close partnerships with her horses and teach her to "read" meanings in the smallest twitches of skin.[15] As Despret writes, "talented riders behave and move like horses…which may explain how horses may be so well attuned to their humans…Human bodies have been transformed by and into a horse's body" (115). This logic indicates that Marjorie has already experienced "becoming-horse." Her horses' bodies have shaped her into a highly trained dressage horse; she "speaks skin" extemporaneously, and "knows" her horses and children through the language of contact, but lacks the talent for human speech.

Marjorie's speech deficiency distances her from language; as a diplomat, her ability to "read" bodies aids in decoding communications between two political groups. Her sensitivity to gestures and movement allows her to determine the reliability of a

message because the speaker's movements indicate the truth of the words. Because she is not attuned to speech as she is to movement, Marjorie has difficulty translating words from her husband and daughter into movements she can understand. Despite her successful training as a horsewoman, she does not conform to the roles in which society trains her, such as Catholic, wife, mother, and social worker. Deleuze and Guattari note, "In fact, the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities" (*TP* 249). In short, Marjorie is not "normal," despite her social roles. In her quest to save humanity, Marjorie discovers her true identity buried under unquestioned cultural roles of docility, and makes herself available for additional becomings-animal.

**These Are Not the Horses You Are Looking For**

Tepper introduces Grass through the Hunt; partial descriptions of the event and the planet seem perfectly "normal" but obscure the truth. Many words sound familiar, but readers soon realize that the hunters pursue "foxen," not foxes, and ride "Mounts," not horses. Though Marjorie and Rigo expect an invitation to *join* the Hunt, particularly after Sanctity emphasizes their importance, the bons invite them to *observe*. Surprised by an enforced silence uncharacteristic of English fox hunts, gratitude quickly replaces injured pride. Tepper describes the arrival of the Mounts, called Hippae: "Below them the monsters pranced silently, twice the size of the hounds, their long necks arching in an almost horselike curve, those necks spined with arm-long scimitars of pointed, knife-edged bone…The eyes of the mounts were burning orbs of red" (82). Only bons participate in this pastiche of the Scandinavian Wild Hunt, riding parodies of horses-posing-as-hunters.[16] The scene recalls Derrida's "figures of animality that… appear monstrous enough to call for a change of name. This science fiction is more and more credible, having begun with taming and domestication, dressage, neutering, and acculturation" (*Animal* 80). Lacan writes that "monsters can be defined precisely as the fantasmatic appearance of the 'missing link' between nature and culture" (136, qtd. In

Wolfe, 108). Readers associate the Hippae with horses, but the creatures reveal their malevolent natures through the messages of their bodies. Both the Hunt and the Hippae are uncanny doubles that only simulate the original.

Hunters and Mounts do not conform to traditional hunt jargon, "terms of venery," as anthropologist John Howe calls them (283). Neither hounds nor Hippae resemble dogs or horses, and hunters use harpoons--not a "scenting pack"--to hunt "foxen." Hounds have drooping ears and lolling tongues but rival draft horses in size. Trapped foxen hide in trees, rather than "going to ground" (Howe 283). While the foxen's screams signal defeat, Tepper's description leaves the creature's appearance uncertain: "All they really saw was an explosion of what might have been fur or scales or fangs, talons…an impression of ferocity" (88). Howe notes that hunters often rate a sport by the difficulty of the chase, "the wilder the animal, the better the sport. The problem with foxes is that, although they may be the wildest four-footed animal available, they are still in some ways as close to domesticity as other game" (295). The foxen conceal themselves but when revealed, their material bodies shimmer between visual spectrums.

The hosting bon family mourns their daughter, Dimity bon Damfels, lost in a "hunting accident" (Tepper 50). With the exception of children, pregnant women, and those injured in the Hunt (many wearing elaborate prosthetic limbs), all bons are expected to ride but none speak of it; non-riders are marginalized. A hound's glare means more than any human communication, as some sustain injuries after "offending a hound" (115). The bons resist influences from "elsewhere," or any place other than Grass, and use the term "*fragras*" ("foreigner") as the ultimate insult (13). They believe that keeping the anachronistic ritual of the Hunt honors tradition, but they mistake isolation for exclusivity. In this way, the bons reject the system (Sanctity) that has marginalized them. Despite the bons' evident disdain, Marjorie and Rigo attempt conversation after the Hunt, but without success. Only the host's son, Sylvan bon Damfels, speaks with them. Close to Marjorie's age, he warns her not to ride if invited.[17] He speaks furtively, with physical

difficulty, as Marjorie notes: "the cords in his throat standing out as though he struggled to speak at all" (91). He begs for their discretion, obviously afraid. Tepper emphasizes Sylvan's difficulty speaking to foreshadow the truth of the inverted relationship between hunters and Hippae.

In addition to the bons' estates (estancias), humans live by the main port and commercial area in "the Commons." Most community members know each other and use a "tell-me" device to share infomation (or gossip about the bons). Some townspeople work for the bons and many have friends or family who work and live near the estancias. Because bons avoid "Commoner Town," they are surprised and humbled when they learn that most "commoners" have kept pace with technological advances and are better educated and wealthier. The townspeople's open minds and manners contrast the bons' antiquated repression. Along with the Commons and the bons, the Green Brothers are the only other humans on the planet, a small colony of penitent monks. Sanctity's Friary is a wide-open oubliette for the brothers, who either garden or work in nearby archaeological ruins.[18] Brothers Mainoa and Lourai research the site for lost knowledge from the extinct Arbai race. Neither full monks nor free men, they dwell between an extinct alien civilization and the wild grasslands. Ultimately they act as intercessors.

Tepper features horses' zoocentric thoughts, but instead of mediated telepathic conversations, an omniscient narrator relays equine internal monologues, emphasizing the horses' reliance on sounds, scents, and touch for information. They recognize their environment as alien and their human companions *as such*, indicating self-awareness. Tepper presents familiar animal bodies that convey messages to readers and other characters as Marjorie and her family take their horses through routine dressage exercises at their home, Opal Hill. When her horse's quivering skin and tensed muscles signal danger, she glimpses a partial, horse-like silhouette (74-5 passim). The sight shocks Marjorie:

> Three Hippae doing dressage exercises, walking, trotting, cantering, changing feet to cross the arena on long diagonals. They did everything

> she had done with Octavo, did it casually, offhandedly, with a practiced ease, concluding with the three animals side by side, facing away from her, the saber tips of their neck barbs pointing at her like a glittering abatis, as threatening as drawn blades. Then they turned and looked up at where she was hidden, their dark eyes gleaming red in the light of dawn, soundless….What she had seen in those red eyes was mockery—mockery and something deeper. Something abiding and unforgiving.
>
> Malice (106-7).

The Hippae imitate the horses' dressage movements—but as a veiled embodied threat.[19] The horses and Hippae recognize other beings only "as such" (Calarco 28), yet the Hippae seem confused and possibly frightened of the horses. Neither species has previous experience with the other, so while the Hippae may think of their performance as a challenge to an unknown threat, the horses, as prey animals, only recognize the danger present in the predatory Hippae. This selection is one among many that deny Hippae any familiarity; they are wholly "other," an alien species that mimes, simulates, and mocks the movements of real horses, but without riders. Riders in the Hunt train on mechanical simulators because live Hippae would not allow themselves to be used for practice.[20] Their "dressage" act indicates the Hippae's dislike of the horses they attempt to imitate.

