

The Animal Novel

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Abstract

Our reluctance to take seriously the anthropomorphic terms we routinely employ to describe the novel's history, form, and social function has prevented us from considering critically the constitutive role of animals in the genesis

and development of the genre. In this paper I argue that the figure of the animal, which subtends the biopolitical logic of realism, is our best, perhaps our only, means of coming to terms with anthropogenic extinction.

Animals have played such a prominent role in the history of literature that it is at first blush surprising that literary critics have paid scant attention to their figurative as well as material presence in literary texts. Animals have been a part of literature since its beginnings, enlivening its representational space and giving imaginative shape to some of its most significant generic variants, including the pastoral, the chivalric romance, and nature poetry, all of which are inconceivable without the presence of animals. One specific form, the animal fable, can even be said to instantiate the literariness of the literary since, in granting speech to animals, the fable also carries out a function that can only be performed in literature and, in doing so, lays claim to literature's capacity to say absolutely anything. Yet, literary critics have been slow to answer the call of the animal in literature, reading literature's constitutive anthropomorphism as the non-serious residue of mimetic representation, or, much as scientists might, as an error whereby human characteristics are employed to describe non-human entities. Naturally accepted in archaic, primitive, or theistic literary forms, anthropomorphism is relegated to the margins of the modern literary field, where children's literature, science fiction, and autobiographies now comprise a sort of literary preserve in which animals can roam unhindered by the burden of realistic representation. Literary critics have nevertheless begun to examine the presence of animals in realistic literature across languages, genres, and periods. But they tend to make better environmentalists than literary ecologists, alive to nuances of managing nature through literature's referential function yet oddly disengaged from the literary field as a ground for comparison that enables the responsible anthropomorphism implicated in the exercise of environmental justice. The recent attempt to account for the presence of animals in literature, perhaps most poignantly elaborated on the basis of their absence, has in any case come only at the far end of the long history of animal-human interactions. The elegiac tone of much eco-critical writing identified by Ursula Heise responds as much to the loss of biodiversity, environmental degradation, and climate change as to the realization that the literary representation of the natural world is now forever cast in the preterite and can only be read as the record of what it once was rather than

as its living chronicle. We have been approaching the presence of animals in literature with all the trepidation with which an unarmed writer would approach a wild animal except that now there are no longer any wild animals to encounter and not even writing will bring them back.

But from another perspective the trepidation with which literary critics have approached the wild card of animals in literature is not all that surprising considering the dramatic changes to which human-animal relations have been subjected over the past two hundred years. These can be traced back to two parallel yet seldom related historical phenomena. The first has to do with the pronounced acceleration at the turn of the nineteenth century of what historian Harriet Ritvo has called the “human manipulation” of animals in a variety of domains such as industry, transport, science, and agriculture (2). This acceleration had a paradoxical impact on the place of animals in the cultural imaginary: on the one hand, animals became less visible as the growth of urban centers abstracted them from everyday experience and factory farms, abattoirs, and laboratories began to remove them from public view; on the other, animals became more visible as circuses, zoos, natural history museums, and children’s books turned animals into an ubiquitous cultural presence. This paradox is structured by a set of traditional oppositions—rural vs. urban; local vs. global; domesticated vs. wild; native vs. exotic; work vs. leisure; high vs. low—that both mark and make possible humans’ almost complete appropriation of the natural world. Nowhere is this paradox more materially evident than in the figure of the household pet, the living emblem of humans’ manipulation of nature and, to judge by the fact that they represent a massive population without collectivity, the compensatory reward for its destruction at the service of competitive individualism in the age of capital. Pets, that is, are “people in disguise,” to use James Serpell’s suggestive phrase: they have proper names, house-bound habits, and codified behavior and belong to no pack, clowder, flock, or school (121). Consider under this head the recent trend in cloning pets: the most sophisticated biotechnology available to humans is devoted to the reproduction of animals that exist entirely outside of “nature,” both in the sense that domestication removes species from their natural habitats and in the sense that their animality has

been selectively bred out of existence. At once visible and invisible, pets are the paradoxical return of our repressed animality.

