

LANGUAGE, ANIMALITY, AND THE EMERGING MODERN  
IN SPENSER, BALDWIN, AND CERVANTES

by

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For our family: Gordon, Josephine, and The Cheat Szalacinski.

And in memory of Sylvia Szalacinski, who will always be family.

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## ABSTRACT

Language, Animality, and the Emerging Modern in Spenser, Baldwin, and Cervantes

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This study considers the ways in which notions of animality contribute to early modern discussions of what it means to be human. The talking animals in the selected works of Edmund Spenser (1552-1599), William Baldwin (c. 1518-1563), and Miguel Cervantes (1547-1616) are not the animals of beast fable. Spenser's, Baldwin's, and Cervantes' talking apes, foxes, cats, and dogs register a residual animality typical of medieval habits of mind, but compounded with an emerging, early modern notion of a sovereign animal that reveals complex networks of competing cultural forces. By using the genres of the medieval beast fable and the bestiary to contextualize the notion of the "beast" in these authors' works, the emerging permutations of a "novel" sense of animality can be traced, from Spenser's poem "Mother Hubberds Tale" (1591), which troubles conventions of the beast fable, through Baldwin's novel *Beware the Cat* (1570), which features two kingdoms—cat and human—functioning sovereignly, to Cervantes' *The Dialogue of the Dogs* (1613), which depicts complex partnerships between members of the canine and human worlds. Considering animality and how it bears on the concept of "human"—especially through techniques of satire and technologies of narrative framing—deepens our understanding of ontological and epistemological shifts in early modernity. Shifting shapes in the works by Spenser, Baldwin, and Cervantes mirror the larger philosophical, religious, and social metamorphoses that both arise from and further transform the changing nature of authority. Representations of animals in the period give humans the

opportunity to think about their own places in society, about animal as greater than “beast,” and reveal the contours of humanity’s reforming self-conceptualization.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Safeguarding Sovereignty: Animal Relations, Roles, and Representations in Early Modernity

In his humanist political work *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995), Giorgio Agamben explores the notion of humanity's implied sovereignty over "life." Agamben examines sovereignty using Carl Schmitt's definition of the sovereign being as the one who determines inclusion and exception. In other words, the ability to decide what is exceptional indicates the "sovereign."<sup>1</sup> Agamben considers the idea of *Homo Sacer*, the "sacred man," as the person who can be killed but not sacrificed. The two different Greek meanings for "life" are *zoe* and *bios*. According to Agamben, *zoe*—"life as such"—is the life common to all living beings (animal, man, and god), while *bios*—political life—is a way of living a life changed by institution.<sup>2</sup> Agamben asserts that *bios* has taken over *zoe*. To have *bios*, he claims, one must first have *zoe*, but the attainment of *bios* is at the abandonment of *zoe*: the movement from *zoe* to *bios* concludes in sacred life or *bare life*. Agamben goes on to consider the determination of exclusion between *zoe* and *bios*: "In Foucault's statement according to which man was,

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<sup>1</sup> For reading on the theory of the sovereign as the one who is able to determine the state of exception, see Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben criticizes the opposition between bio-political power and sovereign power that Michel Foucault develops at the end of *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, Vintage Books, 1978).

for Aristotle, a ‘living animal with the additional capacity for political existence,’ it is therefore precisely the meaning of this ‘additional capacity’ that must be understood as problematic” (7). Agamben explains the intention with which “a passage of the *Politics* situates the proper place of the *polis* in the transition from voice to language” (7).

Although other animals have voice to express pleasure and pain, only the human animal has the additional capacity of language, and of creating a political community. Agamben argues that the ideological construction of man as a political animal is based on oppositional binaries:

The fundamental categorical pair of Western politics is not that of friend/enemy but that of bare life/political existence, *zoe*/bios, exclusion/inclusion. There is politics because man is the living being who, in language, separates and opposes himself to his own bare life and, at the same time, maintains himself in relation to that bare life in an inclusive exclusion. (8)

In other words, through language, man separates and differs himself from his own “bare life” while maintaining a relationship to his *zoe* through his rejection of it. Although there is no distinct boundary between animal and man, humanity establishes itself through the “inclusive exclusion” of animality.<sup>3</sup>

In a subsequent work entitled *The Open: Man and Animal* (2002), Agamben moves from humanism into posthumanism, and deeper into the space of indistinction between what he titles *animalitas* and *humanitas*. To consider the division between

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<sup>3</sup> For further critique of the zoological and biological definitions of “life,” of *zoe* and *bios*, see Jacques Derrida, “Twelfth [Lecture] Session: March, 20, 2002,” trans. Geoffrey Bennington (*The Beast & the Sovereign*, ed. Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet, and Ginette Michaud [Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009]), 305-334.

animal and human in realms other than politics, such as religion, science, and metaphysics, is to consider man's displacement of self and the incongruity of his self-separation:

What is man, if he is always the place—and, at the same time, the result—of ceaseless divisions and caesurae? It is more urgent to work on these divisions, to ask in what way—within man—has man been separated from non-man, and the animal from the human, than it is to take positions on the great issues, on so-called human rights and values. And perhaps even the most luminous sphere of our relations with the divine depends, in some way, on that darker one which separates us from the animal. (16)

In Agamben's view, inner-identity occurs through separations. The human animal is what is left behind after its divisions from the nonhuman. What Agamben calls the "anthropological machine" establishes absolute distinction between man and animal, dividing even humans into sublevels of humanness. The slave, for example, too openly demonstrates "bare life," marking him distinctively less than human. Citing the eighteenth-century scientist Carl Linnaeus, the Father of Taxonomy, Agamben gives the clearest definition of the division system between human animal and animal: "man is the being which recognizes itself as such, that *man is the animal that must recognize itself as human to be human*" (26). Man becomes human not only through rationality, but also by elevating himself, through his rational processes, above animal. Agamben cites two possible products of the "machine," the humanization of the animal and the animalization of the human. To disrupt the machine, Agamben claims, we must reunite man and animal to "show the central emptiness, the hiatus that—within man—separates man and animal, and to risk ourselves in this emptiness" (92).

The present study explores changing representations of the animal in mid-sixteenth- to early seventeenth-century literary culture. A residual animality of the beast

fable typical of medieval habits of mind merges with and shifts into a novel sense of animality in early modernity that reveals complex cultural forces at work. Physical, linguistic, commercial, economic, social, and political changes in the organization and regulation of authority created a sense of deep disquiet. Concurrent themes of animality and mutability treated especially through the use of satire and techniques of narrative framing serve as foci for critical consideration of ontological and epistemological attitudes in early modernity. The representations of these changes in three talking beast tales reflect a burgeoning awareness of liminal boundaries between categories and groups, and of an animal that is more than a “beast.”

The *Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature* defines a beast epic or beast fable as a genre of animal tale that presents observations on human society. Beast fables and epics comprise “a series of linked stories grouped around animal characters. The beast epic often presents a satirical commentary about events related to the church or court. The work was novel in that it gave human qualities to beast characters” (52). Similarly, in animal exemplum literature, animals function as moral exemplars—as paragons of either vice or virtue—for the human audience to imitate or to recognize and avoid. In both genres of literature, the animal is an agent of the human, an illustration: if “animals spoke in the animal fable and the exemplum tradition, they were mouthpieces for human speech” (Beusterien 38). The creatures in the three works considered here do function as exemplars, but they emerge as more than the mouthpieces for human thought and morality of the tradition. Popular in humanist and post-humanist literature when discussing beast fables, the term “fabling beasts,” by its converse reformulation, suggests more to the beast fable than its critique of human morality through animal models.

In the beast fable, animals often perform as humans while humans often act as animals. More importantly, however, fabled animals manifest the gift of human language. The fabling of beasts calls into question language as the most valorized distinction between man and animal. Fabling beasts also explores the nature of animals as Other.<sup>4</sup> The definitive claim to the human, language marks the boundary between man and animal. In beast fables, talking animals often excel in moral nature above their human narrative counterparts. At times, though, the animals reflect human vice instead of virtue. Morally superior, early modern talking animals threatened man's position within socially embedded class boundaries.

Strategically critical in satire, personified animals magnify "animalistic" traits through their articulation of rational thought. In the facile use of language, animals in the tales give readers insight into their human counterparts, who themselves demonstrate human animalities. The question of what an animal is and how it is separate and lower in form to its human foils has been the crux upon which religion and art, society and

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<sup>4</sup> While used earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to refer to methodically distancing oneself, the terms "the Other" and "othering" as used in this study have their roots in Hegel's dialectic of the master and slave in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), juxtaposing the other to create an identity of the self. "The Other," or "the constitutive other," stands in contrast and inferior to "the One" and opposes "the Same." Using the process of "othering" to construct identity borders, perceived dualities such as male/female, us/them, human/animal, subject/object, and self/other concern, among other subjects, class, race, and gender.

politics, morality and law have been hung. But does the representation of an animal as a sort of automaton lacking consciousness, and, thus, morality, negate animalistic tendencies in human activity, or separate instincts from rationality; or does it rather give the humans, as Erica Fudge claims, “the opportunity to think about their own degraded places in society” (“A Left-Handed Blow” 7)? In Edmund Spenser’s narrative poem “Prosopopoia: *Or Mother Hubberds Tale*” (1591), the animals, namely “Ape” and “Fox,” provide encoded commentary on just how bestially “humans” behave. Ape and Fox freely disguise themselves, misrepresent their motives, and commit deceit by perverting what the culture understood as a natural hierarchical structure of society. In William Baldwin’s novel *Beware the Cat* (1553), cats provide commentary on just how bestially their “owners” behave in their private lives. In Miguel Cervantes’ novella *The Dialogue of the Dogs* (1613), the dogs present a remarkable analysis of vice and virtue through their conversations concerning their experiences living with people.