Rather than malice, the bons demonstrate a continued indifference to the ambassadors so Rigo uses the pretense of a diplomatic gala to find information on the plague. While planning the details according to native traditions, he learns that those from the Commons can--and will—tell them more of bon traditions than the bons themselves. This suggests that important resources, including information, are available to everyone on Grass. Yet terms of diplomacy name bons as official diplomats, and the ambassadors target them with continued attempts to find a cure for the plague. The arrival of Rigo's mistress Eugenie heralds the event's spectacular failure when she arrives with her "Pet"—a young girl discovered in town. Devoid of thought and speech, she is called the

"Goosegirl" for her blank, bird-like stares.[21] "Pet" is really Janetta, a bon's daughter who has disappeared after a Hunt, and her appearance has slightly less impact than a hydrogen bomb: for she is the only such girl ever found alive and many have been lost. Chaos ensues. Bons storm out, they hurl threats and insults, and they dare Rigo to ride in the Hunt. If they had been knights, they would have challenged Rigo to a joust or a duel, but all they know is the Hunt. Their "challenge" seems odd, but the bons react like enraged animals—a foreshadowing of danger that reflects the Hippae's anger at being discovered.

Janetta leaves with her family and readers wonder at the logic behind Eugenie's decision to adopt a "Pet," particularly when she is clearly human. Keaveney elaborates on owners' identification with pets, "researchers identify the metaphor of 'animal as self,' noting that pets can be ego-extensions of how pet owners view themselves" (448). Though widely documented by the current media focus on celebrity pets, there are some inherent philosophical problems, as Vint notes: "Too often, we construct animals as mirrors for ourselves. We fail to encounter other creatures in their concrete materiality, to allow an exchange with a recognized fellow-subject to take place" (Vint 181). In these terms Eugenie's "Pet" shows an uncanny mirroring effect that implies that Eugenie sees herself as a mindless Goosegirl, and foreshadows her own fate.

With this passage, Tepper intensifies the inversion of what Cary Wolfe calls "the logic of the pet" (*Rites* 104), and references Deleuze and Guattari's "Oedipal" animals, where pets are "humanized" animals. Wolfe extends Derrida's concept of a sacrificial economy, "a founding sacrifice, within a human space where, in any case, exercising power over the animal to the point of being able to put it to death when necessary is not forbidden" (*Animal* 91).The pet is "the individual who is exempted from slaughter," because such animals are assigned human traits. However, Tepper inverts this "pet" relationship between Goosegirls and Hippae so that humans are "animalized" (*Rites* 104). This "animalization" is a regression or like post-traumatic stress. Replacing Janetta's name with "Goosegirl" exchanges human identity for animal, reinforced by Janetta's

lack of speech. This scene recalls Carol J. Adams's critique of the "sexist absenting of women," in which renaming girls as animals erases their human identity, just as "Animals are made absent through language that renames dead bodies before consumers participate in eating them. The absent referent permits us to forget about the animal as an independent entity" (Adams 136). The bons tacitly accept the annual disappearance of young girls after a Hunt, and Hippae prevent their speaking of it to enforce this understanding; nobody searches for the missing, yet Janetta's appearance forces them to acknowledge a mystery never discussed.

From the uproar, hope emerges for Dimity's family, desperate to find her alive. Her mother and brother confirm (with difficulty) the Hippae's dominant roles in the Hunt and disappearances. After Rigo and Stella's first Hunt, their experiences fill in blanks left by Tepper's initial description. Once mounted, riders become hood ornaments for the mind-controlling Hippae, who enslave them through an alien channel of communication strengthened by proximity. The effect is as if Hippae broadcast their thoughts like radio waves through human "speakers"; when riders make physical contact they express only Hippae thoughts. Tepper illustrates the effect vividly when hounds make a kill: the rush of victory translates into physical climax for the riders.

Once again, Tepper inverts, or perverts, the usual roles of the horse and rider. Keaveney emphasizes the underlying theme of contact: "riding a horse adds a level of physicality, intimacy, and instensity unique from anything experienced with household animal companions…Few activities involve such intensely focused physical contact with another being" (448-9). The physical contact between horse and rider is a continuous conversation spoken through skin. While horses respond to minute signals of touch, balance, and rhythm, Hippae have no interest in a partnership or in any real "contact."

Instead of riders, then, humans are little more than meat puppets "mounted" like taxidermy, blank faces expressing their masters' wishes. The Hippae physically restrict human speech, sometimes causing a rider to literally choke on his or her words. They

bring a different level of meaning to the phrase "body language," as they simply use human bodies for their own language games. Rigo and Stella return unharmed, but their blank faces confirm the Hippae's influence. Where Smith used the trope of telepathy to portray reciprocal inter-special exchanges, Tepper's Hippae use hypnotism, where communication flows only one direction.[22] This puppet (or magnet) configuration allows Hippae to seize power from riders, who lose all ability to respond. Their loss of speech indicates their "animalization." Derrida uses a metaphor of marionettes to describe "a 'living without being'—or what 'is' only a simulacrum of being. Or what is only a prosthesis" (*BS* 219). Hippae are simulacra for horses; the original image of horses, harvested from original human settlers, no longer exists on Grass (until Marjorie arrives). Riders become prostheses whose human faces hide Hippae sovereignty despite Sanctity's panoptic presence.

Speechless Hippae control human speech and movements, and injured human riders wear prosthetic limbs: their puppet appendages are permanent. The riders' physical climax—called *le petit mort*, "the little death," in French—also affirms the Hippae domination of human flesh. Derrida asks "Who will deny that the marionette is a technical thing, and even a sort of allegorical personification of technical power itself, of machinality?" (251). From this passage, the Hippae claim power over technology, though even their mastery of writing, another sort of technology, is extremely limited.

Still seeking answers about the plague, Marjorie visits two Green Brothers at the Arbai ruins. Lourai (Rillibee Chime) has lost his family to plague and Mainoa suspects a plague has killed the Arbai on other worlds, though evidence suggests a more violent end on Grass. He describes them as "Two-legged and two-armed, like us... Spread over a lot of worlds, like us. Had writing, like us, not that we can read it yet" (Tepper 141). Tepper changes the direction of the species discourse with a discussion on possible intelligent alien beings. Numinous whispers, a psychic echo of the Arbai civilization, prime an exchange on animal intelligence and confirms foxen as highly intelligent, possibly more

evolved than humans. Tepper reveals Mainoa's regular telepathic convesations with an unseen speaker he assumes is foxen. At the first Hunt they seem ferocious but when Marjorie's son Tony suggests that foxen killed the Arbai, Mainoa quickly corrects him: "'We Green Brothers have been here for many years.…In all that time, not one of us has ever been attacked by the foxen'" (198). Without revealing his communication with foxen, Mainoa affirms the malicious nature of the Hippae, fueling Marjorie's curiosity.

She witnesses a metamorphosis concealed from the bons called "the lapse": peepers become hounds, and existing hounds become Hippae. Mole-like migerers dig caverns to hide and guard the eggs. The lapse is the only time Hippae do not Hunt; instead they perform a ritualized dance of battle that ends in a symbolic gesture of kicking dead bats, meanimg "you're vermin." Marjorie records the hoofprint pattern left in the dust. Here, Tepper not only introduces the idea that Hippae use different modes of language, but also demonstrates the trust Marjorie and her horses share. Her stallion senses danger from the Hippae, as well as the guidance of a foxen, unknown to Marjorie. Aid from both horse and foxen allows her to escape.