The second phenomenon, which occurs within the seemingly autonomous domain of literary culture, concerns the disappearance of animals from the domain of aesthetic representation. Literary historians agree that, at the turn of the nineteenth century, the novel became the dominant narrative form of a newly constituted institution of literature that was supported by a mass reading public whose scale was becoming increasingly global. The question of where the novel originated, traveled, and took root, and by what means it was able to conquer the global marketplace are less relevant to the present argument than the fact that its consolidation pushed to the margins forms, modes, and genres that had once enjoyed broad cultural appeal. I have already mentioned a number of zoophilic or zoocentric genres whose symbolic capital waned with the rise of that of the novel (the animal fable, the pastoral, the chivalric romance) but among the literary casualties of the novel's global expansion we must also count native, folkloric, and oral forms of literature that may not have been beholden to the categorical distinction between humans and animals maintained and policed by realistic representation before the age of the novel's empire. For while it would be excessive to claim that all literary forms marginalized by the novel are in some way zoophilic, it is nevertheless important to note that the triumph of the novel is the triumph of a mode of representation—realism—that categorically resists the anthropomorphic impulse of literature by reabsorbing the properly fabulous energies of the literary into the unremarkable fabric of the everyday. The novel is that genre that depicts a world from which animals have disappeared or, paraphrasing Lukács, the novel is the epic of a world that has been abandoned by animals.¹

Why then should we be concerned with the fate of animals in the novel? Would it not make more sense to move on from the impasse of representation (or, better, representativeness) and embrace a properly historical perspective on the role of animals in literature much as we do with, say, the role of God in Medieval or Renaissance texts? The matter could be easily settled if our agnosticism concerning the exist-

¹ For Lukács's version of this sentence, see *The Theory of the Novel* (88).

ence of God were of the same figurative order as our skepticism concerning the relevance of animals in literature. Even though animals and gods (and for that matter monsters and fairies and aliens) belong to the same figurative register, anthropomorphism involving animals uniquely resolves the confusion between the referential and cognitive functions of language that anthropomorphism takes as its structuring principle. As Barbara Johnson notes, anthropomorphism is not like other tropes in that one of the terms of comparison is a given: “To use an anthropomorphism is to treat as *known* what the properties of man are” (551; emphasis in original). But to use an anthropomorphism to describe a non-existent entity such as a god and to use an anthropomorphism to describe an animal is different not because the rhetorical strategies—the “rhetorical sleight of hand” (574) as Johnson calls it—involved in defining gods and animals in terms of “man” are different, but because “man” is an animal and not a god, no matter how desperately, how viciously, how stupidly, how sublimely “he” has attempted to land on the other side of this equation. The equation of human and animal in anthropomorphism renders the representation of animals in realism into a tautological structure that excludes, through the de-sublimation of figure, any naming that compromises humans’ dominant position over nature.

The novel’s implication in what Jacques Rancière calls the “partition of the sensible” [*partage du sensible*] (12)—the manner in which politics frames a specific sphere of experience using sensory data—is relevant in this context since the absence of animal voices, animal actions, and animal images from the realm of the sayable, indeed of the novelizable, forms part of a system of political representation from which the animal has been categorically excluded. It is perhaps for this reason that when animals do appear in the realist novel they appear as overtly political subjects: Sewell’s *Black Beauty* (in one of the most popular novels of the nineteenth century) is a mouthpiece for animal welfare and the RSPCA; London’s dogs, Buck and White Fang, explicit stand-ins for social Darwinist individualism; Melville’s whale in *Moby Dick* arguably the embodiment of white American exceptionalism; Kafka’s Gregor Samsa the personification of European anti-Semitism. The anthropomorphic

treatment of animals within realism, as these examples suggest, is a figural aberration or category mistake since the incongruent presence of a sentient horse or a crawling salesman in a discourse otherwise committed to mimetic representation corresponds to the partition of the sensible in the literary field, but it is only intelligible as an aberration when the political exclusion of animals from the realm of the sensible also occurs “outside” literature.