Satire as a mode and genre exposes human folly with the intention of moral direction. In satire, an alliance forms between author and reader in the observation of humanity’s folly, with the author’s scrutiny guiding the reader to virtue. In *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, William R. Jones notes that satire is distinctive as a mode for its engagement with its present historical situation:

Because satire criticizes the contemp[orary] world, the satirist is frequently compelled to employ an array of self-protective structures, including a range of personae, apology, allegory, and claims of innocent comedic intent; however, such gestures are belied by the satirist's bold assertion that his work alone offers “antidotes to [the] pestilential sins” of a morally diseased society.<sup>5</sup>

In early modern culture, satire was viewed as threatening the security of the state, often breaking from and mocking literary and social conventions and styles. Ignored or defied “hierarchy, order, decorum and the [legal] status of outsiders” (Perry 33) within satirical texts threatened the social structure, subversively calling into question beliefs concerning superiority and exclusivity. Although they hide behind devices and techniques such as personae and allegory, in satire, these veiled threats have often caught the attention of authorities and have led to a work’s censorship, as was the case with Spenser’s “Mother Hubberds Tale.”

In *Renaissance Hybrids*, Gary Schmidt notes that the generic understanding of satire during the early modern period held it to be related to early Greek satyr plays, although early in the seventeenth century, the term was etymologically proven to be related “not to the satyr but to the Roman *satura*, meaning mixture or farrago” (121-2). Schmidt states that association of satire with satyr nonetheless remained culturally powerful and constant. William R. Jones notes satire’s hybridity, seen in the common Renaissance spelling: satyre. By having an uncivilized “satyr”—that is, the generic form itself—criticize, this hybrid creature’s “utterances were not to be trammelled by the exigencies of refined court language” (Schmidt 122). With themes of espionage,

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<sup>5</sup> For further study on satire, see William R. Jones, “Satire” (*The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012]).

subversion, secrets, and deceits that parodied the ruling class and condemned politics, early modern literature often embraced risky, and risqué, issues thinly cloaked as fiction.<sup>6</sup> “Mother Hubberds Tale,” *Beware the Cat*, and *The Dialogue of the Dogs* work as coded messages and through veiled representations by disguising identities and affiliations, implicating philosophies and politics of the time. Schmidt explains the anxieties of “social undifferentiation” during the early modern period: by highlighting “the decline of a hierarchical society in which each rung of the social ladder is clearly demarcated,” these early modern texts “dwell apprehensively upon the dangerous liminal state in which nobles and commoners *cannot* be so easily distinguished from one another” (120). In these treacherous fables, the messages sent to the reader via animal dialogue perform political critique and moral and philosophical analyses but also reveal human animality and the hurdles it presents for mankind’s self-conceptualization in early modernity. These tales of Spenser, Baldwin, and Cervantes significantly challenged prevailing ideologies by using oppositional voices, calling especially into question patriarchal authority along with human superiority over animals.

By using animal satires, an author often desires to provoke a conservative response to the satirized issue. Talking animals are often fashioned as debauched and subversive. Satirical “animal acts,” as Jennifer Ham and Matthew Senior call them, in

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<sup>6</sup> For further discussion on satirical duplicity in early modern fiction, see Robert W. Maslen, “Chapter 2: Fictions and their Commentaries before 1570” (*Elizabethan Fictions: Espionage, Counter-Espionage, and the Duplicity of Fiction in Early Elizabethan Prose Narratives* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997] 68-113).

which animals and humans share performative space and consciousness, rely on speech. “Zoomorphism” uses animal form for literary symbolism; more specifically, it analyzes human behavior refracted through animal behavior, and told through voices oppositional to received authority. Zoomorphism in the sixteenth century probed the borders of human and animal: within the social structures reproduced in talking animal texts, “the representation of figures of authority as talking animals often is undignified and derisory or, at best, encourages a sense of intimacy that is inimical to authority” (Perry 33). A fundamental issue and source of uncertainty of being human in the sixteenth century was status. Where did each individual fit within social, political, “ethnic,” or religious hierarchical arrangements? Where did humans fit within larger ontological hierarchies? How has history determined these arrangements, drawn boundary lines, and were they perceived by sixteenth-century readers as absolute? Speech marked the boundary of humanity in the sixteenth century, and “dissent ... requires speech” (Perry 34).

Etienne Benson’s essay “Animal Writes” discusses the problem of animal “speech.” The true intent behind the question of whether animals can speak is “whether nonhuman entities can exceed and confound human intentions, the answer to which must surely be affirmative” (6). The three works examined in this study are not autobiographies of their animal characters reflecting on what it means to be a beast more largely, but rather tales that reveal the place of the “beast” in being “human.” They are exceptional during the early modern era for their suggestion that animals have full reasoning natures and meaningful existences separate and distinct from people. The three works record shifts in historical relationships between human and animal and human attitudes toward animals. Such movements ultimately are recorded only from the human

viewpoint. In texts that fashion “talking beasts,” man gives voice and perspective to an animal impersonating the human; authors speak for animal. Fudge’s “A Left-Handed Blow” points out that “a history of animals...is impossible” (6), as the only record of animal is that written by man and from the perspective of man. Bestiaries, beast fables, and animal epics are profoundly fables of human, not of beast. This study both employs and puts aside what Etienne Benson calls a “temporal consciousness” (6) and Fudge calls a “concept of historical periodization” (6).

Certain treatments of the problem of animal language reduce it to one of epistemology (Cummings 179). What separates the belief that animals do not have language from opinion? Does linguistic competence require knowledge of language? Is there some sort of language distinctive to humans? If so, what constitutes a language? In “Pliny’s Literate Elephant and the Idea of Animal Language in Renaissance Thought,” Brian Cummings considers what characteristics, when put together, constitute a language and which, if any, animals can perform:

Is it articulation that makes language, or is it sounds as words? Is it convention, or words as symbols? Is it syntax, putting words into different orders, in the right place? Or does language depend on a criterion of the beliefs or thoughts a speaker has? (Or is it the other way around?) Or is language language only when the speaker intends a meaning and also intends the intention to be recognized? Which of these can a parrot do, which can a raven, which can a chimpanzee? Can an elephant do any of them? (178-9)

In other words, humans continually refashion their assessment of what constitutes language so that language remains exclusively human.<sup>7</sup> But the matter of endorsing a

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<sup>7</sup> On animal thinking and language, see Gary L. Francione, “Taking Sentience Seriously”

(*Animals as Persons: Essays on the Abolition of Animal Exploitation* [New York:

language is not an issue of animal language but of human language. The animals in question are tested for speaking a human language, not their own. In “Mother Hubbard’s Tale,” for example, the animals can understand and produce human speech, wear human clothes and are mistaken for being human, thus making it a poem of “personation” (Dutton 351), of disguises and façades that blur boundaries and call their existence, as their ability divide and order, into question. The vain drive to demarcate the human from animal species relies on reasoning and language, but reason and language make difference.

To fully appreciate the reading of animals in these three early modern works, a brief review of basic ontological and epistemological shifts occurring contemporaneously will be helpful. The “Scientific Revolution” designates the period between Nicholas Copernicus and Isaac Newton, roughly 1550-1700. With it came respective major shifts in beliefs. Such philosophical revolutions began with astronomy, such as Copernicus’ popularizing the heliocentric model of the solar system in *On the Revolutions of Heavenly Spheres* (1543). (The heliocentric model was later proven correct by Galileo’s telescope in 1609.) Similar developments were occurring in anatomy and physiology.

Andreas Vesalius’ *The Fabric of the Human Body* (1543), commonly known as *Fabrica*,  


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 Columbia University Press, 2009]), 129-147; Robert C. Jones, *Thought, Language, and Sentience: The Moral Implications for Nonhuman Animals* (Los Angeles: California State University Press, 1998); Lynn Sharpe, *Creatures Like Us?* (Charlottesville: Imprint Academic, 2005); and Shigeru Watanabe and Ludwig Huber, “Animal Logics: Decisions in the Absence of Human Language” (*Animal Cognition* 9.4 [2006]): 235-245.

was the first human anatomy textbook based upon human rather than animal cadavers. Discoveries concerning the universe without and the universe within inaugurated a new tradition of observation and comparison instead of a reliance on received authority, as in medieval scholasticism. The Scientific Revolution ends with “Newtonian Synthesis”: the shift from a fixed, hierarchical cosmos to an infinite, harmonized universe. Certain discoveries in the “natural philosophies” bear on the study of animality in early modern culture.

The Scientific Revolution of the early modern era required realistic representations of animals for consideration and examination. Curiosity cabinets and ill-maintained menageries—animal collections for private observational use—came into vogue, while the social and economic conversions of the period led to the portrayal in art of the commodified relationship humans had with animals: “beginning around 1500, animals are usually represented in art as dead, dying or waiting for human consumption, visual depictions that are strikingly and overwhelmingly morbid” (Kalof 79). As in the Middle Ages, the social attitudes of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries led to animals being used, and symbolized, in ceremonies meant to shame those who transgressed against societal norms, especially those animals aligned with power and honor such as the horse or ram. Such ceremonies included riding skimmington, charivaris, and hanging horns on the church pews or horses’ necks to expose and humiliate a scolding, unfaithful, or abusive wife and the cuckolded or weak husband

unable to control her.<sup>8</sup> These rituals were used to dishonor and ridicule those who contravened cultural traditions and institutions, but animalizing tendencies in these rituals meant “to shame unruly women were expressions of increasing male insecurity as women became more independent” (Kalof 93). Paintings during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries expressed animal suffering and human coldness to it. The uneasiness caused by the Reformation, the vulnerabilities of the permeable hierarchical social structure and the violence that was commonplace, required an outlet in which to express such consequential anxieties.