Deleuze and Guattari describe animals in packs where each individual becoming-hound (peepers), and becoming-Hippae (hounds), exists on the boundaries of an individual pack. "What we are talking about is not the unity of substance but the infinity of the modifications that are part of one another in this unique plane of life" (254). Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that the continual process of "becoming" is never static. The bons invert this idea; they are "animalized" like the Goosegirls: they become blanks on which Hippae impose control. Trapped in time, they repeat the same archaic ritual, never progressing or "becoming" anything more. Marjorie and her stallion experience becomings in a metaphysical sense, something like attunement, or the musical quality of being "in harmony." Derrida describes Heidegger's thoughts on "attunement," which he describes as "an 'awakening' of consciousness" (*Animal* 147). While this seems a fitting definition, Heidegger goes on to specify that "'attunement is something that belongs to

man'" (Ibid.), which leads him to reconceptualize man, among other larger concepts. Perhaps Heidegger was on the right track, but afraid to follow; if attunement belongs to humans and only needs to be awakened, perhaps animals can awaken this quality and confirm the presence of an unconscious "animal self" through recognition.

**Postmodern Ponies and Becomings-Foxen**

After Hippae abduct her daughter Marjorie organizes a mounted search, including Sylvan, Mainoa, and his foxen friend. Hippae--who cannot swim--pursue them into the swamp forest surrounding The Commons. Humans and horses find refuge there, but they also find the last Arbai city and holographs of the former inhabitants concealed in the treetops. In Jung's symbolism, "an ancient tree or plant represents symbolically the growth and development of psychic life" (*Soul* 152), and in Tepper trees that once harbored an advanced Arbai civilization now harbor humans and the remaining foxen, who finally reveal themselves.

Mainoa reverently introduces the foxen he calls "First." Foxen appear blurry and unstable, like viewing a monitor with poor resolution; they occupy a visual spectrum nearly imperceptible to human eyes. Human characters describe winged, shadowy figures with an angelic appearance, but with fangs. Indistinct imagery suggests foxen exist beyond humanity and wear badges of both heaven (wings) and hell (fangs). They communicate semi-telepathically in a flood of pictures and amplified emotion that humans cannot process easily, and hunters cannot hear at all. This illustrates Geoffrey Bennington's comment on the "inhumanity" of language, noting that "'language is not essentially human…; the refusal to think of language as in some way a separate domain over against the world…implies the consequence of an essential inhumanity of language'" (qtd. In Wolfe, 73). Foxen and humans, both intelligent beings, communicate ideas despite different languaging modes: a posthuman projection of embodied communication.

The foxen reveal a final metamorphosis: the Hippae are the larvae of the foxen.

When a new foxen emerges, their scream drives the Hippae to Hunt. Howe notes that "Hunters in many societies, …identify themselves with at least some of the animals they pursue, and…symbolically transfer certain of their qualities to themselves" (293). In Tepper, the Hippae's denial of their becoming-foxen destroys their own potential. Tepper thus finally emphasizes the liminality of the Hippae, portraying them as adolescents compared to "adult" foxen. Like many human adolescents, Hippae assume knowledge they do not possess and deny knowledge they do not want, even the truth of their own bodies. Here, Tepper correlates Hippae with human behaviors that destroy opportunities for growth.

Mainoa uses the Hippae hoofprints to translate the Arbai histories, and foxen explain how their failure to stop an ancient plague caused their genocide. The Arbai had denied the concept of evil, refusing to kill any thinking species. Hounds and Hippae were vulnerable prey to monsters foxen call "walking appetites,"(293) so the Arbai saved them, recognizing Hippae as intelligent. They taught Hippae writing, and because they did not believe them to be evil, the Arbai mistakenly thought if they explained why killing was wrong, the Hippae would understand and stop. "They learned to kill by accident, but once having learned, they went on, and on. Everything they have done was merely a repetition of a pattern…" (431). Their hoofprints communicate their bestial nature: "*joy-to-kill-strangers*" (349 passim). They enjoy killling, evidenced by the group orgasm of the Hunters and the inscription from their embodied communication, choreographed and memorized over thousands of years. The hieroglyphs explain how Hippae spread the plague in what was first a symbolic act, but became causal. Their "dances" ended by kicking dead bats, which Hippae sent through the Arbai transporters, causing their destruction on every world. This relates closely to Derrida's extension of *bêtise* as "evil and cruelty" (*BS* 155). He cites Gilles Deleuze, who writes that, "'Cowardice, cruelty, baseness, *bêtise* are not simply bodily powers or facts of character…but structures of thought'" (qtd. In *BS* 157).[23] When the Hippae killed accidentally, the same act was not *bêtise*, but *bête*, as Derrida notes, "a chance event or occurrence that is undesirable,

regrettable, in itself insignificant but damaging in its consequences" (*BS* 140). Upon learning they had the power to kill, the Hippae became *bêtise*, or cruel.

Recognizing the deadly results of their inaction cause foxen guilt and shame, concepts foreign to them until they identified the same emotions in human minds. They know of the current plague, but argue among themselves about whether to intervene until they are interrupted when a group of foxen and humans rescues Marjorie's daughter, and Sylvan's sister, another Goosegirl, is discovered naked and clutching a dead bat. All have been "animalized" by Hippae, physically and emotionally.

Returning from the hospital, Marjorie travels with "First" and collapses on his back, sobbing, and arrives at the threshold of her own "becoming-animal." Deleuze and Guattari note that "wherever there is multiplicity, you will also find an exceptional individual, and it is with that individual that an alliance must be made in order to become-animal" (243). Marjorie begins "becoming-foxen" through First; His comfort and sympathy become laughter, joy, and much more. Vivid images, impressions, and words comprise their mental and emotional interchange; they "speak" the same tactile language and dance in union. Haraway compares the language of relationships with dance: "An embodied communication is more like a dance than a word: the flow of entangled, meaningful bodies in time—whether both partners move in harmony or are painfully out of synch or something else altogether—is communication about relationship, the relationship itself, and the means of reshaping relationship" (*CS* 107).

Tepper uses synesthesia, tangling colors, sounds, flavors, and touch; what Deleuze and Guattari call the deterritorialization and coming-together of several different zones. This tumble of senses leaves readers uncertain at first, but Tepper builds a clear picture of cross-species intercourse more primal and intimate than physical consummation. Marjorie's experience culminates in the image of a door and sense of invitation, which she declines. Despret would explain their coming together as an "emotional experience [which] belongs to that strange sphere of experiences where neither world, nor body,

nor consciousness can be clearly separated, distributed. Emotional experience, in other words, is an experience that makes us hesitate" (126). Though becoming-foxen, she remains convinced of her duties to human expectations, but is increasingly aware of their arbitrary restrictions.

Afterward, Marjorie and First, the foxen she calls "Him" (339), share a deeper bond. He explains that their mutual experience allows him to know her from within, just as she gains insight into the foxen's collective remorse over the Arbai genocide. Their guilt keeps many females from laying eggs--so many that more Hippae lay eggs than foxen now, and the foxen's abstinence could result in their passive racial suicide. In this case, inaction communicates an embodied silence, mirroring the Hippae's denial of their becomings. Marjorie urges Him to act rather than "wasting time on guilt" (338). Her words may also reflect her own internal conflict as she tries to reconcile their experience with former world views: "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. I have committed adultery. Bestiality? No. Not a man, not a beast. What? I am in love with—…?" (339). Her body knows the truth, but her mind cannot grasp "a new articulation of 'with-ness,' an undetermined articulation of 'being-with'" (Despret 131). Her confessional script has no context on the planet Grass. While Tepper emphasizes the foxen's liminality as neither man nor beast, here she strengthens Marjorie's liminality as well.