Yet, the problem of animal representation (in both senses of the word, *darstellen* and *vertreten*) is only one aspect of the literary critic’s reluctance to address the animal presence. Given the apparent ease with which literary critics employ anthropomorphic tropes to describe their object of study, as we shall see, the reluctance to speak directly of animals must also be considered a critical blindspot. This was not always the case: one of the founding events of literary criticism explicitly uses animal metaphors to describe literary forms. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle famously compares a “well-constructed plot” to a “living creature or any organism composed of parts” in order to make an argument about aesthetic proportion. “Beauty,” he writes, “is a matter of size and order.” Just as a beautiful living creature must be of such size as can be “taken in by the eye,” a beautiful story must be of a length that can be “taken in by memory” (1450b, 33-1451a, 6). Aristotle’s animal metaphor of course is just that, a metaphor, and no literary critic today would seriously treat a story as though it were an animal, yet metaphors tend to be tenacious creatures, and, in the case of novel criticism, animals make their presence felt in an indirect but for all that not insignificant manner. Literary historians speak of the “evolution” of the novel and of the influence Darwin’s theory had on the language, imagery, and themes of some of the most important novelists writing in the second half of the nineteenth century.² More recently, self-styled literary Darwinists claim that the development of the novel (though all of literature is included in this reading) is a response to social evolutionary pressures.³ Leaving

² For an account of literary history as literary “evolution” see Franco Moretti (222). See Gillian Beer and George Levine for two different, though largely compatible accounts of Darwin’s influence on the Victorian novel.

³ See, for one such instance, Carroll.

aside the question of internal coherence and logical plausibility in these evolutionary models, what is striking is that, in spite of the service to which they press biological paradigms, the figure of the animal is practically absent from their historical arguments. In the work of these critics, the evolutionary paradigm tells us something about the economic selection of certain genres over others, the representation of human communities as “entangled” social “banks,” or the adaptability of narrative forms in some idealized Paleolithic past, but hardly anything about the novel’s “animality.” In Franco Moretti’s evolutionary argument, for instance, novelistic genres are something like animal species, some thrive in the capitalist environment while others go extinct, yet, in this version of critical naturalism, the novel’s own explicit investments in biological figuration are occluded. The point is not that these critics should be taken to task for not using, like Aristotle, animal imagery to describe the novel in evolutionary terms; it is rather that, in constructing evolutionary models for literary history, they are already doing so even if they do not acknowledge it. Were they to acknowledge that they did, moreover, they would realize that the terms we use to describe the novel are already informed by a form of animality that the theory of evolution made possible; namely, the animality of the human, a state or condition that, to judge by current political alignments, has not been universally embraced.

We are perhaps inured by now to the use of personification in the criticism of the novel, so prevalent is the use of human tropes to refer to the most characteristic aspects of the novel, but, in the context of the present argument, it is still nevertheless worth remarking upon the fact that we routinely use anthropomorphisms as though they were natural and unremarkable. For it is not, or not only, a lack of scientific rigor nor a failing of the critical imagination that leads us to assert that the novel has a point of view, a voice, or an unconscious.⁴ We refer to the novel anthropomorphically because we have no better means of describing it. There may be other figures available to us (the novel is a Panopticon; the novel is a microscope; the novel is a book), but these are all human

⁴ For “point of view” the reference is Percy Lubbock; for “voice” Genette and Bakhtin; for “unconscious” Jameson.

prosthetics, names that fit or extend human attributes, functions, and abilities. To be sure, this referential confusion is the result of a linguistic predicament that pervades all language use, but it presents more acutely in the novel than in other discursive events rendered in so-called ordinary language. In part this has to do with the fact that we ascribe an inordinate power to the novel—it produces subjects, polices identities, erects empires—that can only be explained with reference to a type of agency that we more readily ascribe to humans than to inanimate objects; to cultural rather than natural forces.⁵ But it also has to do with the difficulty we have traditionally had in describing its anomalous form: Henry James famously called realist novels “large loose baggy monsters” (1107). In James’s use, the phrase becomes a figure for the novel’s lack of reference since it is impossible to specify what a “large,” “loose,” and “baggy” “monster” would actually look like. The monster, as Mary Shelley shows in *Frankenstein*, has no name; it stands in for a figure employed to suggest that an entity has no adequate referent in reality. The term “monster,” that is, is a catachresis.

I can point to the novels on my shelves or access others on my iPad, of course, but when we speak of what we might awkwardly but suggestively call the *novelity* of the novel it is not primordially its material history to which we are referring. The material history of the novel is crucial to our understanding of its cultural role, but any account of its production, circulation, and consumption is incomplete without acknowledging that the novel does what it does by means of its discursivity and that its extraordinary portability, fungibility, and adaptability depends upon its linguistic plasticity as much as on the multiple editions, formats, and films that this plasticity makes possible.⁶ The novelty of the novel, to repeat this monstrous term, resists reference, or better, comes into being with the catachrestic use of anthropomorphism (the novel has a point of view, a voice, and unconscious, and so on) we are bound to utilize in naming it. Anthropomorphism names the entity “novel”

⁵ For the novel’s capacity to produce subjects see Armstrong; for its capacity to police the subject so produced see Miller and Sedgwick; for its imperial implications see Said.