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<sup>8</sup> The *OED* defines a charivaris as “A serenade of ‘rough music’, with kettles, pans, tea-trays, and the like, used in France, in mockery and derision of incongruous or unpopular marriages, and of unpopular persons generally; hence a confused, discordant medley of sounds; a babel of noise.” As seen in William Hogarth’s *Hudibras and Skimmington* (1725), to “ride the skimmington,” is defined by the *OED* as holding “a ludicrous procession, formerly common in villages and country districts, usually intended to bring ridicule or odium upon a woman or her husband in cases where the one was unfaithful to, or ill-treated, the other.” For more information concerning the history of riding the skimmington, see B. Howard Cunnington, “‘A Skimmington’ in 1618” (*Folklore* 41.3 [1930]): 287-290; and D. E. Underdown, “The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England” *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*. Ed. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 116-136.

Disguised in the frivolities of amusement, animals were tortured as an expression of human vulnerability. Horses, bears, lions, bulls, and even monkeys were baited and beaten; cock-fights were held; cats were burned alive, roasted on spits; dogs were massacred to control the plague and to assert and sustain social order (excepting, of course, for pet dogs, the anthropomorphized cousin of the unregulated and precarious itinerant or homeless dog). Any apparent “sovereignty” in animals, according to Linda Kalof, necessitated dominance by humans:

The slaughters had a cultural logic: roaming animals (particularly dogs) were singled out for slaughter because they were visible sources of disorder, out of control and unsanitary, but more importantly, they were without a master and not visibly and physically fixed in a social relationship. Everyone was required to have a parent or master in a culture centered on the household, and a greatly feared menace was a masterless individual woman or man. (Kalof 88)

In other words, unrestricted animals were often slaughtered to maintain command over social order. The concerns of social violence, disorder, and death were, perhaps, assuaged with the regulating, tormenting, and torturing of animals. Creatures seen as lesser and more helpless than their human assailants remind humans of their own vulnerabilities. By striking out against animals, humans shield themselves “against the anxiety engendered by the knowledge that animals share our creaturely nature” (Beatson 620).

Such cruelty performed against animals still held value as amusement well into the Enlightenment, as seen in Hogarth’s “Four Stages of Cruelty” (1751).<sup>9</sup> Although

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<sup>9</sup> *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, a series of lithographs meant to morally instruct their audience, portrays the ethical phases in the fictional life of Tom Nero. The exemplary prints show Nero as a young, poor boy, torturing animals, and illustrates his cruelty

there are many examples, the most famous of such cruelties occurred in France in the 1730s. Termed “The Great Cat Massacre” by Robert Darnton, apprentice printers in Paris held mock trials and hanged all nearby cats that could be collected, particularly those living with and cherished by their master printers in the print houses. This event manifests an association of print master with pet cat. Such acts as the cat massacre bore the mark of repressed class anger—workers striking back against the bourgeois owners of industry (Darnton 78-9). In such instances of animal cruelty, the torturers and spectators were able to assert dominance over the animals. People who may not have had rights or liberties in their daily lives could, at once, force control over another creature and occupy the oppressor’s power position, taking on the role of the abusive authority who had, in a sense, tortured them.

Much like the recorded mass-slayings of dogs and cats, animal-baiting has widely been associated with social inequality and domination, especially bear baiting in the Bear Garden arena. Fudge claims that “The Bear Garden emerges as a place of immense contradictions: the place which reveals the difference between the species also reveals

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progressing to murdering a human. The final print shows the deceased Nero dissected in an anatomy seminar, demonstrating that cruelty to animals progresses to brutality against humans. For further reading on Hogarth’s lithographs, see the reproduced 1833 printing of a work written by the artist, William Hogarth, *Anecdotes of William Hogarth* (Charleston: BiblioBazaar, 2008). For analysis of Hogarth’s prints, see James A. Steintrager, “Monstrous Appearances: Hogarth’s ‘Four Stages of Cruelty’ and the Paradox of Inhumanity (*The Eighteenth Century* 42.1 [2001]): 59-82.

the sameness. Baiting is the most explicit and spectacular site of anthropocentrism in the early modern period but it is also the most explicit and spectacular site of humanity's confusion about itself" (*Perceiving Animals* 19). These animals are at once like humans and not like humans, and to "watch a baiting, to enact anthropocentrism, is to reveal, not the stability of species status, but the animal that lurks beneath the surface" of the human (*Perceiving Animals* 15).

Even though widespread cultural views held animals as a domestic commodity, there were animal advocates, the most recognized being Michel de Montaigne. In his 1580 *Essays*, Montaigne asserts that animals not only have feelings and consciousness, they are also capable of sympathetic reciprocity, and could communicate across species.

How does [man] know by the Strength of his Understanding, the Secret and internal Motions of Animals? And from what Comparison betwixt them and us, does he conclude the Stupidity he attributes to them? When I play with my Cat, who knows whether I do not make her more sport, than she makes me? We mutually divert one another with our Play. If I have my hour to begin, or to refuse, she also has hers...The defect that hinders Communication betwixt them and us, why may it not be on our part, as well as theirs? 'Tis yet to determine, where the Fault lyes, that we understand not one another; for we understand them no more, than they do us, and by the same reason may think us to be Beasts, as we think them. (THE CONTENTS OF THE CHAPTERS OF THE Second Book. Chap. 12. Apology for Raimond de Sebonde, 159)<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> All references to Montaigne's *Essays of Michael* are taken from the 1685 translated printing: Michel de Montaigne, *Essays of Michael, seigneur de Montaigne in three books, with marginal notes and quotations of the cited authors, and an account of the author's life / new rendered into English by Charles Cotton, Esq.* (*Early English Books Online*, 1685).

Appealingly, Montaigne uses his accounts to get at the heart of that which man feels he holds exclusively—capacities such as emotions, imagination, intelligence and reason, and the abilities to learn, hold beliefs, and communicate—to show that humans are not exceptional. Montaigne’s considerations radically challenge the attitudes of the medieval bestiaries that were still popular at the time and that expounded through allusion and allegory to direct the behaviors of men, a point that I develop more fully in Chapter I, “‘So Well They Shifted’: Medieval and Early Modern Animality in Spenser’s ‘Mother Hubberds Tale.’” In “The Second Book,” Montaigne addresses animal language and communication between species directly: “We can only guess whose fault it is that we cannot understand each other: for we do not understand them any more than they understand us. They may reckon us to be brute beasts for the same reason that we reckon them to be so.” In his essay “On Cruelty,” Montaigne explains that after realizing the similitude of man and animal, man must drop the claim of absolute dominion over all creatures. The Enlightenment brought debates on the relative similarities and dissimilarities between humans and animals, with Montaigne proposing that “Animals his Fellows and Companions” were, perhaps, more moral than humans. But Montaigne was not only fighting an uneasy society but an uphill battle, as René Descartes’ 1637 *Discourse of a Method for the Well Guiding of Reason* stood to show that even almost fifty years after “Mother Hubberds Tale,” philosophy on this subject had not much changed.

Descartes’ “beast-machine” doctrine is advanced in one of the most famous philosophical formulations of the seventeenth century: “I think, therefore I am” (19). In *The Discourse on Method*, Descartes claims that if a machine having the same organs and

shape of a human were to exist, humans would be able to recognize the non-humanity of the machine in its inability to “declare [its] thoughts to others” (32). Such a feat as reasoned testimony could be accomplished only through a shared symbolic language, which, he claimed, neither animals nor machines possessed. Animals cannot “testify...to the fact that they are thinking about what they are saying...and this attests not merely to the fact that beasts have less reason than men but that they have none at all” (32).

Without their testimony, the notion of animals’ consciousness is in jeopardy. Descartes goes on to state that if animals could speak, “they could make themselves as well understood by us as they are by their fellow creatures” (33), thus acknowledging a shared “understanding” between creatures if not between people and animals. According to Descartes, because they cannot or choose not to make themselves understood in a human language, animals are less than human.

Animals were not only tortured for amusement but also for “progress.” During the Enlightenment, a rise in experimental science led to widespread vivisection, as animals were believed to possess neither rational nor moral thought—not even consciousness—only that “animals exist to serve” (Beatson 619). Descartes explains in Book V of *Discourse* that animals are machines without “reason”:

although there are divers creatures which express more industry then we in some one of their actions; yet we may well perceive, that the same shew none at all in many others: So that what they do better then we, proves not at all that they have reason; for by that reckoning they would have more then any of us, and would do better in all other things; but rather, that they have none at all, and that its Nature onely which works in them according to the disposition of their organs. As wee see a Clock, which is onely composed of wheels and springs, can reckon the hours, and measure the times more exactly then we can with all our prudence.

Cartesian philosophy stated that animals “act not with knowledge, but onely by the disposition of their organs” (Book V, *Discourse*), that animals were nothing more than mechanical bodies which humans too possessed, but that only humans possessed minds or souls and could, thus, spiritually transcend animality. One can trace a trajectory from the belief that “animals” could not feel pain, could not possess “God-given reason,” to justify dissection of live animals in the name of scientific progress.

Cartesian philosophy also argued against Montaigne’s proto-empirical notion of animals’ abilities to communicate. Descartes suggests that even a machine could be built which would announce words without concomitant ability to articulate an argument. Animals, Descartes asserts, may make noises as a corporeal defense but cannot reason and thus cannot speak:

[Animals] could never have the use of speech, nor of other signes in framing it, as we have, to declare our thoughts to others: for we may well conceive, that a Machine may be so made, that it may utter words, and even some proper to the corporal actions, which may cause some change in its organs; as if we touch it in some part, and it should ask what we would say; or so as it might cry out that one hurts it, and the like: but not that they can diversifie them to answer sensibly to all what shall be spoken in its presence, as the dullest men may do. (Book V, *Discourse*)

As humans are the “rational beasts” of the earth, Descartes claims, they do not rely alone on the reflexive instincts of animals—programmed automata rationalizing nothing.

