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Threatening Animals?

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ABSTRACT

Threatening predators and pernicious beasts continue to play significant roles in the human imaginary even as human threats to other species increase exponentially in the age of Anthropocene. While posthumanist animal studies and material ecocriticism sync human and other animals within the biosphere's living interactions, our shared material reciprocity is currently skewing ever more towards the human threat to other species – and so to ourselves as co-dependents. This essay explores the meaning of “threatening” and “threatened”. Five German texts presenting human-animal interactions in the Anthropocene’s span by Goethe, Kafka, Stifter, Duve, and Trojanow unsettle expectations of threats. In Goethe’s “Novella”, an escaped lion and tiger enter German forests and are subdued, whereas Stifter’s “Brigitta” depicts a pastoral peace threatened by wolves. Kafka’s “Metamorphosis” re-shapes David Abram’s idea of “becoming animal”, and Karen Duve’s “Rain Novel” and Ilija Trojanow’s “Melting Ice”, recent climate change novels, juxtapose the human threat to the world’s climate with the onslaught of endless slugs and a biting penguin. Finally, the resurgence of wild boars in Berlin’s urban space in the past few years renegotiates human, nonhuman, and posthuman boundaries in an urban ecology.

Keywords: Anthropocene, animals, Plumwood, Goethe, Stifter, Kafka, Duve, Trojanow, climate change, material ecocriticism.

The crocodile’s terrifying death roll pulled Val Plumwood repeatedly into the murky water, as she describes in her now famous crocodile survival tale, *Being Prey*. Yet her primary concern after living to tell this story was that the crocodile should not be hunted down and killed in response to the attack since she had ventured into its space in the main tributary of the river in Kakadu, in the Australian Northern Territory. Indeed, the most dangerous and threatening animal/predator on the planet in large numbers is not the ancient crocodile, nor the iconic white shark, nor even the fetishized large cats, but rather humanity en masse even though many literary works continue to portray human-animal conflicts in terms of hunter-prey relations. The impact of human beings as a vast population is now that

of a geological force, as experts across the disciplines discuss when debating whether to call our era the “Anthropocene” or age of humankind (The International Commission on Stratigraphy will vote in 2016 whether to adopt, officially, the term). Erased in this understanding is the appreciation of different groups with different carbon footprints, energy uses, and dietary habits; diminished are gender, ethnic, continental, and regional differences. Though it is dangerously universalizing to think of human impact as one singular vast entity, humanity now faces the fact that we as a species are altering the climate, the composition of the atmosphere in which we reside, the surface soil layers across the entire planet, and, as per the focus of this essay, annihilating vast numbers of other species, so much so that scientists describe it this as the Earth’s sixth major extinction event. Elizabeth Kolbert describes the five previous events in *The Sixth Extinction*, noting: “The most recent – and famous – mass extinction came at the close of the Cretaceous period; it wiped out, in addition to the dinosaurs, the plesiosaurs, the mosasaurs, the ammonites, and the pterosaurs. [D.B.] Wake and [V.T.] Vredenburg argued that, based on extinction rates among amphibians, an event of a similarly catastrophic nature was currently under way” (Kolbert 2014, 6). The Anthropocene is a catastrophe of animal losses.

Nevertheless, threatening predators, parasites and plagues of insects, and pernicious beasts continue to play significant role in the human imaginary even as human threats to the well-being of innumerable other species have increased exponentially in the age of Anthropocene. While posthumanist animal studies and material ecocriticism sync human and other animals within the biosphere’s living interactions, our shared material reciprocity is currently skewing ever more towards the human threat to other species – and so to ourselves since we are also ecological beings dependent upon an entire network or, in Timothy Morton’s term, a “mesh” of relations without which we cannot survive. Our co-bacteria make up most of the DNA in our bodies and enable our digestive abilities. This human threat emerges with our expanding population and industrial use as a species necessitating ever more land and resources. This essay follows the animal studies projects such as Ursula Heise’s *Nach der Natur (After Nature)*, Donna Haraway’s *A Companion Species Manifesto*, and David Abram’s *Becoming Animal* that view human beings as a *species* interrelated and co-reliant upon other species, yet I have here an emphasis on conflicts. The confrontations often reveal just as much about our shared heritage and cohabitation as analyses of symbiosis.