⁶ As I have elsewhere argued, a more robust formulation of the “materiality” of the novel must be made in order to account for this aspect of the novel’s discursivity (Ortiz-Robles).

but does not describe it; anthropomorphism, as Paul De Man notes, is a proper name (241). Roland Barthes's *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, a text he asks us to read as a novel, captures this paradox economically by deploying the proper name as the title of a text "about" an author ("R.B.") in whose name he cannot speak because he is dead (he is, after all, the author of "The Death of the Author") but who will nevertheless endure as a "novel" through the very act of naming. Moreover, by using the proper name as a title, Barthes is also using a conventional formula that links his text to a long tradition of using proper names as the titles of novels, a practice that might be said to characterize (literally) the novelizable. Here is the discursive paradox of the realist novel: it is premised on a referential reliability for which it cannot itself vouch since it is impossible to refer to it except by the very means it uses to refer to the world, which is fiction. The novel can be profitably aligned, in this context, with Alex Woloch's character system as the meta-character that legitimates and makes possible the asymmetrical distribution of narrative space between major and minor characters in the novel. The novel, from this perspective, can only be described as a character not because it is a character but because we have no better means of capturing what it is that it does: it tells stories about characters.

So what do animals have to do with the novel's constitutive anthropomorphism? In order to account for the absence of animals in novel criticism we must make a small detour to determine what sorts of characters the novel came to represent when it became the dominant narrative form. The first thing to note is that the historical conjuncture at the turn of the nineteenth century that witnessed the acceleration of human's manipulation of animals and the consolidation of the novel as the dominant narrative form coincided with a further development that we must now take into account if we are to determine the conditions under which animals disappeared from the plane of novelistic representation only to reappear, in however attenuated a form, in literary criticism. I am referring to what Michel Foucault has characterized as the birth of biopolitics. The nature and practice of power, according to Foucault, underwent a profound transformation in the West at the turn of the nineteenth century, shifting its focus toward the optimization of

life and devoting its administrative energies to its unfolding. This power over life evolved along two separate but supplementary tracks: a disciplinary regime centered on the body as a machine and a biological regime aimed at biological processes at the level of species. He calls the first the “anatomy-politics of the human body”; the second the “biopolitics of the population” (134). Biopower, Foucault claims, contributed to the development of capitalism by making life processes the basis on which it would henceforth be administered. While institutional forms of discipline created individual subjects, biopower regulated the population as a whole by deploying “technologies of life” (139) that measured, assessed, and intervened in the conduct of life. Foucault does not mention the figure of the animal, but his formulation of biopower’s rationalization of life suggests that it is the animality of the human, rather than the machine-like capabilities released by discipline, that constitutes the principle as well as the object of its exercise. It is precisely to this aspect of biopolitics that Giorgio Agamben refers when he describes the “anthropological machine” as a discursive mechanism that makes a categorical distinction between animalized humans and humanized animals. The anthropological machine works by “establishing a zone of indifference” at its center within which the articulation between human and animal takes place (37-38). Biopolitics, in this view, determines who is to be considered a human animal or an animal human; who dies and who lives.

D.A. Miller has taught us how to read the novel as a disciplinary mechanism that in policing us also makes us who we are, but it is to biopolitics to which we must therefore turn to determine the mechanisms the novel employs to transform us into the animals we think we are not. Consider the great novelistic cycles that dominate the literary landscape in the nineteenth century: Scott’s Waverley novels, Balzac’s *La Comédie humaine*, Trollope’s *Chronicles of Barsetshire* and *Palliser* novels, Zola’s *Les Rougon-Macquart* cycle, Pérez Galdós’s *Novelas contemporáneas*, Hardy’s Wessex novels, and, for that matter, the collected novels of Austen, Dickens, Eliot, Thackeray, Tolstoy, and all the other realists who sought to recreate their worlds in words. We are used to reading these novels as a function of individual subjects (heroes, villains, orphans, victims,

lovers, friends, narrators, what have you), but what if we were to read their character-systems not as collections of individuals but as populations? We would have to adjust, at a minimum, the scale and manner of engagement, adopting a medium-range level of reading, not too close, not too distant, sensitive to the categories of biopolitical rationalization. Reading “for the plot” would still matter, of course, but we would now also have to conduct a sort of census of the novel, determining the age, sex, health, income, education, housing, and profession of the novelistic population and conduct statistical analyses of birth, death, and marriage rates for specific subsets within it. The analyses of the novel’s “life processes” would yield a representation of the animality of human characters that would put pressure on our traditional interpretation of novelistic action and alter the terms with which we engage mimetic representation, prompting us to shift our critical emphases from reference to probability, from depiction to representativeness, from individuality to collectivity.