People possess the human body, housing the human brain, built more complexly by a God who reveres those in His own image over His other creatures. Fudge, discussing sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century scientific thought, explains that “Knowledge is both a gift from God and proof of God’s gift: to know the self is to know God. But the conscience is not available to all; the animal does not possess one and the exclusivity of

conscience is another form of assurance: the assurance of the separation from the beast” (*Perceiving Animals* 48). By recognizing the nature of their own behavior and that of humans, the animals in the writings of Spenser, Baldwin, and Cervantes are fully conscience of their own state. Their ability to reason on their existence moves these creatures past the position of figurative representation. These animals are profound.

From the examples of Montaigne and Descartes, one can see not only the polarity of the two positions on “animalitus” but also the continuity of the debates regarding animal intelligence, their abilities to reason, and the nature of human obligations concerning animals, ongoing since Platonic philosophy. In “The Renaissance Transformation of Animal Meaning,” Benjamin Arbel notes the Renaissance’s growing sensibilities toward animals:

During the Middle Ages as well, people of various classes, especially those who lived in close contact with animals, experienced similar feelings about and impressions from animal behavior. But only during the Renaissance did a cultural milieu develop that enabled educated people, particularly laymen with humanistic education, to give vent to such thoughts and feelings in writing. (75)

In other words, although the interest in animality began early with those who worked closest with them, a focused philosophical attention to animals only truly began to manifest in scholarly writing during the Renaissance. Arbel claims that the public debate considering the nature and intelligence of animals and the morality of animal exploitation “could take place during the Renaissance because lay society gained sufficient strength and self-confidence to voice unconventional ideas, whether directly or in the form of parodies and paradoxes” (75). In *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages*, Joyce Salisbury states that the absolute philosophical separatism of man and animal during the Middle Ages began to weaken as hybridity and anthropomorphic tales gained popularity.

These tales laid the foundations for a radical shift in the awareness and assessment of animality in the Renaissance.

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, composed around 1486 and first printed in 1496, a work well-read and sourced into the late seventeenth century, declares that a human is *parvus mundus*, a microcosm that, while a part of the world, can also convey the whole of creation and the divine. Neo-Platonic Christianity states that humans have a midpoint rank between the physical and spiritual world in The Great Chain of Being. Humans are unique based on the qualities that separate them from both animal and angel. A full century before Spenser, Baldwin, and Cervantes, Pico testifies that, by using understanding and imagination, humans have the ability within themselves to move closer to animal or closer to God but also to become animal or God. One's intentions—good or evil, as defined by Christianity—determine a person's ability to transform into a higher or lower being. This ability to transform differs from other philosophies of lateral growth such as Machiavelli's. While Christian theology locates humans in status above animals, Pico's *Oration* made fashionable the philosophical proposal that all men have the ability within themselves to rise above one's station, whether social (ethical) or physical. People possess the freedom to choose their destiny and develop themselves into supreme beings. Although he speaks of humans' mutability—of humans to angels and humans to animals—animals are not afforded the same transformable freedom. Pico dislocates man within the hierarchy of beings by granting man the ability to change.

During the early modern period, a literary work's artistic weight, or its generic value, was often based on the primary characters' social status. Characters of lower

status were assigned as being appropriate to minor comic works or to appearing as characters in minor comic roles. The three works employed in this study upset such oversimplification. “Mother Hubberds Tale,” *Beware the Cat*, and *The Dialogue of the Dogs* use the narrative technique of embedding, a method by which the narrator of a story is also a character within the story he or she tells. Gérard Genette terms this second degree narration “metadiegetic” (228). In “Mother Hubberds Tale,” the ill old man inserts himself into his tale. In *Beware the Cat*, both Master Streamer and Baldwin are embedded within the story. And in *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, the framing narrator Campuzano also makes an appearance in the dogs’ dialogue. All three works illustrate Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of *heteroglossia*. According to Bakhtin’s theory, members of differing social groups speak differently, speech is a double-voiced discourse, and “all languages of heteroglossia ... are specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words” (291-2). The three tales deepen the significance and implications of Bakhtin’s notion by an interspecies mixing of “glossia.”

Apart from the human narrators, the major animal characters in all three of these works have languages of their own. The animals are bilingual and coexist with humans, with some even using social registers, from top to bottom, to disguise themselves and move up in social rank. Some of the creaturely speakers use language to deceive, while others use it to conceal. Bakhtin asserts that “the ideological becoming of a human being...is the process of selectively assimilating the words of others” (341). In all three works, the animals use human language to express how they perceive the human and also how they perceive themselves as both similar to and different from their human counterparts. In the cases of *Beware the Cat* and *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, the animals

meditate on how their creaturely morals align (or do not) with man's. On the one hand, in both of these works, the animals' moral codes allow them to remain superior by rising above their current material circumstances, underscoring the freedom to choose and change for the better, reminiscent of the "dignity of man" in Pico's *Oration*. On the other hand, in "Mother Hubberds Tale," the slippery slope of corruption's potential to spiral downward is drawn through the antics of Ape and Fox.

Chapter I, "'So well they shifted': Medieval and Early Modern Animality in Spenser's 'Mother Hubberds Tale,'" begins with observations concerning medieval bestiaries, which provide a context for considering how Spenser makes use of beast fable representatives of human vice to warn against emerging permeability of social boundaries. "Mother Hubberds Tale" performs well as a model demonstrating the period's residual medievalism concerning attitudes toward the "animal." However, through Ape and Fox's resourceful gymnastics of social ascension, the reader recognizes a move toward empowering animals as sovereign subjects. "Mother Hubberds Tale" is a multi-framed narrative concerning the emerging penetrability of social boundaries, an exemplary tale within a tale within a tale, told by Mother Hubbard to an ill old man who then recounts her tale to the reader. The story of Fox and Ape's rise in rank through deception and disguise heralds an understanding of proper human behavior through animals' vice and virtue. Because it also deals with animal dialogue during the period (these two animals know and use human language to appropriate humanness) the tale asks what demarcates humans as human and from humans. If these two animals are proficiently able to deceive humans as to their natures, what boundary between human and animal remains? Although chronologically Spenser's poem (an Elizabethan tale)

follows Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* (Edwardian), "Mother Hubberds Tale" remains closer to the beast fable tradition and, for this reason, precedes the chapter addressing Baldwin's work.

Chapter II, "'He called me 'knave' in his language': The Sovereign Animal in Baldwin's *Beware the Cat*," investigates how Baldwin manipulates generic expectations for talking animals in beast fable. Through an elaborate feline social structure, Baldwin reveals an emergent notion of "sovereign" animality that bears upon larger political controversies in mid-Tudor England. *Beware the Cat* is complexly multi-framed in narrative technique. Its main story is framed by the author who frames, and glosses, Master Streamer's account of overhearing a cat recounting her autobiography to exonerate herself in a hearing before a cat court. Unlike *The Dialogue of the Dogs* (Chapter III), *Beware the Cat* makes clear that animal morality differs from that of human. These cats reason with strong intelligence and discernment. They have their own feline religion, and above all animals considered here—human and otherwise—allow a scrupulous forensic logic to dictate law and order. These cats possess not only human language but also their own language, although they choose not to engage humans unless necessary.

Chapter III, "'We don't just speak, we talk': Complex Partnerships of Social Interaction in Cervantes' *The Dialogue of the Dogs*," examines Cervantes' use of the dogs' self-conscious exercise of virtuous actions more plainly to identify them with a privileged class by having the enfranchised animals in an inclusive partnership with man. *The Dialogue of the Dogs* is also a multi-framed narrative, a tale enclosed within *The Deceitful Marriage*, the surrounding tale which focuses the readers' attention on social

passing. Infiltrators challenge the tenets of honor and blood purity in the Spanish caste system. Berganza, the recounting dog who could possibly be a witch-transmuted human, chooses not to pursue “passing” after witnessing the corrupt morals of deceitful humans he partners with. Berganza suggests that moral principles are more powerful than the vessels that contain them.

Chapter IV, ““You... Will Finally See Yourselves as You Desire”: Hybridity, Mutability, Liminality, Animal, and Human in the Early Modern Period,” explores the idea of shape-shifting as metaphor for social metamorphosis. In “Mother Hubbard’s Tale,” Ape and Fox use clothing, posture, and language to shape-shift, pass, and rise in social ranking. *Beware the Cat* and *The Dialogue of the Dogs* employ shape-shifting, witches and werewolves, along with the transmuting powers of alchemy and natural sciences to examine human anxieties concerning social change, the instability of power, and human imperfections and vulnerabilities. By examining these different presentations of metamorphosis, one can see that all three works address the anxiety of whether form or substance defines one’s place in the world, but also ultimately call into question what it means to be human.

How humans wish to perceive themselves compels the shaping of animals and others, like witches and werewolves, to meet conditions their distinction requires. This study explores the liminal boundaries humans have set and reset to safeguard their sovereignty, especially in the face of a burgeoning mutability of social boundaries in early modernity. It is also the study of the unstable self changing freely through fluid roles and disguises. Written during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the three works examined are both products of a residual medievalism concerning animality

and a radical revisioning of anthropocentrism. Having animals speak human language erodes the long-held demarcation between animal and sovereign animal, what Cary Wolfe explains simply as “no language, no subjectivity” (*Zoontologies* xvi). The three works are, in a way, the biographies of their fictional animal characters, expressing the political life of what it means to be an ape, a fox, a cat, or a dog in early modernity. These three early modern texts, taken together, are exceptional for suggesting that their animal characters have reasoning natures, and full lives separate and distinct from the human, making them more than the beasts of beast fable. This study thereby provides a first look at Spenser, Baldwin, and Cervantes through the critical lens of the animal other, or the *other* other, as Jacques Derrida has suggested we see the “beast.”