Abram emphasizes the intertwined being of human and nonhuman so that “becoming animal” connotes becoming aware of how we have always been a part of this world and its many species. He notes:

By implying that each mountain, each cloud, each wolf or oak or hive of bees, is a distant variant of our own texture and pulse, and conversely, that our own sentient organism is itself a variant of these things – and intensification of fluctuation within the sensitive flesh of the world – such a way of speaking situates the human intellect back *within* the sensuous cosmos. (Abram 2010, 71)

Placing us in the sensuous cosmos, we find ourselves as we have always been: linked, enmeshed, co-embodied, and yet in conflict with our co-humans, our co-species, and ourselves. In this essay, I trace our circumstances within the sensuous cosmos, briefly evaluating five well-known German texts that present human-animal interactions in the Anthropocene's span, including works from Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832), Adalbert Stifter (1805-1868), Franz Kafka (1883-1924), Karen Duve (1961), and Ilija Trojanow (1965). These authors' animal portrayals, when read anew in light of the Anthropocene, unsettle our expectations of human and nonhuman threats. In Goethe's *Novella*, an escaped lion and tiger enter German forests and are subdued, whereas Stifter's *Brigitta* depicts a pastoral peace threatened by wolves. Kafka's *Metamorphosis* re-shapes David Abram's idea of "becoming animal", and Karen Duve's *Rain Novel* and Ilija Trojanow's *Melting Ice*, recent climate change novels, juxtapose the human threat to the world's climate with the onslaught of endless slugs and a biting penguin. Finally, the resurgence of wild boars in Berlin's urban space in the past few years renegotiates human, nonhuman, and posthuman boundaries in an urban ecology. Indeed, animals are now being recognized as our co-species with a new deep posthumanism based on ecological insights and the scientific knowledge of DNA and evolution simultaneous to the realization that we are in the middle of the Earth's sixth mass extinction event brought about by our activities. With this crisis in mind, we enter into the cultural imaginary in the Anthropocene with five literary examples depicting various engagements with human-animal conflicts.

Goethe writes at the beginning of the Anthropocene, at least as it is defined by the coiners of the terms, Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer. Central to his 1828 *Novella* is the escape of a circus tiger and lion into the mountainous German forestland. As the princess rides up the mountain with her new husband's uncle Friedrich and the besotted Honorio as her guard, she must flee from the apparent attack of the tiger: "[...] the provoked beast pursued his course straight towards the princess" (Goethe 1828, 272). Yet "the uneven ground, the sharp stones, seemed to hinder his progress. Honorio rode immediately behind him, and slowed down as he came alongside the beast" (273). Honorio shoots and kills the large cat,

kneeling down on the corpse and offering, to the princess's horror, the pelt as a sign of his adoration. But the crisis is not over; for one thing, the circus family arrives on the mountain and declares that both the tiger and lion were old and tame members of their family who posed no threat, but the lion is still loose. Additionally, the fire in the town below, the reason for the escape of the big cats, continues to burn. Uncle Friedrich, who had just been rather coincidentally recalling his dismay when facing a previous fire, must return below to battle this anthropogenic danger in the built environment of a newly market-driven economy. In fact, the danger in Goethe's tale appears to be not the escaped animals but rather the impending changes of modernity bringing new life to markets and the shifting of power away from the aristocracy. While Goethe was a wealthy middle-class citizen given his noble "von" only for his excellent writings, he expressed concern about the rapidity of change and the violence of revolutionary Europe; hence the lion and tiger are the aesthetic challenge to a world gone awry.