Tepper suggests another facet of liminality for Hippae in the mutation they cultivate after learning to reproduce in the larval stage. This "rebellion" against the foxen may contribute to the Hippae's malignant brand of joy, but it does not produce their aggressive actions: Hippae clearly demonstrate agency in initiating the Hunt. Derrida emphasizes that "there is no *bêtise* in itself, but a becoming-*bête*... different from, other than, the becoming-animal" (*BS* 159). Tepper is equally clear about destructive human actions as Marjorie asks, "Didn't man think he had a right to kill everything but himself? Didn't he have fun?" (431). As if in answer, assassins sent by the Moldies drop in on the Tree City to destroy evidence of the plague and kill the only witnesses, Mainoa and

Rillibee. As she dodges an attack, Marjorie tumbles from the lofty branches and wakes in what appears to be God's office.

**Viral Epiphany**

Tepper writes Marjorie's eidetic "religious experience" humorously, announcing her as a "very small being." Disturbed by the idea that God designs humans as viruses, or task-oriented swarms, He responds to her query that perhaps He needs "something that spreads" like a virus (353-5 passim). This passage references "becoming," and infection "as modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peopling" (*TP* 239). Tepper subtly underlines humanity's arrogant presumption of pre-eminence in the food chain; although the plague virus is a "very small being," humans have not been able to stop it. God diagnoses Marjorie with "terminal conscientiousness," implying that her self-sacrifice will be literal (and include the rest of humanity) if, like the Arbai, she cannot stop the Hippae. His comment on the Arbai "disaster" crystallizes her internal conflict: "'Too good is good for nothing. A chisel has to have an edge, my dear. Otherwise it simply stirs things around without ever cutting through to causes and realities'" (355). Here, Tepper reinforces the power of action instead of inertia from over-analysis; indecision is merely a passive-aggressive way to deny responsibility for inaction.

Marjorie wakes to foxen images of dropping the climbers to their deaths, but despite their demands for justice and her own doubts, Marjorie leaves their fate with the town "order officers." The foxen are greatly disturbed to learn the Hippae have secret access to the Commons, and begin searching immediately. After failing to protect the Arbai, foxen have tried to keep humans safe; they telepathically influence them to construct the town within the surrounds of the swamp forest, which would keep Hippae out. Secret tunnels under the swamp allow Hippae to dispatch re-programmed Goosegirls, who board outbound ships carrying dead bats—and the plague virus. The symbolic meaning of the bats changes from "you're vermin" into performative speech that

announces “you’re dead.” The hospital employs a leading authority on the plague who confirms that those on Grass are immune to the plague, and those who arrive infected, leave healthy--though she has no medical explanation. This passage comments on the unreliability of human words, ceremonial performances, diplomatic protocol, and rumors, and underlines the importance of keeping available resources (like information) in the commons.

After discovering the Hippae’s hidden tunnel, human riders lure them away on horseback, hoping for the foxen’s aid. Marjorie looks for His help, and He fights off physical Hippae attacks, but each rider must fight the Hippae’s mind control. Marjorie battles on two fronts; with Hippae in pursuit, she mentally defends her decision to battle Hippae and spare human assassins, while the morally burdened foxen remain paralyzed by abstract thought. Here, Tepper delivers her most direct critique of those unwilling to take responsibility for improving their own situations, whether their issues are environmental, social, or otherwise. She scolds those paralyzed by thought (like the foxen), or who recite scripts of other authors (like Sanctity), instead of basing independent judgments on subjective experience; Marjorie’s frustrated outburst channels Tepper’s metanarrative over the foxen’s indecision: “‘Can’t you see that theoretical answers are no answers at all! It has to be something you can *do*!” (Tepper 385). Tepper’s criticism builds to a demand for action, ventriloquized by Marjorie-becoming-foxen.

**When the Body *is* the Message**

She continues to battle, but refuses to leave the horses. Simultaneously, three foxen converge on the threatening Hippae; when an airtruck large enough for horses and humans arrives, Marjorie accepts the rescue offer. The foxen see this as the turning-point in their decision to aid the humans: “Because of the horses,” they reply (426). By refusing to leave the horses Marjorie expresses that she, like Mainoa, is capable of friendship with other species. Though “He” tried to convince the other foxen of her “availability,” only

Marjorie's efforts to save her horses sway their decision. This passage demonstrates the power of embodied messages over human speech; Marjorie's actions verify her words. This also forms the other end of the narrative frame, as the phrase "because of the horses" that initiates Marjorie's physical journey is also the phrase that initiates her metaphysical journey. After years of "domestication" she no longer feels compelled to perform, Marjorie joins "First" at the story's end, securing the foxen as allies. She physically enacts her promise, bolstering her words with truth. This, too, indicates another benchmark in her becoming, as Deleuze and Guattari note, "All so-called initiatory journeys include these thresholds and doors where becoming itself becomes" (*TP* 249). Tepper's ambiguous description of her becoming leaves only hints of both physical and metaphysical changes. Her final act of speech performs both rituals of farewell and greeting, releasing old expectations and communication modes, and embracing her new role in becoming-foxen.

Embodied communications in Tepper's characters are overt; they deliver messages with more reliable meanings than words alone. Most of her characters are liminal in some way, though others move beyond the margins of indiscernibility. She peppers the story with ecological and feminist critiques, admonishing those reluctant to take action, or to take responsibility for their (in)actions. She portrays many types of inter-special communications, each one a different "becoming-animal" that proposes "new manner[s] of becoming together, which provides new identities" (Despret 122). In this way, different species instruct and construct each other through embodied communications.

The novel's emphasis on becoming, action, truth, and power are succinctly represented by the movement of horses. While some scholars debate calling horses partners rather than "companion animals," Tepper clearly portrays Marjorie and her horses as close companions, accentuated by the skill they share, reading the somatic language of twitches in each other's skin. Humans can only imagine what an animal

might think, but uncertainty provides opportunity. As Haraway writes, "Species interdependence is the name of the worlding game on Earth, and that game must be one of response and respect. That is the play of companion species learning to pay attention" (*CS* 102).

## IV. CONCLUSION: LEARNING TO LISTEN TO MR. ED

The genres of sf and fantasy afford scholars and readers alike the benefit of visualizing speculative futures. As N. Katherine Hayles notes, "Literary texts help translate the technical jargon of the theoretical scientific world into real-life examples that "actively shape what the technologies mean and what the scientific theories signify in cultural contexts" (21). In addition to scientific exposition, science fiction is also a literature of subversion. Le Guin writes in favor of upsetting "norms" when she notes that "Incompleteness and suggestion are very powerful tools for the artist of our time; the impossible, the incredible, the fantastic all suggest the limitations and the falsity of ordinary perception" (33). Change begins, in other words, when we allow for the possibility of the impossible. Although familiar fables and myths have featured talking animals, at some point along the way to adulthood, we stopped believing that animals can talk. The very idea seemed juvenile, silly—maybe a little *bête*.

Such speaking beasts live on in educational texts, which authorize them to teach morals, and as the wish-fulfillment fantasy of countless adolescents (and a few adults). But such fantastic portrayals on stage or screen usually have a comedic effect, as Tolkien notes that costumes and props "may achieve buffoonery or mimicry, but they do not achieve fantasy" (49).[24] Whatever the reason, talking horses are seldom represented in sf literature, which is why these two particular texts invited my analysis. Though I use the phrase "talking horses," both texts narrate zoocentric equid thoughts as human words, either as an omniscient narrator, or as a telepathic translation. The horses do not "speak human," but they most certainly communicate with other species, providing an entry point into the discourse of species.