## CHAPTER I

### “So Well They Shifted”: Medieval and Early Modern Animality in Spenser’s “Mother Hubberds Tale”

When looking in Spenser, Baldwin, and Cervantes at the significance of animals, their language, and their actions, one must first explore early modern culture to discover the roles animals played especially in ideologies employing fable and satire. Through the looking glass of animality and creaturliness, “Mother Hubberds Tale,” *Beware the Cat*, and *The Dialogue of the Dogs* become less about how animals were viewed in relation to humans than about early modern humanness. Further, these tales address how changing representations of the animal reflect ontological and epistemological shifts regarding animals’ roles in early modern society. Relationships to and with others in early modern social hierarchies, including especially the boundaries between them, both drove and led how humans perceived animals.

The writers and illustrators of bestiaries infused society’s values and preoccupations into representations of animals. The bestiaries help reveal medieval habits of mind residual in the early modern period. Animal metaphors of humanity in bestiaries reveal an appreciation of stability. The animals do not mutate or change, mirroring a longed for moral stability—and fears of instability—in the larger society. Bestiaries historically register the partitions between animal species and between animals and humans. In *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature*, Dorothy Yamamoto notes that social and cultural matters permeate the reading of animals’ bodies and natures:

It is *because* there is concern about the politics of the family and conventions of child-rearing that birds and fish are imaged [as principled, altruistic parents]...The bodies of the creatures are manipulated so that they ‘speak’ a chosen message—one has only to think of birds of prey, which feed the oldest chick preferentially and allow it to harry its siblings to death, or of coots, which reduce the number of their offspring through selective bullying or starvation, to realize that there is no *intrinsic* connection between birds and good parenting. (24)

In other words, the highly stylized animals within the bestiaries reflect the concerns and desires of their historical moment, not, in fact, some authentic animal. In bestiaries, animals represent received formulations of specific vices and virtues, foxes being one of a few animals to play out a much larger metaphorical commission.<sup>1</sup> The main focus of the present study is to view how the bodies of animals were understood by early modern society, the genre of the bestiary deepening our understanding of how they were to be “read.”

By fabling beasts, humans require animals to be more than they are, and in one more instance commodify animals by manipulating their “nature.” Bestiaries, like beast

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<sup>1</sup> Although there is a generic relationship between Spenser’s fox and the earlier German and French story cycle of *Raynarde* (variously spelled *Reynard*, *Renard*, or *Renart*) the *Fox* (Spenser names his fox “Reynold”), much scholarship has already been devoted to connecting the work within the tradition. For the *Reynard* cycle and its connection to Spenser’s fox in “Mother Hubberds Tale,” see Edwin Greenlaw, “The Sources of Spenser’s ‘Mother Hubberd’s Tale’” (*Modern Philology* 2.3 [1905]): 411-432; and Kenneth Varty, *Reynard the Fox: Social Engagement and Cultural Metamorphoses in the Beast Epic from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003).

fables, are not the stories of animal natures but of a conception of human nature. The bestiary is a traditional compendium of all known animals—real and marvelous, cataloging even trees and stones as well as man and Creation—and complete with inventories of attributes, etymological analyses of names, known history and temperament, and Christian moral lessons to be learned from them. By using a bestiary as an authoritative reference, human and animal comparisons can often be read in the cataloged attributes and moralities. Arnold Clayton Henderson notes that the explicit moralizations in bestiaries and beast fables allow readers to identify original medieval meanings: “beast literature shows the universal process [of searching for meaning] so clearly because it places the interpretations and their underlying logic so explicitly on the page” (46).

Multiple and variant bestiaries written and illustrated from as early as the second century through the early modern period demonstrate the Christian arrangement of the natural world through an animal inventory. Although no two bestiaries were exactly the same, much information found within them is reproduced from earlier bestiaries. The Aberdeen Bestiary Project (Aberdeen University Library MS 24) at Aberdeen University is an online digitized manuscript of a Latin bestiary written and illustrated in England around 1200. Created nearly four-hundred years earlier than the writings of Spenser, Baldwin, and Cervantes, this bestiary maintained a contemporary influence and is judged as one of the best of its genre.

Utilization of a bestiary as a lens to examine early modern animality draws attention to residual habits of the medieval mind concerning the boundaries between classes of animals and the relations of beasts to other beasts and also to man, God, and

Satan. Recourse to the Aberdeen Bestiary reveals to the reader of “Mother Hubberds Tale,” *Beware the Cat*, and *The Dialogue of the Dogs* the culturally understood “natures” of the fox and the ape, cats, and dogs. Folios 12v and 13r discuss the ape as a creature similar to both man and the devil:

Apes are called *simie* in Latin because the similarity between their mentality and that of humans is felt to be great. Apes are keenly aware of the elements; they rejoice when the moon is new and are sad when it wanes. A characteristic of the ape is that when a mother bears twins, she loves one and despises the other. If it ever happens that she is pursued by hunters, she carries the one she loves before her in her arms and the one she detests on her shoulders. But when she is tired of going upright, she deliberately drops the one she loves and reluctantly carries the one she hates. The ape does not have a tail. The Devil has the form of an ape, with a head but no tail. Although every part of the ape is foul, its rear parts are disgusting and horrid enough. The Devil began as an angel in heaven. But inside he was a hypocrite and a deceiver, and he lost his tail, because he will perish totally at the end, just as the apostle says: 'The Lord shall consume him with the spirit of his mouth.' (2 Thessalonians, 2:8) The name *symia* is Greek, meaning, 'flattened nostrils'. Hence we call the ape *symia* because they have compressed nostrils and a hideous face, its creases foully expanding and contracting like a bellows; although she-goats also have a flattened nose. The apes called *circopetici* have tails. This alone distinguishes them from the apes mentioned earlier. *Cenophali* are numbered among the apes. They occur in great numbers in parts of Ethiopia. They leap wildly and bite fiercely. They are never so tame, that their ferocity does not increase. Sphynxes are also included among apes. They have shaggy hair on their arms and are easily taught to forget their wild nature.<sup>2</sup>

An ape was seen as like the devil, a “hypocrite and a deceiver,” much like Ape in Spenser’s poem “Mother Hubberds Tale,” but is also seen as being flanked by both

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<sup>2</sup> All translations of the Aberdeen Bestiary are from the online text translated by Morton Gauld and Colin McLaren. See Aberdeen MSS 24. University of Aberdeen Library’s Online *Aberdeen Bestiary Project*, Special Collections Department.

human and devil in physical similarity. Folio 16r discusses the fox as cunning and deceitful and, too, like the devil:

The word *vulpis*, fox, is, so to say, *volupis*. For it is fleet-footed and never runs in a straight line but twists and turns. It is a clever, crafty animal. When it is hungry and can find nothing to eat, it rolls itself in red earth so that it seems to be stained with blood, lies on the ground and holds its breath, so that it seems scarcely alive. When birds see that it is not breathing, that it is flecked with blood and that its tongue is sticking out of its mouth, they think that it is dead and descend to perch on it. Thus it seizes them and devours them. The Devil is of a similar nature. For to all who live by the flesh he represents himself as dead until he has them in his gullet and punishes them. But to spiritual men, living in the faith, he is truly dead and reduced to nothing. Those who wish to do the Devil's work will die, as the apostle says: 'For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' (Romans, 8:13) And David says: 'They shall go into the lower parts of the earth: they shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes.' (Psalms, 63:9-10)

The fox of the bestiaries, like Spenser's Fox, is able to disguise his body to gain access to his wants. In *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature*, Yamamoto dedicates an entire chapter to the fox alone, describing the links between representations of foxes and their pungent excrement and offensive bodily smell. The fox's coat color is compared with the red-haired Judas; its nighttime thieving of domesticated fowl, and its associations with the underworld, with the devil. By these types of formulations, the fox was culturally constructed as an evil and deceitful creature:

The fox is therefore an animal of the periphery which is at the same time inextricably meshed in the dealings of everyday life. It is this paradox which provides the key to its significance. For the fox, the arch-deceiver, becomes a way of articulating the presence of deceit, of false-seeing, within the various institutions of society...How to recognize deceit, the debased reality beneath the outward dress, was a problem that continually exercised the medieval imagination. If certain gestures or accoutrements confirmed one in a particular social role or social order—the penitent’s kneeling position, the monk’s tonsure, the knight’s emblazoned shield, perhaps even the housewife’s distaff—what would happen if a person simply copied those gestures or adopted those accoutrements: in effect crafted themselves a body to fit? Learning how to “read” a deceitful body was a difficult skill. The fox’s body might be thought of as a primer in that art, for in both stories and pictures there is always a point at which it is fully disclosed to the reader or viewer, so that its true foxiness becomes apparent. (Yamamoto 58-9)

Through the fox’s culturally understood artful slyness, the bestiary moralizes the use of deceit, to gain entry into different social orders, for instance. The fox is not only a “peripheral” animal but one intimate in the rural lives of early English peoples. In Spenser’s “Mother Hubbard Tale,” the themes of deception accentuate anxieties concerning social mutability. Through their mastering of language, Fox and Ape are able to copy and craft details of social station and spin stories, convincing others to trust them in their performances.

The “sovereign” nature of cats led them to be perceived as liberated and independent. A sovereign creature—whether human or animal—uncontrollable by religion, the court, or society, makes for a dangerous beast. Notably, the Aberdeen Bestiary makes no mention of the private, seemingly aloof nature of cats. Given the familiarity of cats as pets in Europe for centuries and their independent natures, one wonders why there is no real reference to their “sovereignty” in the symbolism of cats in such a large compendium as the Aberdeen Bestiary. The entry in the bestiary concerning cats is brief, with Folio 23v simply mentioning cats as “cunning” creatures:

The cat is called *musio*, mouse-catcher, because it is the enemy of mice. It is commonly called *catus*, cat, from *captura*, the act of catching. Others say it gets the name from *capto*, because it catches mice with its sharp eyes. For it has such piercing sight that it overcomes the dark of night with the gleam of light from its eyes. As a result, the Greek word *catus* means sharp, or cunning.