As the prince and his entourage return early from their hunt, drawn by the signs of smoke, they join the princess on the mountain, put Honorio on guard, and wait while the young circus boy charms the lion with music: "At last the flute could be heard again, the child, his eyes bright and pleased, emerged from the dark cavern, and behind him the lion, walking slowly and, as it seemed, with some difficulty" (Goethe 1828, 279). The boy sits down in the waning sunlight and removes a thorn from the lion's paw. In other words, Goethe's famous novella – known for its ambiguity, its shifting protagonists (*who* is the protagonist is one of the most frequently asked questions in the scholarship, as noted by Jane Brown), and its poetic, musical finale with biblical allusions to Daniel and the lions and St. Jerome removing the thorn from the lion's paw – symbolically addresses the political and economic upheavals of the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, the German "Restoration" or return to the rule of the aristocracy but in encoded terms of chaotic violence ending aesthetically with harmony. Yet I suggest here that we read this novella in light of its overt attention to the animals in addition to its hidden politics. Hence the return of the prince and the barely contained violence of the aristocratic hunters awaiting a chance to slaughter "large game" draw our attention to the fact that Goethe distracts from the human power struggles with animal interactions.

Thus the threat of the lion and tiger pale in the face of the more disturbingly unresolved dangers in the story: the fire as a symbol in Goethe's works for revolution and violent social change burns on, the bustling town so overfull as to make the princess quite wary denotes the increased monetary power of capitalism bringing radical change fed by war and profit

seeking, the prince's interrupted hunt brings implications of masculine violence and aristocratic traditions continuing despite emerging modernity, the crumbling ruin of the old castle is being taken over by trees (and the power of uncontained nature), and Honorio's undeclared yet obvious love for the newly married princess is left open-ended. Of all these dangers, only the situation with the lion and tiger is contained. The circus family arrives on the scene as if transported directly out of the Old Testament, embodying Goethe's orientalist bent for ancient Judaic texts as original and "natural" sources of creative inspiration (albeit with troubling Orientalism and a complex relation to Judaism as described by Herman Meyer and Karin Schutjer). As the keepers of the animals who treat them as part of the family, they also have the last word here, so that the middle-class capitalist conflict with the aristocracy and the burning town are overwritten by the boy singing to his lion: "The child fluted and sang on [...]" (Goethe 1928, 280). Nearly all the scholarly attention is to the aesthetic, biblical, political, economic, and biographical questions rather than the human-animal relationships here. Yet Goethe's *Novella*, written at the early phases of the Anthropocene, presents us with an important reversal: the threat is to the animals whose agencies are highlighted and framed by the human yet the looming social eruptions only seemingly disappear. The flames still burn and the aristocratic hunt is only interrupted. The lion and tiger stand in for Goethe's somewhat romantic sense of nature as a place of aesthetic beauty and natural systems in which even the wildest elements and uncontained energies follow specific laws, whereas, rather presciently, the impending drama of modernity is open-ended, urban, fiery, and pitted with unresolved power struggles of shifting economic structures.

While Goethe exoticizes the animals with orientalist and ancient harmonies in conflict with modern European cultural transformations, Stifter's 1847 *Brigitta* does the opposite presenting a conflict between the working dogs (as tools) and the wild and threatening wolves (as uncontained and dangerous nature). This novella follows the travels of a young German narrator visiting the Hungarian steppes where his old friend, the Major, rules over a large estate with farms, forests, and "animal husbandry". This traditional term applies since Stifter's tale portrays animals in a dichotomy: they either are part of the cultivated landscape tamed for human use, or else are threatening predators representing nature's explosive energies. As Sean Ireton notes, these explosions are always eventually subdued and the "soft law" of the world reasserts itself. "As to be expected in a tale by Stifter [...], nature undergoes a period of disarray before returning to its original wholesome condition" (Ireton 2011, 165). Indeed, the dark energies in Stifter mirror the human soul that occasionally erupts out of its bounds and

must be brought back into the fold, which in the case of *Brigitta* is a kind of “natureculture”. Stifter’s narrator tours the impressive estate and lands of the major and soon meets the equally impressive neighbor, the titular Brigitta, who turns out to be the major’s wife whom he abandoned years ago. They now live alongside each other, jointly cultivating the lands, and slowly growing reattached. Much of the text is dedicated to describing the land: undeveloped, it is “a barren level heath” (Stifter 1844, 94), a “gloomy waste” (95), and an “arid waste of stones” (98). That is, until the narrator reaches the Major’s lands, which are lushly and systematically organized:

The higher we went up the hill the more the valley opened up behind us and I saw that the wood beyond the white house was very large and stretched away to the mountains. Great avenues of trees came right down to the fields and one cultivated area after the other was revealed with crops which all seemed in excellent heart. I had never seen such long, plump and healthy-looking maize before and it was obviously most carefully attended, for there was no grass or weeds growing between its strong stems. (100)

The vineyards are as rich as the Rhineland and full of “luscious berries” (100). Natureculture is thoroughly cultivated here.