By using equine characters instead of traditional "companion animals" such as

dogs or cats, both authors ensure that the human/animal divide remains comparably pronounced. As Keaveney explains, "Two phenomena that help explain human attraction to household companion animals, anthropomorphism and neoteny, are present to a much lesser degree with equines…horses share few similarities with humans on which to hang human characteristics" (445), their size alone is a reminder of potential danger. Neoteny, "the cuteness factor," is also diminished: "Horses may be awesome, powerful, or beautiful, but they're not usually considered 'cute,' thereby also making them seem less approachable" (Ibid.). Horses are always more "other" than the household pets Deleuze and Guattari describe as "Oedipal animals," so Roy Rogers's Trigger offers more opportunities to think about non-human animal subjectivity than Timmy's Lassie. If Mr. Ed takes over for Trigger, his ability to talk "others" him even more. At the same time, speech is an ability humans share, so an element of the uncanny begins to drift through the abyss between human and animal being.

In addition to the equine characters central to Cordwainer Smith's novella "On the Gem Planet" and Sheri S. Tepper's novel *Grass*, both texts also Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "becoming," which includes disappearance of the solitary self, correlations of movement, liminality, marginality, small things, and interconnection. All "becomings" are defined by a process of creation, and not linear measure. All result from emotional, mental, or spiritual movements back and forth across borders, or "lines of deterritorialization."

Becomings-animal are not the blended product of two different things, but the interstitial space between points. Hayles cites Varela's comment that posits the mind, "'not as a unified, homogeneous unity, nor even as a collection of entities, but rather as a *disunified, heterogeneous collection of processes*'" (158). While Deleuze and Guattari might not choose the word "collection," Varela's statement parallels their concepts of multiplicities and liminality. Elisa Aaltola writes that animal personhood is often questioned:

> Independence is based on either *full personhood*, or *full materialism*, and it is the beings that fall in between that remain lacking in these qualities. This reveals the presumed nature of animals: they are 'in between' people and material things—animality is formed of 'in-betweenness,' and hence lacks a permanent and independent quality" (176-7).

Although liminality is only one aspect of how humans perceive animals, it helps explain the intercessory qualities both authors ascribe to their non-human characters.

Smith's underpeople illustrate the multiplicity of "animals" and "others"; their roles as telepathic intercessors helps clarify human and animal communications. As Haraway writes, "Certain dualisms…have all been systemic to the logics and the practices of domination of women, of people of colour, nature, workers, animals--in short, domination of all constituted as others, whose task is to mirror the self" (*Cyborgs* 177). Liminality is the place between--and sometimes just beyond thresholds; it rebuts binary dualism in infinite possibilities. "Since its variations and dimensions are immanent to it, *it amounts to the same thing to say that each multiplicity is already composed of heterogeneous terms in symbiosis, and that a multiplicity is continually transforming itself into a string of other multiplicities, according to its thresholds and doors* [emphasis in original]" (Deleuze and Guattari 249).

As Vint writes, "Technoculture is deeply implicated in the reshaping of human/animal interactions; and sf, as a literature concerned with the social impact of science and technology, can contribute to a necessary rethinking of responsibility and ethics" ("Animals" 178). Telepathy provides a window into the minds and thoughts of animals and others and bridges interspecial communications. This liminal quality the underpeople possess figures them as intercessors; their telepathy and their liminality links them to Tepper's Hippae, but that is all they share. For both heroes, human language does not provide enough information to guide them. In addition to telepathy, embodied communications of animals and "others" communicate more information and truth,

if human heroes possess the capability to receive them. Within the context of these narratives, all acts of embodied communication are performative speech, offering characters the "opportunity to shape their own identities and resist hegemonic power" (Butler 2486).

In Tepper's *Grass*, Marjorie's character encompasses a multiplicity of roles she feels she must perform, but she can only become-animal by shedding cultural expectations. As Hayles writes, "Embodiment is akin to articulation in that it is inherently performative, subject to individual enactments, and therefore always to some extent improvisational" (197). Deleuze and Guattari write that "We do not become animal without a fascination for the pack, for multiplicity…is the multiplicity that fascinates us already related to a multiplicity dwelling within us?" (239-40). Cultural roles often come with "scripts," expectations for behavior, speech, or the lack thereof. In order to express her embodiment improvisationally, Marjorie must release the scripts and get up on stage. Tepper's novel has more conspicuous connections to "becoming-animal," with both physical and metaphysical representations in the foxen's metamorphoses, as well as the heroine's deep connections to her horses, and her final becoming-foxen. Smith's novella emphasizes more internalized becomings. The hero must recognize the horse's face to return his gaze, and this recognition creates a sense of attunement between the horse and hero, making him "available" to participate in his own becoming-animal. In order to become-animal, he must first recognize the horse as a citizen of the planet.

While both texts fall into the general category of sf, both share the hybrid qualities of science fantasy. In *Strategies of Fantasy*, Brian Attebery notes that "there are, as I expected, no clear boundaries between categories. Fantasy edges into science fiction; science fiction impinges on mainstream fiction; mainstream fiction overlaps with fantasy" (13). Each subgenre is a deterritorialization, and individual narratives move freely among the permeable borders. Attebery describes Tepper's work as "indigenous fantasy" that employs fantastic elements within a realistic setting. Yet his description of "science

fantasy" seems a more accurate description of *Grass*, unless it is best to classify Grass as a "becoming-fantasy." In an interview with *Astounding* magazine, Tepper explains her multiplicity of story lines: "Of course a book isn't one idea, it's a whole series of ideas that may start in a dozen or a hundred different places" (Hunt).

Vint suggests that new configurations of subjectivity will challenge our ethics in the future:

> Material and metaphysical entanglements of humans, non-humans, corporations, and governments are shaping the future we will inhabit. The various constructions of who counts as a subject and who is merely an object, of which non-humans are part of extended family networks-and which are expendable lab tools-are crucial sites for science fiction's thought-experiments (Vint 180).

Hayles notes the importance of speculative literature like sf and fantasy, for narratives "display the passageways that enabled stories coming out of narrowly focused scientific theories to circulate more widely throughout the body politic" (21). While tales that feature talking animals can inspire readers to discover or re-kindle their own human-animal bond, the context of these narratives still ignores problems inherent in language and cultural barriers (like the inescapable anthropocentrism in texts). Attebery quotes Gwyneth Jones's description of sf in her essay "Fools: The Neuroscience of Cyberspace": "'Science fiction exists… on the boundary area between our knowledge of the world out there, our science and its technologies, and the reports we have from the inner world of subjective experience: ideology, interpretation, metaphor, myth'" (qtd. in "Metaphor" 105).

In order to cross over from theory into application, and consider some real-world implications that could result from the restructured subjectivities Vint suggests, Wolfe draws from the research of biology and systems theory to explore what it will mean for humans when we can no longer take animals for granted, simply because we do not possess the capabilities to understand their "wholly other" communications. Hayles

echoes the emptiness of abstract ideas:

> words never make things happen by themselves—or rather, the only things they can make happen are abstractions…material and embedded processes must be used—processes that never exist in isolation but always *in contexts* where the relevant boundaries are permeable, negotiable, instantiated (83).

Both authors juggle two different meanings for "domestication," most notably in *Grass*. Derrida takes issue with dressage and domestication as inscriptions of human culture on animal bodies, reflected by similar cultural inscriptions Marjorie bears. As Derrida writes, "The socialization of human culture goes hand in hand…with the domestication of the tamed beast: it is nothing other than the becoming-livestock [devenir-betail] of the beast…appropriation, breaking-in, and domestication" (*Animal* 96). But Despret suggests that in answer to scientific objectivism, domestication holds more promise, as "the practices that allow themselves to be pervaded by humans: they are practices that create and transform through the miracle of attunement" (125). She argues for interested, subjective interactions between human and animal bodies called "'anthropo-zoo-genesis'…a practice that constructs animal and human" (122) when both bodies express and respond to emotions.