That Baldwin names his main cat character “Mouse-slayer” suggests the enduring influence of formulations of the bestiary tradition in the sixteenth century. In Baldwin’s manipulations of the conventions, however, her name points to his cat’s cunning abilities at shadowing and judgmentally catching with her sharp observations creatures unaware of her, including humans.

The Aberdeen Bestiary describes “dogs,” again in reference to etymology, in folios 18r, 18v, 19r, 19v, 20r, and 20v. Dogs, seen as more symbolically human-like than other animals described in the bestiary, are noted for their intelligence, alertness, and devotion to man:

The Latin name for the dog, *canis*, seems to have a Greek origin. For in Greek it is called *cenos*, although some think that it is called after the musical sound, *canor*, of its barking, because when it howls, it is also said to sing, *canere*. No creature is more intelligent than the dog, for dogs have more understanding than other animals; they alone recognise their names and love their masters. There are many kinds of dogs: some track down the wild beasts of the forests to catch them; others by their vigilance guard flocks of sheep from the attacks of wolves; others as watch-dogs in the home guard the property of their masters lest it be stolen by thieves at night and sacrifice their lives for their master; they willingly go after game with their master; they guard his body even when he is dead and do not leave it. Finally, their nature is that they cannot exist without man. (18r)

The bestiary’s emphasis on dogs in their association with guarding “flocks of sheep” is a characterization both Spenser and Cervantes foreground in their works as well. Naming gives human linguistic representation to an animal, and along with the noun, human connotations involving value judgments. Giving a name suggests a process of mastery, as represented by Adam’s ordering his world in Genesis. As Erica Fudge maintains, “It is

as if the animals had no identity, no presence without Adam, and their inherent powerlessness, perhaps most easily described as their inability to name themselves, has persisted in human relations with animals. An animal cannot think, we argue, and therefore it is down to us to think for it” (*Animal* 8). Names, like language itself, are instruments of power and rule. According to the Aberdeen Bestiary, not only are dogs intelligent enough to recognize the names given to them by men, but by their very “nature,” cannot exist without them.

The extreme subjectivity of this position is suggested by Cervantes. Most of Berganza’s masters in *The Dialogue of the Dogs* name him human names, suggesting the projection of “humanization” onto him. None gives him the name “Berganza,” with which he christens himself. Being able to recognize one’s name implies a shared consciousness, and self-naming implies an even more advanced awareness. In Cervantes’ work, Berganza too talks of the loyal nature of dogs and performs with great care all the mentioned stations in the Aberdeen Bestiary—livestock herder and guard, watchdog, tracker and hunter (although of criminals rather than game), and guardian of the dead. By his autonomy he slips collars when relationships he seeks with humans become too discouraging. Berganza expounds on the close bonds formed between dogs and masters recorded in history, emphasizing their virtue, heroism, and loyalty, qualities the bestiaries note that dogs possess:

We read that dogs have such great love for their masters, as when King Garamantes was caught by his enemies and taken into captivity, two hundred dogs went in formation through enemy lines and led him back from exile, fighting off those who resisted them. When Jason [Licio] was killed, his dog rejected food and died of starvation. The dog of King Lysimachus threw itself in the flame when its master's funeral pyre was lit and was consumed by fire along with him. When Apius and Junius Pictinius were consuls, a dog that could not be driven away from its master, who had been condemned, accompanied him to prison; when, soon afterwards, he was executed, it followed him, howling. When the people of Rome, out of pity, caused it to be fed, it carried the food to its dead master's mouth. Finally, when its master's corpse was thrown into the Tiber, the dog swam to it and tried to keep it from sinking. (18v)

The Aberdeen Bestiary's representation of dogs' relationships with man presents Berganza's perception of himself with a master worthy of self-sacrifice. The Aberdeen Bestiary refers to a dog's life as "temperate." The idea of a dog as self-restrained implies a moderate temperament and appetite, but Cervantes' Berganza is both ethically exemplary and morally problematic. Contained within one animal is the ability for avaricious and benevolent behavior:

A dog's tongue, licking a wound, heals it. A dog's way of life is said to be wholly temperate. A puppy's tongue is generally a cure for internal injuries. It is characteristic of a dog that it returns to its vomit and eats it again. If a dog swims across a river carrying a piece of meat or anything of that sort in its mouth, and sees its shadow, it opens its mouth and in hastening to seize the other piece of meat, it loses the one it was carrying. (19v)

Dropping the meat it has to seize the meat of its shadow and dutifully remaining at his dead master's side reveals the complex, contradictory nature of dogs. The qualities of the dog's complexity recurs in the self-control Berganza shows when dutifully carrying the butcher's meat in a basket while abstaining from eating the meat himself.

The Aberdeen Bestiary affirms, "Often, also, when a murder has been committed, dogs have produced clear evidence of the guilt of the accused, with the result that their unspoken testimony is for the most part believed" (19r). Berganza repeatedly finds fault

with his masters' moralities, although he is too affected and offended to produce evidence that would bear on reforming the human world. That the humans do not listen to him communicating without human language is deeply distressing. His sorrow concerning human behavior slowly overwhelms his benevolent nature. The Aberdeen Bestiary recognizes that "In some ways preachers are like dogs: by their admonitions and righteous ways they are always driving off the ambushes laid by the Devil, lest he seize and carry off God's treasure - Christian souls. As the dog's tongue, licking a wound, heals it, the wounds of sinners, laid bare in confession, are cleansed by the correction of the priest" (19v). Indeed, in some ways dogs resemble preachers in *The Dialogue of the Dogs*. Although they "don't want to seem like some know-it-all preacher" (37) as one notes in Cervantes' work, Berganza and Scipio sermonize on the downfall of humanity from the righteous path. It is often Berganza's goal to "cleanse by correction" people's offenses by using his tongue in one way or another. Although he has believed that he could raise his voice to reveal a sound argument, he testifies only in barks and is accordingly punished severely for making too much noise. Having been dismissed, Berganza retreats to Resurrection Hospital, where, for at least one night, he gains the use of human speech, an object he ardently desired. But instead of using his speech to redeem humanity, he instead tells his autobiographical story to Scipio.

The Aberdeen Bestiary transmits commonplaces of Christian morality through its inventory of dog characteristics. As a dog is to his master, a sinner is to his Maker, asserts the Aberdeen Bestiary. With each master he seeks out, Berganza hopes to find one righteous enough to serve completely, establishing through his bond with humans a connection reproducing humanity's with God here on earth. The "masters" (personified

virtues) according to the Aberdeen Bestiary include an open heart, an honest confession, and a sincere contrition, and accompanying them a soul shrouded in purity:

Whenever a sinner wishes to please his maker, it is necessary and advantageous for him to seek out three spiritual masters, who will hire three spiritual servants with three spiritual gifts in order to reconcile the man with his maker. The masters and their servants with the three gifts are in this order: the first servant is a tearful heart; the second, true confession; the third, sincere repentance. Their masters are the love of God, righteous desire and good deeds. The spiritual gifts are cleanliness of body and mind, purity of speech, and perseverance in good works ...

But if the soul, once healed, is left without a decent covering, how, in the heavenly court where it must be presented, will it be presented before its maker? ... The first garment in which the soul should be clad is purity. For no soul can be presented in the court of heaven, which now or in the future is not pure. Other garments are piety, charity and other virtues in which it should be attired. (20r-20v)

The three spiritual “masters” listed in the Aberdeen Bestiary are “love of God, righteous desire and good deeds” (20r). Berganza practices all of these qualities, although his good deeds are not wholly noble according to human mores. The spiritual servants are “a tearful heart,” “true confession,” and “sincere repentance,” all of which Berganza commands, except repentance, for he believes he has done no wrong. The dialogue can be read as the “true confession” of Berganza’s life, although he is not seeking repentance. Berganza openly declares what he believes to be the truth, which is a confession of faith.

By using the genres of medieval beast fable and bestiary as context within which to examine the three works, the progression of an emerging early modern sense of animality can be traced from Spenser’s poem “Mother Hubberds Tale,” reminiscent of the beast fable, through Baldwin’s novel *Beware the Cat* which features two sovereign kingdoms—animal and human—functioning in parallel worlds with little

interdependence, to Cervantes' *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, a novella depicting complex partnerships between members of the animal and human realms.

During the early modern period, a residual use of the animality of the beast fable couples with lingering notions of animal natures derived from medieval bestiaries in a way that serves to reveal a network of competing cultural forces. Of the three works considered in this study, Edmund Spenser's "Mother Hubberds Tale" (1591) most closely embodies the medieval habits of mind concerning the boundaries between animal and human. "Mother Hubberds Tale" functions as a medieval estate satire in its socio-political commentary concerning order. Estate satire criticizes the failures of each estate—church, nobility, merchant class, and peasantry—to live up to their divinely appointed social roles. Working with the medieval tradition of estate satire, Spenser demonstrates the vulnerability of shifting "states" and makes an appeal for their stable return.

In the poem "Mother Hubberds Tale," Spenser uses beast fable representatives of human vice to warn against the emerging permeability of social boundaries. Through Ape's and Fox's resourceful social climbing, Spenser's readers recognize the porosity of the hierarchical social structures in the era. Further, Spenser's tale contributes to burgeoning ontological and epistemological debates. If the humans within this fable do not possess enough discernment to distinguish themselves from an ape or a fox, how could an animal substantiate the distinction of what it means to be "human"? The seamless and measured transition from the stable medieval fabled animal as a mouthpiece for human Christian moral commentary to unruly, newly made animals in Spenser's poem moves unsettlingly toward a thesis on animal sovereignty.