There is little action in the novella; the lengthy quote above is but one of many long descriptions of the two estates’ farms, fields, and domesticated animals as well as of the labor to make the soil fertile, the trees grow in avenues, and the sheep to be ever woolier. They also have high walled parks to keep the deer in and the wolves out, paid for by the profits of the maize crops and cattle breeding – all actions with profound ecological consequences. Finally, though, all of this harmony is disrupted by an animal attack: in the cold of approaching winter, the famished wolves attack Gustave, who is Brigitta’s, and it turns out, the Major’s, son. This is a typical strategy of Stifter: harmony reigns until briefly interrupted by a natural disaster whether storms, earthquakes, ice, floods, or wolves, and then a peaceful reconciliation recurs. In *Brigitta*, this event involves wolves. While out on a late autumn ride, the Major and the narrator hear pistols. They race their horses to the spot and witness a terrible scene: Gustave was under attack and seeking to “defend himself against a pack of fierce wolves” but was tiring (146). “He had killed two wolves with his pistols and slashed open a third with his blade as the beast sprang at his horse’s head” (146-47). In a brief stand-off, the Major sees the wolves “licking their slavering chops” while they “waited their opportunity. A slight movement, anything or nothing, and they would have sprung at him all together and the boy would have been lost” (147). Luckily the major arrives and shoots as many of the wolves as possible, firing “as though he were a wild animal himself” (147). It is not over, though, and they grab Gustave to rush home

to send out the wolfhounds to hunt down the remaining wolves since, as the narrator states, “At any moment they would attack again” (147). Barely rescued from the fangs of death, Gustave recovers, his parent reconcile, and the young German narrator decides to return home in the spring to begin a family of his own.

With modern ecological knowledge, this text has implications that conflict with Stifter’s clear message about wolves, dogs, and cultivation. The narrator comments on the fact that the cold winter approaching has led the wolves south, but neglects to mention that the vast enclosed parks where the deer are kept for human consumption exclude normal predation. The expansion of the estate swallowing land for agriculture is also relevant, as is the re-shaping of the forest, the draining of swamps to build roads, and the expansion of domesticated species across the lands. Such human impact alters the way that the “wild” animals behave, as Christina Eisenberg notes in *The Wolf’s Tooth*: deer usually live in a “landscape of fear, where your ability to survive depends on your ability to detect and escape predators as well as obtain food. The resulting stealth and fear dynamics – and the relationship between top predators and their prey – have profound ecological implications” (Eisenberg 2010, 38). Eisenberg, a wolf ecologist, demonstrates that deer living without wolves wreak serious havoc among trees by eating away all the bark at their head level since they must no longer be alert and constantly moving when the “landscape of fear” is gone, a point very similar to Aldo Leopold’s discussion of wolves in *A Sand County Almanac*. Hence the wolves’ presence alters deer behavior and the long-term health of the trees. Stifter’s *Brigitta* documents the relationship of wolves and deer but not of trees (which instead rely on human caretaking). Stifter, as is so typical with portrayals of top predators, posits wolves as an outside threat and a disruption of the system. Yet an ecological reading of *Brigitta* highlights how Stifter’s text nevertheless even if inadvertently intertwines the wolves, the deer enclosed in high walls, and the vast estates of human beings as agents connected in complex ecological interactions.