We would also realize that the novelists themselves were already tapping into what we can think of as the biopolitical imaginary in constructing their novelistic worlds. The idea of *La Comédie humaine*, writes Balzac, “originated in a comparison between Humanity and Animality” [*Cette idée vint d’une comparaison entre l’Humanité et l’Animalité*] (n. pag.). For Balzac, this comparison is valid because animals are shaped by the conditions under which they are obliged to develop:

does not society modify Man, according to the conditions in which he lives and acts, into men as manifold as the species in Zoology? The differences between a soldier, an artisan, a man of business, a lawyer, an idler, a student, a statesman, a merchant, a sailor, a poet, a beggar, a priest, are as great, though not so easy to define, as those between the wolf, the lion, the ass, the crow, the shark, the seal, the sheep, etc.

Balzac’s vision of society cannot be called “social Darwinism,” in part because he is writing in 1842, but also because he believes in the power of a “Creator” who “works on a single model for every organized be-

ing.” Yet biological categories are similarly applied to social situations and human types are understood to behave like zoological species shaped by their environment. Balzac suggests that society is more complex than nature—“nature *plus* society”—not only because “drama is limited” among animals but also because animals have no property, no arts, no sciences and lead unchanging lives. The novelist, in this telling, is not exactly a naturalist, observing and recording the habits of animals; rather, the novelist is more like a statesman because he judges human affairs according to strict principles, which, in the case of Balzac, are, famously, “Religion and Monarchy.” At least in his own mind, Balzac acts as a sort of biopolitical legislator, deciding who lives and who dies and moving the plot along following rationalizations that might be said to pertain to something like a novelistic governmentality. Nothing further from Foucault, of course, since for him power is exercised in a more diffuse, more capillary fashion, yet the idea of a technology of life remains operative in Balzac’s novelistic practice insofar as his characters are complex humans shaped by a ruthless social environment and driven by ambition, desire, jealousy, hate, and all those ugly feelings we tend to associate with human animality.

Balzac’s novelistic biopolitics make visible the novel’s constitutive anthropomorphism by depicting society in zoomorphic terms. The representational reversal is paradoxical only if we forget that to represent humans as animals is to already describe animals in human terms. We can call Vautrin a rat, say, only because we think of rats as unscrupulous, scheming, and devious in the first place. Not every novelist uses animal imagery to describe human characters, of course, but, to the extent that they represent the social world at a distance, they are already using the biopolitical categories society uses to describe itself. Consider the constituent elements of Dickens’s fiction in this light: the ubiquitous use of the marriage plot and the inheritance plot as narrative devices; the recurring figure of the orphan; the ominous presence of bureaucratic institutions; the generic logic of the Bildungsroman as a structuring principle for social mobility; social cohesion as a function of moral character rather than desire, profit, and corruption. Dickens’s novels can be said to track the “life” of his characters (birth, death, marriage, health,

etc.) following probabilistic outcomes according to class, gender, location, family history, and so on. The functions, effects, and practices of biopower as it is applied to the human-as-animal may not appear to be particularly novelistic—nothing as boring as bureaucracy—yet they can be said to act as the backdrop against which action, dialogue, description, and characterization come into relief. George Eliot famously conducts “varying experiments of Time” in *Middlemarch* (3), a novel whose characters weave a fabric of connections through marriage, inheritance, and labor that creates, as the novel’s title implies, a population shaped by “unhistoric acts” whose effects are “incalculably diffusive” (514). Eliot is not exactly referring to bureaucratic acts here, but it is nevertheless instructive to think of them in this light when we consider that the novel’s various plot lines measure the results (as in an experiment) of acts carried out by error-prone humans in the course of life’s natural unfolding. These examples suggest that even when novelists do not make explicit comparisons between *l’Humanité et l’Animalité*, the human animal is still the proper subject of the realist novel.