“Mother Hubberds Tale” is the story of Fox and Ape, two crafty and deceitful friends who decide to go on a social climbing pilgrimage. The tale is divided into four main sections, each including an encounter and an opportunity for social advancement that mimicks what Amanda Jones calls the “brokerage function of the Elizabethan patronage system” (26). In the first section (ll. 25-339), Ape disguises himself as a wounded and unfortunate soldier with Fox as his dog. Preying on the goodness of a poor farmer, they are helpfully hired as shepherd and sheepdog to tend a flock of sheep, which they subsequently ravage to nothing within the course of half a year. Consequently, they run away to escape punishment. In the second section (ll. 340-574), having evaded the farmer of the former episode, they meet an ignorant, self-serving priest and gain entrance into the service of the church as clerics, with Fox disguised as a priest and Ape as his parish-clerk. Another scandal ensues, and in the course of fleeing once more, the friends meet Mule who speaks glowingly of court life. In the third section (ll. 576-942), Ape dresses as a courtier with Fox as his servant. The two attend court and again manipulate and mislead for profit the humans they encounter before they are again discovered and must take flight. After each experience, Fox and Ape either get away or are only slightly punished; they continue to climb ever higher in the social hierarchy, the consequences of doing so being an affront to moral and natural rightness. “So well they shifted” (l. 659) through the political organization of man that Ape and Fox eventually relocate their efforts to the animal kingdom. In the fourth section (ll. 943-1384), Ape and Fox come across a sleeping Lion in the forest, decide to drug him, and steal, not only his scepter and crown, but also his very skin to use as a disguise. Ape masquerades as the Lion King and vows Fox his intimate counselor. After their harsh monarchical rule in the animal

kingdom, Jove sends Mercury to awaken Lion, the true king. This time, the friends are pursued for justice, and while Fox escapes “uncased” (l. 1380), Ape has his ears and tail cropped as punishment, making him, perplexingly, even more able to pass for human in future endeavors (which surely will occur).

The first section situates the beasts’ activities in a pastoral setting, with the farmer sending Ape and Fox to tend his sheep. Pastoral themes were often used in the era to call attention to government abuses, particularly by contrasting the country to a corrupt court, as Spenser did in such other poems as “Colin Clouts Come Home Againe” (1595). But the satirical nature of “Mother Hubberds Tale” imposes itself on the pastoral mode, smothering the rural ideal through derisive and hybrid combinations. The beasts do not concern themselves with pastoral tasks and duties but eat their way through the flock in their care, predictably showing “the greed of those in care of others and the ease with which they deceive simple folk” (Bjorvand 184). Ape and Fox’s devouring of the flock satirizes “the idea that degrees of good government can be discussed rationally at all in the face of beastly appetite” (Jones 27). In pastoral relations, a herd’s balance between reproduction and slaughter must be maintained by human interventions. Ape and Fox, however, contradict the reciprocal interdependence of shepherds with their flocks. Because the sheep are without language, Ape and Fox deliberately differentiate themselves from the other animals and build a political relationship with the flock based on exploitation, dominance, and consumption. Ape and Fox take pleasure in their predatory offensives against the flock they should be tending:

For not a lambe of all their flockes supply  
 Had they to shew: but ever as they bred,  
 They slue them, and upon their flesh fed:  
 For that disguised Dog lov'd blood to spill,  
 And drew the wicked Shepheard to his will.  
 So twixt them both they not a lambkin left,  
 And when lambes fail'd the old sheepes lives they reft. (ll. 316-322)

Ape and Fox assault the pastoral state, with Spenser mingling the ambiguous pronouns *they* and *them* to signify a sort of cannibalism taking place (Brown 192). The relationship between shepherd and flock becomes perverted, a fellowship founded on simple trust of those in charge. Ape and Fox have transgressed the boundaries of the human they are impersonating but regress to their animal natures to prey on the sheep. Similarly, in parish and court, the second and third sections respectively, Ape and Fox “exploit the fragilities of each state . . . [and] the society in which they operate reacts passively to their self-promotive efforts” (Brown 176). Ape and Fox take hungry advantage of their positions to feed upon their “flocks,” a thinly veiled critique of institutional corruption in both Elizabethan church and court.

In the first section of the poem, the innocent farmer sees enough humanity in the soldier-costumed Ape to “pitie” (l. 251) him. The disguise of clothing is effective enough to fool the simple farmer, who employs him. But the farmer also sees enough dog in Fox to believe Fox actually to be a dog, even though Fox wore no disguise and noised no dog “language.” In essence, Ape’s informing the farmer of Fox’s dog nature disguises Fox: “Thereto right well this Curdog by my coste / (Meaning the Foxe)” (ll. 294-295). By stating an untruth as fact, masking it with costume or even just words, all the human characters in the poem resign to trust without substantive proof. Whether in pasture, parish, or court, and even when evidence is placed in their hands, as with the priest in the

second section, the humans in this tale are easily influenced by appearances. And strangely, when eventually they are found out and must flee, Ape and Fox gain from their mobility and ability to successfully impersonate their way to ever higher levels of society.

The complete title to Spenser's "Mother Hubberds Tale" is "Prosopopeia: or Mother Hubberds Tale." The first of the two titles for the poem, "*Prosopopoeia*," is derived from the ancient Greek words *prosopon* meaning "face or person" and *poeia* meaning "making or creating." The *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* defines "prosopopoeia" as "A rhetorical device by which an imaginary, absent, or dead person is represented as speaking or acting; the introduction of a pretended speaker; an instance of this." The term also indicates "A figure of speech by which an inanimate object or abstract thing is represented as a person, or as having personal characteristics, esp[ecially] the power to think or speak." The title *Prosopopoeia* places Ape and Fox in the roles of rhetorical devices, as animals using human language and having human characteristics. Clear in the second title as well, "*Mother Hubberds Tale*," the poem's intention was to showcase and critique the technique of impersonation. Superficially, such a combined title would stand to call attention to how Spenser uses his satirical animal fable to place language in the mouths of animals. But the two titles, combined with the conjunction "*or*," is greater than the sum of its parts. Spenser's earliest typeset of this work "Imprinted for VVilliam Ponsonbie" was set thus:

*Prosopopoeia.*  
*Or*  
*Mother Hubberds Tale.*

Each title ends with a period (although later printings used a comma after the first title). “*Or*” marks each part as equally significant and interchangeable.<sup>3</sup> Each title, standing on its own, is singularly important: the rhetorical device of the talking beast fable and the titled fable itself told by an old, nearly absent woman. The “*Or*” between the two spatially independent titles suggests their quality of transposition, a shiftiness and doubleness much like the subject of the satire itself.

This fable is told through two voices: the principal narrator who is recounting the story of Ape and Fox told to him on his sick bed by Mother Hubberd, and Mother Hubberd herself, whose “matter,” the primary narrator tells us, is “meane withal” (l. 44). The *OED* defines the title’s use of “mother” as “a respectful (or mock-respectful) form of address, esp[ecially] to one of little or no means or education.” Mother Hubberd is, as Kate Giglio puts it, “a hard-working but formally unlearned woman who had an informal license to cross the threshold of humble cottages and noble houses alike, pleasuring and mending minds with her chatter as she worked on ailing bodies” (13). In essence, Spenser’s second frame is that of an “old wives’ tale,” also known as an “old wives’ fable.” From the primary narrator’s dismissive statements regarding her in framing the “mother” as narrator, the reader is likewise reluctant to give any real credit to her tale:

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<sup>3</sup> The text is reproduced from the 1591 edition title page: Edmund Spenser, “Prosopopoia. or Mother Hubberds tale. Dedicated to the right Honorable the Ladie Compton and Mountegle.” (*Early English Books Online*, 1591).

Amongst the rest a good old woman was,  
 Hight Mother *Hubberd*, who did farre surpass  
 The rest in honest mirth, that seem'd her well:  
 She when her turne was come her tale to tell,  
 Tolde of a strange adventure, that betided  
 Betwixt the Foxe and th'Ape by him misguided;  
 The which for that my sense it greatly pleased,  
 All were my spirite heavie and diseased,  
 Ile write in termes, as she the same did say,  
 So well as I her words remember may.  
 No Muses aide me needs hereto to call;  
 Base is the style, and matter meane withal. (ll. 33-44)

The lack of credibility is due, in part, to the second narrator being an unlettered woman.

The primary narrator discounts the female oral tradition as “pleasant tales” (l. 26) told to “waste the weary houres” (l. 27). The introduction of feminine rhyme at ll. 37-38

(“betided” / “misguided”) augments the narrator’s strategies of trivializing the mother’s

“strange” contribution to the tale-telling session. But the first, notably male, narrator

states that he does not stray from this “mother’s” words, reproducing them exactly. He

carefully notes at the end of his narrative account his precise transcription, except in the

event the reader find fault with the tale:

So Mother *Hubberd* her discourse did end:  
 Which pardon me, if I amisse have pend,  
 For weake was my remembrance it to hold,  
 And bad her tongue that it so bluntly tolde. (ll. 1385-1388)

Mother Hubberd is the original poet. Critics such as Edwin Greenlaw have pointed out

that the simple rhyme Spenser employs represents the unembellished style and language

of what was traditionally thought of as an “old wives’ tale” (“Appendix IV” 593-5). The

primary narrator, though, ensures his difference from Mother Hubberd as narrator when

he evokes the Muses, notably by negative invocation (“No Muses aide me needs hereto to call” [l. 43]). Here he displays his humanist education against her “base” and “meane”

style (l. 44), and illustrates the low status of her knowledge and wisdom, and thus, to him, of her intelligence. By distinguishing himself from Mother Hubberd, the first narrator demonstrates his “natural” superiority as a learned man (Giglio 18). Such contentions are important when looking not only at Mother Hubberd’s fable itself but the role language plays in oppression in her tale.