Kafka’s infamous 1916 story, the *Metamorphosis*, shifts the ecological setting from the outdoor lands to the interior space of an apartment. The human-nonhuman entanglements are much closer and more bodily here, when: “Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from unsettling dreams, he found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin” (Kafka 1916, 3). The description of his transformed body indicates that he is a large dung beetle; this situation requires vigorous new navigations of physical space and body. “He was lying on his back as he saw his vaulted brown belly, sectioned by arch-shaped ribs, to whose dome the cover, about to slide off completely, could barely cling. His many legs, pitifully thin compared

with the size of the rest of him, were waving helplessly before his eyes” (3). As one of the most famous authors of twentieth-century modernity, Kafka preempts Abram’s theme of “becoming animal”, albeit in a less idealistic and ecological form. His *Metamorphosis* has been read as a portrayal of the modern human alienated by the marketplace and inhuman bureaucracy, or as a documentation of the oppressive patriarchal society that damages individual subjectivity, warping it into grotesque forms of anguish as Ronald Gray’s volume of essays attests. This essay reconsiders Gregor’s fate through the lens of the Anthropocene: his metamorphosis is monstrous and he fails to thrive yet this process contains ironic possibilities for posthuman survival. If all of Kafka’s figures suffer from a paralyzing powerlessness in the face of modern bureaucratic, patriarchal, oppressive society, Gregor as insect or hybrid finally has some space for freedom and power to climb the walls and abandon his hated career.

Insects, in fact, are survivors even in the Anthropocene; they are not endangered. Beetles are notoriously plentiful and successful in all kinds of environments and changing circumstances. This is not to imply that Gregor’s fate is positive but rather that it is apt for the twentieth century in surprising ways beyond its highly acclaimed expression of damaged modern subjectivities. The ecological supremacy of insects in the biosphere means that poor Gregor is connected to significant power (of a kind unlikely to have been part of Kafka’s vision) yet that evokes an ecological perspective of modern society traveling via capitalism towards increasingly insect-like population numbers, physical association with waste and debris (in disposable consumerism), and a new sense of our bodily materiality.

Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, like many of his works, is undeniably associated with a horror of the body. I juxtapose this discomfort with the insights of the new materialisms which celebrate our bodily interconnections and immersions in ecological relations with the nonhuman as described in Jane Bennett’s *Vibrant Matter*, Stacy Alaimo’s concept of trans-corporeality in *Bodily Natures*, and Serpil Oppermann’s and Serenella Iovino’s delineation of *Material Ecocriticism*: “Seen in this light, every living creature, from humans to fungi, tells evolutionary stories of coexistence, interdependence, adaptation and hybridization, extinctions and survivals” (Iovino and Oppermann 2014, 7). Material ecocriticism’s celebration of our bodily participation in ecological enlivenment may sharply contrast with Kafka’s disturbingly gritty body in the *Metamorphosis* yet when these two materialities are bridged, the hybrid futures of the posthuman emerge. The ecological, in other words, can be disturbing. Alaimo analyses its toxic forms such as when the industrial waste products permeating our surroundings also infiltrate our bodies. As material ecocriticism also explains, our ecological

mesh is vibrantly agentic in both beautiful and disturbing possibilities, the latter of which dominates when Gregor Samsa's carcass is swept away by the maid at the end of the *Metamorphosis* and his parent's turn their gaze, in the final line of the story, to the "young body" of their daughter (Kafka 1916, 58). Kafka points towards an ominous materiality of insect(-like) futures in which the human and nonhuman blend in a war with ourselves and our bodies.

In Karen Duve's 1999 novel *Rain*, translated in 2002, the nonhuman and bodily also dominate, though this time in the form of an invading mass of slugs. When the protagonist Martina and her new husband Leon buy a rundown house in the former East (Germany) so that he can focus on his writing, things quickly go awry in the ceaseless rain. The house sits alongside a swamp that expands as the rain turns everything to mud and erodes the house's walls, paint, and finally even its foundation. After the house collapses into the mud, Leon runs out into the wetness wearing only his bathrobe until he falls face down and breathes in the mud, filling himself with it and expiring. In this, Leon's ultimate fate shares its horror with Gregor Samsa's fading into the dust and debris. Leon does try to overcome the forces of weather and mud up until the end of the novel, engaging in violent battle against the encroaching swamp's forces, particularly the onslaught of slugs. He picks buckets of them from the garden and drives them away from the house, trying to destroy them by smashing them under the tires, strewing them with salt, and digging ditches between the house and garden. Yet to no avail. His buckets of slugs spill in the house, and hordes more appear from the garden. He counts them as they slime towards him: ten at first sight, then: "[...] fifteen, eighteen. No, Nature was not charming. Nature was malevolent, undisciplined and dirty, and hostile on principle [...]. There were over twenty of them. Two were nibbling a mouldy mushroom with their fluted semicircular upper jaws, but they didn't fool Leon" (Duve 2002, 99). He knows they are coming for him. "He picked them up. He collected all of them within a radius of three meters around his garden. There weren't too many. Two handfuls. Leon threw them into the main ditch and went back to the house" (100). Yet this battle is not over. When Leon starts to enter the house, he sees another slug.