Horses in these stories serve a multiply coded mythic function, calling on their ancient heritage in fairy tales and mythology as well as more contemporary cultural narratives. They are familiar, recognizable figures in alien settings, reminding the reader of the ordinary, or common. They are technological artifacts of past epochs; reminding us that they used to work by our sides. They are atavistic connections to "spirit" from forgotten indigenous traditions that span the globe. They act as texts, their bodies inscribed by acts that define them, and for those with the skills to "read" their bodies, including movement, postures, and "twitches of skin," they are tactile billboards of emotion. In all of these roles, horses mediate, connect, negotiate, and intercede for

humans, helping us understand ideas larger than our individual lives.

Conversations about ethical treatment of non-human animals can open up larger cultural conversations about race, gender, and other marginalized groups. Michel Foucault's work on the history and methods of the penal system and mental institutions helped illuminate the viewpoint of excluded or marginalized groups. His publications "attested to the existence among even the most helpless of the oppressed of a singular ability to speak, and therefore to know—a power that continues to this day to be stifled by authorities of all kinds, beginning with the academic authorities, [who were/are] the licensed possessors of legitimate knowledge" (Delacampagne 246).

Both Smith's and Tepper's texts feature a recurring motif of remembered knowledge that has either been forgotten, or deliberately hidden, portrayed as a secret. Derrida writes of the "double sense of the term 'secret of,'" that can refer to something's "sense of manufacture, its making, its possibility of taking form…I prefer to say its signature" (*BS* 227). This first meaning refers to knowledge that is often taken for granted; something valid, but unrecognized or unformulated, as in the phrase, "the secret to success." The word "secret" originates from the Latin *secernere* (v), which means to "separate, sunder, or discern" (OED). When each protagonist proves their capability to discern, they will have access to the "secret" as "a present that does not present itself, a phenomenon that does not phenomenalize itself" (Derrida, *BS* 227). Each character must first recognize a potential source of wisdom, then decipher the truth that does not "present itself."

Both Smith and Tepper employ such terms as "silly," "little," or "very small beings," indicating a character's feelings of insignificance; both their heroes face colossal tasks, and, as smaller parts of a larger whole, they have trouble recognizing that importance as well as size, is a matter of perspective. Yet each author reveals "small," or "silly" things as vitally important. Another colloquial use for *bête* is "silly," so in acting silly, Marjorie further demonstrates her animal nature, becoming-animal, or becoming-*bête* when she journeys beyond her name and human perception to become-foxen.

Haraway makes the distinction of a companion *species*; returning the Derridean gaze denotes a respect for all varieties of animal:

> Looking back in this way takes us to seeing again, to *respecere*, to the act of respect… To knot companion and species together in encounter, in regard and respect, is to enter the world of becoming with, where, who, and what are, are precisely what are at stake (*CS* 102).

Her observation of "entangled species" emphasizes that humans and animals have an ongoing partnership essential to the survival of all species, a theme echoed throughout these texts. Both authors portray definitive moments when humans recognize the "other," as a face or gaze, and that s/he is speaking; they also illustrate a recognition of the Other within.

In the end, many animals and others exist alongside humans as co-workers and companions. Sociologist Clinton Sanders examines the dynamics of human-animal relations that qualifies them as friendships. He writes that communication between species is not only possible but that it goes "beyond the limiting anthropocentric orthodoxy that presents the bonds and interactions between humans and nonhuman animals as qualitatively different from—and, by implication, inferior to—those between humans" (406). Tepper and Smith both feature "work" as a source of emotional, and perhaps spiritual fulfillment. Meaningful work and companionship contribute as much to human happiness as to non-human animal happiness, if we are to believe Smith's golden horse orbiting Pontoppidan. As Monica Sjöö and Barbara Mor write, "under imperialist-class labor exploitation, and Christian doctrines of innate human corruption, the whole idea of work had changed. Work was man's just punishment for being born sinful. Daily work was no longer seen as a seasonal-cyclic-ritual participation in the life of earth" (294). By placing humans and animals in direct, work-related interactions, sf texts portray inter-special partnerships that not only recover a sense of fulfillment, but may also re-connect people with an element of the divine.

Though Wolfe writes about possible real world interspecial communications,

sf imagines grander collaborations. If the prospect of a posthuman, postanimal future presents opportunities for true interspecial communication, Western philosophy will be displaced, or at least augmented. Rather than fall into the trap of binary dualism, and suggest Eastern philosophy as a model for replacement, perhaps there is room enough to include the thoughts and traditions of people silenced by colonization and patriarchal monotheism. As Sjöö and Mor write, "To the ancients, all things and events perceived by the senses and intuition were interrelated, differing manifestations of the same ultimate fluid reality…the notion of the isolated individual self was an ego-illusion" (323). The emphasis on perception and intuition acts as a foil to Western empiricism, which relies on dissecting wholes into parts for understanding. As Jung writes, "In the last analysis, most of our difficulties come from losing contact with our instincts, the age-old forgotten wisdom stored up in us" (*Soul* 89). People recognize the wisdom of neglected knowledge, illuminated by current studies and evolving technology. Haraway writes that "animals have continued to have a special status as natural objects that can show people their origin, and therefore their pre-rational, pre-management, pre-cultural essence" (*Simians*, 11). Once neglected knowledge is recovered, we begin to realize the full scope of knowledge that might have been handed down from previous generations, and the recognition then inspires further excavation into forgotten caches of wisdom.

Fantastic talking horses like "the famous Mr. Ed," are comedy classics in which an obviously intelligent horse makes a human play the fool. Philosophically, the horse simply subverts the Cartesian binary; since Ed speaks, he qualifies as "human," but only Wilbur is privileged with his secret. Since speech is not "proper to animals," Wilbur would need evidence to convince other humans, but Ed is too smart to speak out of turn.

In a way, Mr. Ed illustrates the classic cautionary psychological case study for "influence": Clever Hans. Despret details of the investigations of this "wonder horse," who also challenges Western epistemology (but with more nuance than Ed), even though "Whenever Hans, the bright horse, is requested to testify about someone else…his

testimony is always called upon to impoverish the range of explanations" (117). After a series of interviews and experiments in 1904, German psychologist Oskar Pfungst concluded that "Clever Hans" was neither a genius (at math) nor a telepath. Instead, Hans was exceptionally good at reading nearly imperceptible visual cues; not only were his questioners unaware they were giving him cues, but he taught them which cues to give (Despret 115-17 passim). Despret notes the extraordinary findings suggested that "Hans embodied the chance to explore other ways by which human and non-human bodies become more sensistive to each other," (114) but his case is cited as an example of the kind of "influence" psychologists avoid. It seems that instead of avoiding such "influence," Clever Hans and Mr. Ed could present new ways to think about inter-special communication from the perspective of interest and subjectivity.

The reexamination of Western epistemology is promising in its implications for nonhuman subjectivity, but daunting in its implementation. Wolfe proposes a "reconfiguration of what philosophy (or "theory") is and how it can (and cannot) respond to…the challenge of sharing the planet with non-human subjects" (*Rites* 8). Literary theory and philosophical discourse offer insight into texts, but they rarely include a call to action. In contrast, critics and scholars of critical animal studies, biological sciences, and ecofeminism often include urgent calls to action in response to ethical and social injustices. However, scholarship is often overlooked as an important form of activism; scholars and teachers within the humanities have opportunities to introduce and educate people about speciesism and the larger discourse of species. Bruce Boehrer suggests that higher education is "not capable of making a serious difference" in the issue of speciesism, so he merely practices his personal convictions on ethical treatment of animal others (Cole 91). Animal studies scholar Erica Fudge acknowledges Boehrer's position as academic, not activist, but adds that "We are…involved in educating people—in the classroom and in published work—and this, as Louis Althusser knew, can be effective in challenging the status quo" (Cole 95). While scholarship may not be as visible, it is still a

valuable—and vital—form of activism for many issues.