La Bête humaine is the title of a single novel by Zola, but it could stand in as the title of the novel as such: note the parallelism between Zola’s title and Balzac’s *La Comédie humaine*, the totalizing phrasing of the latter expanding the semantic reach of the former as the *Comédie* becomes all *Bête*. Partly inspired by Balzac’s *Comédie*, Zola’s Rougon-Macquart cycle traces the “Natural and Social History of a Family Under the Second Empire,” as its full title tells us. Like Eliot, Zola thinks of himself as an experimentalist, but Zola’s experiments, unlike Eliot’s, follow protocols that are at least in his telling literally scientific: “the experimentalist [...] sets his characters going in a certain story so as to show that the succession of facts will be such as the requirements of the determinism of the phenomena under examination call for” (8). While reluctant to formulate general laws, Zola argues that “there is an absolute determinism for all human phenomena” and that there are at least two elements that exert great influence on the “intellectual and passionate manifestations of man”: heredity and surroundings (19). With reference to Darwin, Zola suggests that social surroundings are to the human what natural surroundings are to the animal. For Zola, the novelist should attempt to

“solve scientifically the question of how men behave when they are in society” (21). The term “Naturalism” has come to designate that literary style that, following Zola, attempts to describe human behavior as though it were “natural.” While not all self-styled naturalists were good readers of Darwin, they shared an interest in the animality of human characters and, at times, in the humanity of animal characters (Jack London). Even those naturalists who were bad readers of Darwin (Emilia Pardo Bazán, for instance, thought Darwin was a weak scientist because he did not believe in creationism) endeavored to describe in great detail specific social environments that were not usually represented in literature, often exposing in the process the very social ills biopower attempted to contain.

From this perspective, the trepidation with which literary critics have traditionally approached the presence of animals in literature is certainly unwarranted since, at the very least, the animality of the human is very evidently a fundamental aspect of realism’s sensorium. True that animals themselves are scarce in realism, but their marginal presence often frames the novel’s representational space and thus its properly political posture. Lukács’s critique of naturalism in “Narrate or Describe?” begins with a comparison of the horse races in Zola’s *Nana* and Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*. For Lukács, Zola’s description of the horse race is masterful in its detail but “mere filler” in the context of the novel’s narrative, and the fact that the winning horse is named Nana represents a “tenuous chance association” with the social triumph of the novel’s protagonist (110). In contrast, Tolstoy’s staging of the horse race represents a turning point in the plot since it is Vronsky’s fall during the race that prompts Anna, who is pregnant with his child, to tell her husband about their affair. Lukács hardly mentions the horses in these scenes; they are bit players in the human drama, whether it be narrated or described. The horses in these scenes, however, tell us something about the predicament in which these anagrammatically paired protagonists find themselves that we might not otherwise realize: Anna and Nana occupy a precarious political space at the very edge of the “partition of the sensible” on account of biology rather than morality. That Anna the adulterer and Nana the courtesan should both kill themselves in the end

may well be an inevitable dramatic response to realism's logic of retribution, but it might also be read as the result of biopolitical rationalization at the level of plot as each protagonist comes to represent the sacrificial remainder of life-regulating technologies. Pace Lukács, the horse named Nana in Zola's novel must now be understood to carry the representational burden of the animal-as-human, a figure without which the novel could not function as the dominant narrative vehicle of a whole age. Naturalism, in this reading, is the hypostatization of realism's constitutive anthropomorphism rather than a "descriptive" variant of bourgeois science and thus a poignant reminder that the disappearance of animals from the novel is a critical as well as a historical phenomenon.

The novel, as I have been describing it here, naturalizes the animality of the human by suppressing the animal presence. The animal, however, never ceases to haunt the novel as a form since the novel's representational logic follows the biopolitical rationalization of the social reality to which it lays claim. The animal is present in the novel's constitutive anthropomorphism yet critics have been reluctant to acknowledge it, as though it were better to ignore the tiger creeping slowly towards us than to risk confusing its stripes with the grass in which it hides. But now that it is becoming increasingly difficult to novelize the animal world, it is imperative that we take this risk. The novel is the epitaph of a world without animals, so let us read it without trepidation, not to celebrate their disappearance but so as to render them visible and thereby commemorate them as our dead. Anthropomorphism may well be the only means we have at our disposal to resurrect the animal world in the face of irreversible anthropogenic extinction.

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Biography

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