It was sitting on top of the folded plastic table. It was not brick-red or brown like the slugs he had just collected. It was yellowish-white and exuding milky slime. It had crawled up the side of the table and was now trying to reach the wall, which was not easy, since its wrinkled and much-elongated lower body seemed to be full of eggs. The white slug reared up like a performing animal in a circus, waved the front of its body about in the air, and spread its feelers in a "V" shape. "V" for Victory. (100)

Slugs, rain, and the swamp are as much the protagonists of this novel as are Martina and Leon. Martina defies the world, fruitlessly, by burning her father's Mercedes in the end of the novel, and poor Leon joins the swamp, thus enacting yet another possible variation of "becoming animal". As in Kafka, the nonhuman-human hybridity takes on an ominously bodily character. Yet the slugs' "Victory" seems almost a relief in face of the inept and unlovable figures lost and alienated by the modern world to which they fail to adapt and which they fail to change. Duve's slugs, one could say, embody aspects of what the Canadian marine biologist Daniel Pauly terms the age of the "Myxocene", an alternative name for the Anthropocene derived "from the Greek word for 'slime'" (Kolbert 2014, 107). In Duve's rain world, humans navigate rather badly, and without gaining much enlightenment, the slime emerging from the collusion of anthropogenic activities and wild weather.

In the final literary example, Ilija Trojanow's 2011 climate-change novel, *Melting Ice (Eistau)*, traces the life and death of Zeno Hintermeier, glaciologist who loses his heart to a melted glacier and his mind to the thought of the ongoing global ice melt. The novel has three story lines: first, the medley of voices documenting Zeno's final escape with an empty cruise ship through the Antarctic sea while the tourists are left behind to participate in a creative piece of performance art spelling out with their bodies an enormous human-based SOS on the ice (which thus begins as art and then becomes a real call for help); second, his final stint on the ship, now not just climate and ice lecturer but as the cruise director, a position which eventually inspires him to escape into the sea and to dive into the icy waters with a somewhat more poetic demise than both Leon's immersion into the swamp and Gregor's wasting away as a neglected dung beetle; and third, his life story beginning with his first visit as a boy into the Alps to see a glacier and leading to his dismay when his own glacier of choice, his partner, melts into a mere heap of rocks. So distraught is Zeno by climate change that he quits his job as a professor and retreats into a form of madness before joining the crew of the cruise ship in order to lecture tourists on the importance and pleasure of ice in an era of glacial melt.

During his final summer journey, Zeno attempts to guide the passengers in their encounters with glaciers, whales, and, most threateningly, penguins. As they visit the penguins' nesting ground, a penguin clashes with a certain stately old lady with the ominous name of Frau Morgentau (which translates as Mrs. Morning Dew, or more relevantly for the novel's title of *Melting Ice*, as Mrs. Morning Melt). She tries to save an egg but is bitten by an angry penguin mother who fails to see her behavior as altruistic. We learn that penguin bites can result in significant infections, and, indeed,

Mrs. Morgentau remains on board in a feverish coma when Zeno makes his grand escape. This moment of bird biting is the turning point in the novel for Zeno, who is held responsible. The threat of penguins must be read in two relevant contexts; first, as a satire of the many popular films depicting them as adorably anthropomorphized creatures; but also in relation to the human threat to the climate and concomitant melting. The penguins in the South, like the polar bears in the North, provide the alluring pictures of animals facing their demise in this sixth extinction event; in Trojanow's novel, though, the penguin bites back.

