



Introduction

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Insofar as the current animal studies movement is taken to have originated with philosopher Peter Singer's 1975 publication, *Animal Liberation*, and to have polarized quickly as a debate between Singer's utilitarian calculus and philosopher Tom Regan's ontological case for animal rights, literature and literary theory have been left to argue for their inclusion in the field. In his response to J.M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*, published with the novel, Singer not only outlines his "like interests" standard (equal consideration of animals at a similar "mental level" to that of "normal" adult humans), but also makes what, for him, is a fundamental point: animal ethics remains the purview of "philosophy," not of "literature," or in his words, "I prefer to keep truth and fiction clearly separate" (86). His position suggests that, while the animal studies movement may be a recent development, it continues to rely, at least in Singer's instance, on a Kantian notion of rational philosophy and on his blueprint for the modern research university as a hierarchical, philosophical institution. And with the philosopher as at once dispenser of "truth" and standard-exemplar of "mental capacity," the animal studies movement inevitably raises the question of "the subject"—the author or writer constituted by philosophy and by literature.

According to Michael O'Sullivan, writing in this issue, any author who deals with animals must necessarily "give up control," the kind of autonomy and authority that have been definitive of "authorship" since the seventeenth century. The reason for this relinquishing of control, O'Sullivan argues, citing Jacques Derrida's *The Animal That*



Therefore I Am, is that it allows humans “to revisit moments of weakness” that animals traditionally embody, and “it may raise compassion for the other.” With reference to selected works of Coetzee and Kafka, O’Sullivan examines, among other things, “narrative authority, a formal device that is central to an author’s attempts to mediate the ‘giving up of control’ that dealings with animals necessitate.” At stake in this complex question is the “weakness” to which O’Sullivan refers: does this “weakness,” which he attributes to nonhuman animals, relate to what Derrida calls an “impotence” at the heart of human power, not a frailty perhaps so much as an expropriation, a difference, that is constitutive of the subject (of poetry and literature)? If so, then “control” might not be “given up” by the self, who, in his passivity, is finally unable to seize it.

How do we inherit tradition as concerns the relations between human and nonhuman animals? It is interesting and instructive to read O’Sullivan’s essay with Mareike Neuhaus’s study of Harry Robinson’s retelling of “Puss in Boots” in a way that incorporates a European story into Okanagan, British Columbia traditions, and without compromising either heritage. Robinson’s “Puss in Boots” is remarkable, Neuhaus suggests, both “for its use of Okanagan English and Okanagan discourse features—remnants of his ancestral Southern Interior Salish language that can be found in all of his stories,” and for its rhetorical ingenuity, its rhetoric of symbol, in weaving together “both an Okanagan story and a retelling of a colonizer’s story.” Neuhaus reads Robinson’s story as at once an act of decolonization that reclaims Indigenous notions linking people, animals, land, and cosmos, and a commentary on the reception of the original story.

The “wounded” body to which O’Sullivan refers recurs as a theme in this issue, for example in the essays by Stella Bolaki, Clare Counihan, Sharmani Patricia Gabriel, and Hilde Staels. The field of ecocriticism, inseparable from animal studies, is engaged in essays by Serpil Opperman and Stéphanie Posthumus. John McCombe explores both the tension between indolence and creativity in selected Beatles lyrics and a corresponding connection to British Romanticism. Elizabeth Hicks, reading A. S. Byatt’s *The Children’s Book*, explores both the public/private dichotomy and the relationship between high and low culture. And not the least, the issue includes a study by Patricia Morel of the apprenticeship of the gaze in Tracy Chevalier’s *Girl with a Pearl Earring*.

The issue, diverse and tightly woven, marks the interdisciplinary for which *Mosaic* is known.

WORKS CITED

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Singer, Peter. *Animal Liberation*. 1975. New York: Harper Collins, 2009.

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