Despret argues for more involved scientific practices that will produce results automatically endowed with greater interest and emotion. "Availability" implies an epistemology of subjectivity, or interested participation, as opposed to the disinterested objectivity demanded by Western scientific practices. She differentiates between a scientist who relies on the availability of both the apparatus and the animal as "a care-taker, as someone interested in its possible becoming," and a scientist who requires docility "as a judge or a master," citing Harry Harlow as an example of the latter (124).[25] In other words, Because an available scientist shows interest in his subject's becoming, the subject responds positively. Despret writes:

> If we follow carefully how some of these scientists create access to the creatures they study, the way they are moved by their subjects of interest, the way they give them a chance to be interesting and to articulate other things, we notice that the signs that define subject and object…are redistributed in a new manner (128).

While animals may not be adept at expressing abstract thoughts in words, they are expert at sensing, and returning, emotions. Dogs roll over for the perfect belly rub, cats purr and "knead," and horses read minds.

Sanders notes that "human relationships with dogs and horses…have emphasized the central role played by touch in establishing the human-animal relationship and communicating feelings and intentions in the course of interaction" (408). As an expert in "reading" horses' skin, Tepper's hero Marjorie can communicate her feelings the same way. Horses and riders share prolonged contact, before, during, and after a ride. Vicki Hearne explains the importance of such a connection, in *Adam's Task*:

> until you learn not only to read what your skin tells you, but also to be, as it were, kinesthetically legible yourself, you are deprived of that very skepticism that is part of the matrix of thought by means of which we

> learn to be certain enough, most of the time, for consciousness to proceed with a fair amount of confidence (110).

She compares a "green" rider, unfamiliar with reading skin, to a person immersed in a foreign language; both are unsure of what they say as well as how to verify incoming messages.

Despret cites William James' theory on emotions (what objectivism tries to eradicate), that states "emotional experience belongs to that strange sphere of experiences where neither world, not body, nor consciousness can be clearly separated, distributed" (126).[26] While his definitions and categories seem to echo the liminality of "becoming," Despret suggests that an expanding practice of subjectivity can produce more possible outcomes. As Despret clarifies, "it was not the absence of world or of consciousnes that was problematic, but rather their mode of presence, their ways of being present… An emotion is not what is felt, but what makes us feel" (126). James arrives at the idea that "'The world disposes us to feel, and our body makes the world available'" (qtd. in Despret 127). Along this line of thinking, perhaps Heidegger had it backwards; the world has animals and humans just as much as we have the world, as each force affects and produces the other. Without the situated, experiential knowledge that comes from individual relationships with animals, we are left searching for empty traces of human words with no real meaning. A heuristic approach to learning, a recurrent theme in both texts, suggests a practical approach to opposing Western objectivism.

By using only one species-specific language, humans are unable to ask the right questions, or even to know whether the "others" are interested in a dialogue. It is like asking someone to write a haiku using light; the two components are not just dissimilar, they are alienated from each other by nature. "Nonhuman animals do not employ conventional symbols and have perspectives markedly different from…their human associates. Thus the mutual understanding and assignment of complementary roles… typically are tentative and emergent" (Sanders 409). Without a language that can adapt to shifting ideas as humans accumulate and synthesize knowledge, we would be creatively

and cognitively crippled. However, from a zoosemiological viewpoint, perhaps the search for something called a "language" is too narrow.

Anthropologists and semioticians support the idea that embodied animal communications have more power and carry more meaning than human speech. Sebeok notes that "[anthropologist] Margaret Mead identified as the gifted individual that person "who has had the luck to have had all … possible modalities stimulated. If you analyze communication, the person who gets over the greatest communication to the group is the person who uses several sensory modalities" (12 ).[27] Hayles cites Mead's concern about the limitation of "purely *verbal*" transcripts from the 1952 Macy's Conference (76). She details Mead's concern when she notes, "We should drop the idea that language is made up of words and that words are toneless sequences of letters on paper...We are dealing here with language in a very general sense, which would include posture, gesture, and intonation" (304n. 51).

Animals do not enjoy the luxury of abstract thought; their communication is immediate, corporeal, embodied. As Hayles writes, "information is never disembodied, messages don't flow by themselves, and …epistemology isn't a word floating through the thin, thin air until it is connected up with incorporating practices" (83). A cycle of communication and feedback, understood through the embodied language of nonhuman animals could provide valuable input on environmental concerns the world over. Human attempts to understand and control the world often result in isolation; scientific practices like dissection, centrifuge, and vivisection separate and isolate components of a larger whole, instead of seeking a holistic awareness of the relationships of different co-species within a larger ecosystem. Attebery writes:

> Among many postmodernisms, some varieties attempt to find a middle ground between blind faith in traditional epistemologies and absolute rejection of objectivity. This middle way usually involves acknowledging the shaping power of the spectator's perspective while still looking for

> ways to test observations…They see the observer's cultural biases and physical limitations not as bars to knowledge, but as determiners of its form" ("Metaphor" 92).

Again, a median, or liminal, approach between two opposing practices holds the most promise for practical application.

Among many messages, both Smith and Tepper warn against repeating former patterns of colonization. Beyond an indication of our civilization as a species, Tepper suggests that questionable practices may have inflicted harm beyond repair. As Sjoo and Mor write, "Colonialism is a form of vampirism that empowers and bloats the self-image of the colonizing empire by draining the life energies of the colonized people" (26). While the imaginary worlds within science fiction texts decode inter-special communications of animals and others, it may be worth considering what valuable insight the non-human others of our current reality could offer mankind. By paying attention to the differences in animals and others – not just their presence, but their movements, their behavior in their environments, and considering whether or not they are thinking or providing an opportunity in which to communicate –humans can begin to understand embodied communications. Anthropologist Elizabeth Atwood Lawrence writes, "At the most fundamental level, it may be that the sound of horses' hoofbeats echoes our own heartbeat, the pulse of life itself" (Lawrence 188).

With the number of studies on animal communication to provide scientific corroboration, it is difficult to understand why animal subjectivity remains in question, and more specifically, why, if the capabilities exist, more inter-special communications are not already taking place. Despite years of scientific evidence for animal communion and communication—from countless biologists, ethnologists, and YouTube videos—studies in the humanities continue to assume the human as subject. Recent news stories feature digital records of sights and sounds that document communications between and among countless living species, including the conversations of cats; a husky comforting a

fussy (human) newborn; the species-wide preference of certain whale songs, which varies from year to year; and orphaned animals nurtured by other species. As Wolfe writes, "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" (*Rites* 1).

The lives of contemporary humans leave little room for our former equine partners, except as a hobby or sport. Historian Miklós Jankovich calls modern equestrian sports "an inescapable function of civilization" (117), noting that they are modeled on activities like hunting and warfare, which once used to feed and protect communities. Today, these activities allow people to incorporate horses into their daily lives, but the interaction is a conscious choice, and not performed out of a necessity to protect the village from a hungry red fox.