Zeno's final jump into the ocean immerses him in the water where he might theoretically be reunited with his beloved, melted glacier. Yet this act also adds nuance to the implications of the penguin attack. In short, Trojanow's climate change novel puts Zeno – and thus all of us as his fellow humans – literally with the penguins in the same melted ice water, or, as one says, in the “same boat”, at the end. The creative act of forming an SOS turns into a crisis with the tourists stranded by Zeno in a harsh environment and desperately awaiting rescue. This scenario serves as a metaphor for the people of Earth who engage in a seemingly lighthearted gesture that promises solutions without much effort or sacrifice, but then, as it turns out, are left facing much more profoundly difficult circumstances, helplessly calling for rescue by someone else.

Trojanow thus puts the human beings and bodies into circulation with the penguins, fish, and glaciers, much like Duve puts Leon and Martina into the rain and swamp only to be reduced to despair by slugs. Kafka's Gregor Samsa literally becomes an animal and is freed from responsibility but remains trapped in his room in an insect body that fails to thrive. Stifter's wolves embody the explosive violence of nature reflecting the darkness in the heart of “men” but also evoking ecological systems in which we co-exist however unaware we are of our interconnectedness. Finally, Goethe's *Novella* brings an exotic lion and tiger into the German forest thereby re-contextualizing the role of the returned hunters in contrast to the lion's biblical peacefulness, but also distracting from the real threat of the rapid, fiery changes of modernity that Goethe abhorred. While animal-human interactions are coded in these texts as nature's peace or nature's horror, the hybrid blends move us towards posthuman materialities.

As a final example of such hybrid forms, I mention the wild boars who have returned to the city of Berlin. Overrun by tuskers, this urban collective is seeking a wide variety of solutions including trapping and removing them, building fences (which they almost always overcome), immunizing them, celebrating and feeding them, and shooting them (see articles by Nelson 2012; Somaskanda 2014; Steinschek and Sauerbier 2015; and

Walker 2008). The threat of wild boars is primarily to lawns, though the mothers will attack people who approach their babies and several boars have attacked when chased by dogs or trapped in gardens. There are now so many wild boars in the city limits that Berlin is calling on volunteers to hunt them, as Nelson reported for the National Public Radio in 2012, and so we return, in terms of strategy, to Goethe's text with the hunters in *Novella* and Stifter's wolf hunt. The city of Berlin also offers more friendly advice to people encountering boars, including to "speak with them", as does Abram in *Becoming Animal*, and Goethe's circus family when they sing to the lion. Some Berliners, though, are siding with the boars (Walker 2008); some feed them, and some shoot them. One Berliner stated that,

"Even if they send me to prison instead, I won't stop [feeding them]". His loyalty to boars stems from an epiphany he had years ago, when he opened his car door and a large tusker he'd been feeding hopped in. "I thought he was going to bite my leg off", says Mr. Gericke. Instead, the boar put his head in Mr. Gericke's lap. "It was as if he was saying, 'Thank you'", Mr. Gericke says. Mr. Eggert, the hunter, thinks it's time Berlin's authorities got tough. He says: "We should just gather hunters at the these feeding sites, make the civilians stand aside, and feed the swine with lead". (Walker 2008)

In sum, this Berlin situation mirrors the ecological question of "threatening animals"; having altered or eradicated much of the world's forests, we are shocked when the occasional resilient and adaptive species enter into "our space". What does one do with such clever agents as the wild boars who "occupy the cities" in defiant acts of cohabitation, ignoring expectations for smooth green lawns by snuffling them into muddy turmoil? According to Berlin city wildlife officer and biologist Derk Ehlert as reported in the *Washington Times* in May 2011, "The boars have stopped following the rules" (Somaskanda 2011). Perhaps we might read this defiance of the boars (and the penguins) as an indication that our rules that have led us into the Anthropocene have become obsolete. The boars make clear, for example, that we might rethink our green lawns, churning them up as a space for food instead of having them serve as decorative water-gorging and pesticide-flavored turf. Furthermore, acknowledging both our bodily materiality and our inevitable cohabitation with urban animals might bringer greater attention to our joint occupation with other species of all places. To return to the title of this essay, the most significant threat lies not in our liaisons and conflicts with our fellow species but rather in our systems of rules, as the boars seem to imply, that ignore our enmeshed ecological circumstances with other beings and agencies in the Earth's biosphere composed of nonhuman and human alike.

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