The smallest beings, such as viruses, often have more concentrated power than larger beings. Similarly, smaller actions—subtle shifts in perspective—can lead to a completely different understanding of a much larger picture. Great ideas will not change minds, but great experiences might. Beyond mere cognition, experiential knowledge may help recover the ancient skill of intuition, a sense beyond the somatic. Though portraying horses as aliens produces a sense of the uncanny, seeing them in a different perspective may help humans "recover," our familiarity, or better yet, our lost sense of wonderment, "which fantasy…restore[s] them to the vividness with which we first saw them" (Attebery 16). Recovering the wonder of nonhuman nature is a small step toward reconnecting with nature. These are the stories that tell the future—either as a roadmap for success, or as dire warnings. Either way, such narratives open up conversations and make room for the larger discourse of species, granting credence to information sent and received by many different channels, and our responsibility as fellow species of an ecology is to learn how to listen, scent, and feel our way to a connection.

## NOTES

1. The title character from Mary Chase's 1944 Pulitzer-Prize winning play, *Harvey*, is a shapeshifting *pooka* from Celtic mythology in the form of a six-foot rabbit. These creatures also assume the shapes of horses.

2. Although "embodied communication" includes human speech, within the context of this paper it describes alternate channels of communication employed by animals, such as chemical, olfactory, tactile, and kinesic modes.

3. Human authorship of zoocentric narratives never truly allows an escape from anthropomorphism.

4. Some animal-rights groups equate pet-keeping with slavery. Although Daniel Oliver cites an early PETA pamphlet, "Statement on Companion Animals," which claims "[pets] are like slaves, even if well-kept slaves," the group's current website takes a more moderate stance. http://www.peta.org/issues/Companion-Animals/doing-whats-best-for-our-companion-animals.aspx. In *The PETA Practical Guide to Animal Rights: Simple Acts of Kindness to Help Animals in Trouble*, (2009) president Ingrid Newkirk states, "There will always be animal guardians, but we dislike the word "pet," and we are opposed to breeding animals and treating them as if they were toys or surrogate children rather than the whole, interesting, and cultutally different beings they are" (193).

5. Interspecial communications with humans, gorillas, and dogs: http://www.koko.org/news/news_090706_Dog_Lang_Board.html. Birds who use grammar: http://io9.com/5816441/birds-are-the-first-non+human-animals-to-use-grammar?tag=linguistics http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn20615-first-evidence-that-birds-tweet-using-grammar.html *Nature Neuroscience* DOI: 10. 1038/nn.2869; http://io9.com/5953817/

easily-the-best-thing-youll-hear-all-week-a-beluga-whale-mimicking-human-speech; *Current Biology* 22.20 – "Spontaneous human speech mimicry by a cetacean"; Sarasota Dolphin Institute - cracking the "code": http://www.dolphin-institute.org/resource_guide/animal_language.htm.

6. Posthumanism recognizes other disciplines like ethology and zoosemiology have already established several different animal languages.

7. While this term has specific applications within social anthropology, within this paper, I use a more general definition of "in-betweenness."

8. A combination of the Greek root word *hippos* ("horse"), combined with *dipsos* ("thirst"). Smith begins the story by explaining Casher O'Neill's thirst for justice (451), and later describes the valley's shape as resembling a woman's hips and legs (458).

9. The term "palomino" describes the horse's coat color, not his breed. The golden palomino hue results when a cremello (cream-colored) gene dilutes red to yellow (http://www.vgl.ucdavis.edu/services/coatcolor.php). As purebred Arabians do not carry dilution genes (such as the cremello needed to produce a palomino) we *can* deduce that Smith's horse is *not* a purebred Arabian, despite his native Mizzer's desert terrain. While this desert origin could suggest the similar desert origins of the Arabian breed, it is not enough for positive breed identification.

10. In *The Encyclopedia of Horse Breeds and Care* (2007), Judith Draper writes: "Broadly speaking a pony is a small horse, 'small' usually meaning no higher at the withers than 14.2 hh [hands high] (a 'hand' is four inches). However, not all small horses can be classisied as ponies. Arab horses, for example, often stand below 15 hh but they are very much horses, with the proportions and characteristics of the horse.... distinct pony characteristics include a proportionately short length of leg in relation to the depth of the body" (129). Without knowing the fictional runaway's breed or height, I use the terms "horse" and "pony" interchangeably, as Smith does. Although some people call horses "ponies" out of tradition (polo ponies) or as endearing nicknames, some breed

standards such as the Arabian's discourage the term.

11. "Dead Lady" re-tells the tale of Joan of Arc, in which D'Joan - a little dog-girl - becomes Joan, transformed from underperson to "real" person by hundreds of years of downloaded memories and personalities. This story of the underpeople's revolution also illustrates Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "becoming." Joan is martyred for her message of unconditional love and "life-with," and the human doctor in "Gem Planet" complains that the old dog-woman telepath "loves people too much."

12. http://www.karakumstud.com/web/karakum.nsf/PermaLinks/TNKH-7E9K24

13. Budiansky notes that horses have the largest eyes of any land mammal, providing a nearly 360-degree field of view (109-10). In addition, he notes that the fine structure of a horse's facial muscles allows for a wide variety of expressions (128).

14. In *Celtic Myth and Legend*, Charles Squire lists several mischievous "sprites" that take equine shapes, such as kelpies, pookas, and the Glashtyn.

15. Equestrian sport often called "ballet on horseback." Derived from the French verb *dresser*: to train, adjust, straighten out. Such use may indicate that humans thought a horse was "incomplete" without human training. Equestrian sport in which horses jump obstacles of 6 ft. and higher. The French noun, *puissance*, means "power."

16. The tale originated in Scandinavia, but survives today in English folktales, usually from the south and west of England. Charles Squire references The Mabinogion as one source of the Wild Huntsman, Gwyn, Welsh god of the underworld, the "mighty hunter of men's souls, riding on his demon horse and cheering on his demon hound to the fearful chase" (Squire 254-5). Historically, the Wild Hunt is also linked to King Herne, the Horned King (Cernunnos), for whom present-day Herne Bay is named.

17. Origins of the name "Sylvan" mean "forest," or "trees," in contrast to the grasses that cover the planet. his mother's name, Rowena, also recalls the Rowan tree.

18. "Oubliette": (Fr.) "Place of forgetting."

19. The text for *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow…)* begins with

Derrida thanking his colleagues, and writes, "It is said that one must avoid repeating oneself, in order not to give the appearance of training (*dressage*), already, of a habit or a convention that would in the long term program the very act of thanking" (1). However, *dressage*—as a habit, a role, or a script—is a recurring motif throughout the novel.

20. Real-world riding simulators also exist for horseback riding instruction: http://www.electricschoolmaster.com/.

21. This is an allusion to the Grimm Brothers' fairy tale, The Goose Girl. In it, a princess is forced to switch places with her handmaiden, who marries the prince in her stead and gives the princess the job of Goose Girl. To conceal her crime, the false princess has the Goose Girl's talking horse, Falada, beheaded. Falada's head still speaks to the Goose Girl daily, and ultimately leads to the discovery of the crime and the inevitable happy ending.

22. Hypnosis originated at the turn of the century as "mesmerism," after Franz Mesmer, according to the etymological history in the OED. Mesmer explained his method channeled a power he called "animal magnetism," though his tactics were dismissed as fraudulent (*Oxford English Dictionary Online* 3rd. Ed. 2003).

23. Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition.*

24. Tolkien believes "Fantasy is a thing best left to words, to true literature" (*Fairy Stories* 49).

25. Harlow was a famous primatologist who demonstrated that attachment is a primal need by separating newborn rhesus monkeys from their mothers and isolating (torturing) them.

26. Brother of novelist Henry James. Despret cites his *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (1958), and *Principles of Psychology*, vol. II (1890).

27. Speaking earlier at the conference for Comparative Aspects of Human Communication, at the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Burg Warstein, Austria, Sept. 4-10, 1960.

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