This is a twice humbled form of narration, for its proposition is cloaked as an animal fable told badly. By protectively using the folk genre of a talking animal satire told through a lowly old woman, even naming the story as hers instead of after the male primary narrator or the tale’s main characters, Spenser, and his main narrator, signal to contemporary readers that such a tale is not dangerously critical in method nor subject. In fact, had Mother Hubberd told stories of ladies, knights, faeries, or even giants, as had some of the other sick bed visitors, one might judge her as aspiring to a higher class and possibly place more import on the social implications of her tale. But she tells a genre of beast fable, historically a most unpretentious form, allowed certain liberties—the “fool” of literary genre—because unclimblingly lower than others. But the gravity of Spenser’s satirical tale, Greenlaw maintains, of what even contemporaries understood as his bitter court experiences (“The Sources” 1), was, perhaps intentionally, too shallowly hidden behind the “base” (l. 44) style of this double shield. The disillusioned voice of the primary narrator of “Mother Hubberds Tale” led to the scandalous calling in of Spenser’s volume, *Complaints*, in 1591, a post-publication censorship in which unsold copies were seized and impounded by authorities. In a later dedication to the *Fowre Hymnes* (1596), Spenser brazenly alluded to his disregard for the imposed censorship of his work (Hadfield 532). While the other *Complaints* were reissued in 1611, “Mother Hubberds

Tale” was not integrated back into the work until 1612 (Dutton 350-1), over twenty years after its initial censorship.

The importance and implications of the written word in reference to issues of social power, position, and authority are not lost within the poem. Fox and Ape demonstrate throughout their journeys how reading and writing can be used to deceive and manipulate others. Literacy grants the two the access required to rise higher in society during the course of their increasingly grander attempts at social “passing.” The element of class and literacy is mirrored in the literacy differences in the story’s framing narrators: the oral “old wives’ tale,” “tolde” by Mother Hubbard (l. 1387), and the “pend” (l. 1386) tale of the primary narrator. In the first section, Ape and Fox “devise / A pasport” (l. 195-6) required for wanderers and beggars issued by Elizabethan authorities. Through their power of literacy, they are able to forge a document which licenses them to be beggars. Coupled with their costumes, they retain this ability to fashion and to forge their identities and to manipulate and mistreat others throughout their adventures.

The first to fall prey to Ape and Fox is “a simple husbandman” (l. 228) who is unable to check their passports and pays for his inability to read “character”—neither word nor complexion. Through this vulnerability, the husbandman courts misfortune, and his entire flock is eaten up by Ape and Fox. The two “forg’d another [document of identity], as for Clerkes booke-redd” (l. 358) and met their second victim, an unlettered priest, easily fooled:

Which when the Priest beheld, he vew'd it nere,  
 As if therein some text he studying it were,  
 But little els (God wote) could therof skill:  
 For read he could not evidence, nor will,  
 Ne tell a written word, ne write a letter,  
 Ne make one title worse, ne make one better:  
 Of such deep learning little had he neede,  
 Ne yet of Latine, ne of Greeke, that breede  
 Doubts mongst Divines, and difference of texts,  
 From whence arise diversitie of sects,  
 And hatefull heresies, of God abhor'd:  
 But this good Sir did not follow the plaine word. (ll. 379-390)

From this unlettered priest, however, and notably, Fox and Ape learn more strategies in the arts of deception. The illiteracy of the priest necessitates his recourse to “illegitimate” means of acquiring a position.<sup>4</sup> To gain a patron, they must adopt proper clothing and dress the part:

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<sup>4</sup> In early modern England, greater mobility within the social hierarchy led to some citizens seeking higher stations. Others aspired to appear as belonging to a higher status, beginning a succession of imitation through dress. As clothing identified and classified individuals to their “rightful” place, fabricated statuses led to boundary disorder in the social hierarchy. With permission from the court, Parliament passed sumptuary laws which regulated the cloths and styles available to each social class, legally preserving distinct appearances based on status. For further reading on sumptuary laws, see “The briefe content of certayne actes of Parliament agaynst thinordiante use of apparel” (*Early English Books Online* [1559]); Alan Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions: A History of Sumptuary Law* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996); Maria Giuseppina Muzzarrelli, “Reconciling the Privilege of a Few with the Common Good: Sumptuary Laws in Medieval and Early Modern Europe” (*Journal of Medieval and Early Modern*

Much good deep learning one thereout may reed,  
 For that the ground-worke is, and end of all,  
 How to obtain a Beneficiall.  
 First therefore, when ye have in handsome wise  
 Yourself attired, as you can devise. (ll. 484-488)

In addition to “attiring” themselves appropriately, they “fashion eke a godly zeale” and “seeme as Saintlike” (ll. 493 and 497) to gain a benefice. They learn that by mastering the art of imitation of manners and deploying manipulation one can advance to the comforts of aristocracy—to wearing “the finest silkes” and “have lying by our sides / Our lovely Lasses, or bright shining Brides” (ll. 461 and 475-6). The priest is not only illiterate in reading “character”—word and person—but in godliness and morality. The escalations of moral and ethical illiteracy grow with each new section of the poem.

Upon leaving the church, Ape and Fox encounter Mule, asking, “But read (faire Sir, of grace) from whence come yee?” (l. 604). They ask a fellow animal of his enterprise because they see Mule is well-fed and “all deckt in goodly rich aray” (l. 582). Mule addresses them as social “equals”—animals in human costume. As a member of the same “class,” Mule is able to read both their natures and desires, and directs them to Court “for some gainfull benefit” (l. 639), advising them further on artful imitation. Mule states that impressing humans takes only fanciful language and false visage:

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*Studies* 39.3 [2009]: 597-617; and Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

How els (said he) but with a good bold face,  
 And with big words, and with a stately pace,  
 That men may thinke of you in general,  
 That to be in you, which is not at all:  
 For not by that which is, the world now deemeth,  
 (As it was wont) but by that same that seemeth.  
 Ne do I doubt, but that ye well can fashion  
 Your selves theretoo, according to occasion. (ll. 645-652)

By manipulating language and social registers, altering the written word, legal documents, and costumes, Fox and Ape continue to advance their positions and begin to rise in social rank at court itself. Ape attends court “cloathed like a Gentleman” and Fox “his groome” (ll. 660 and 661). Ape is able to “boldlie ... amongst the boldest go. / And his man Reynold with fine counterfesaunce / Supports his credite and his countenaunce” (ll. 666-8). Giglio points out that in this section of the poem Mother Hubbard’s narration is overpowered by courtly manners and the imitation of education through language use (22). Ape’s courtly “nature” of ill speak and intentions, when compared with that of a true courtier, emphasizes his merely “aping” courtesy:

Yet the brave Courtier, in whose beauteous thought  
 Regard of honour harbours more than ought,  
 Doth loath such base condition, to backbite  
 Anies good name for envie or despite:  
 He stands on tearmes of honourable minde,  
 Ne will be carried with the common winde  
 Of Courts inconstant mutabilitie. (ll. 717-23)

Here one recalls the language of “Colin Clouts Come Home Againe” and hears the voice of Spenser’s experience at court, assessing advantage and how it is attained, certainly the preoccupations of the author and lettered principal narrator, not Mother Hubbard. His narration, here usurping hers, even appraises the Muses, the spirits representing insight and knowledge, along with “dreadfull battailes of renownmed Knights” (l. 767), with

which Mother Hubbard would have little concern nor familiarity. By the fourth episode, the male narrator completely dominates her beast fable by corrupting her oral folk tale with a density of humanist erudition.

Once banished from court, Ape and Fox travel to the forest and attempt to appropriate a “beastly” monarchy, again through imitations using costume, language, and posturing. But here their deception is confronted by the Roman gods Jove and Mercury, Jove (Jupiter) being the godly protector of state and laws, and Mercury being the god of trade and profit, merchants and thieves. These two figures from classical literature and mythology awaken Lyon and finally bring Ape and Fox to the justice from which they have fled through all their successive endeavors. From all other illiterate dupes, both human and animal, encountered earlier in the tale, Ape and Fox have escaped the administration of revenge for harms done. The creatures from Mother Hubbard’s oral beast tale are now instructed and punished; the unruly, civilized by the godly intervention of classical humanist learning.

The poem’s closing lines by the male narrator stand as one last domination of the “mother’s” tale. Although he states that it is her tale, “her discourse,” the primary narrator requests clemency for its imperfections. Because of both his “weake” memory and her coarse language, the poem’s primary persona may have set down the tale “amisse.” He may not have adequately improved upon her tale so that her untrained and unsophisticated oratory skills would not offend his audience: (“So Mother *Hubberd* her discourse did end: / Which pardon me, if I amisse have pend” [ll. 1385-86]). What of the male narrator’s appropriation of her story for his means? Much has been expressed by critics concerning Spenser’s poem as commentary to counsel his betters through political

allegory. The male narrator often digresses from recounting Mother Hubbard's tale to address most clearly his own unpleasant court experiences. But Mother Hubbard, like Ape and Fox, is able to gain entrance to the first narrator's home, admittance into a realm above her station. Prose fiction at this time, states R. W. Maslen, "lends new weight to the complex transactions between men and women which take place in the hitherto neglected regions of domestic space. It charts the multiple intersections between the micropolitics of the private household and the macropolitics of the state" (19). Although her tale is mediated by the first narrator, the mother nonetheless reveals the permeability of class boundaries, the mutability of station, and the possibilities of subversion of power by the illiterate. The moral of *her* lesser tale is no less powerful for its being "pend" by the male narrator and retold through the lens of his station. Further, the male narrator of recognizes the entertainment value of the debased tale told to him by a lower order "other." Taken together, the references to differences in gender, education, and status between the two narrators elicit an awareness of the power struggle for the control of language and authority being waged in early modernity.

But are the differences—between the genders of the narrators, for instance—in fact, binaries? While it is true that the woman's point of view is not predominant in early modern texts, and that a woman's social position could represent a "peripheral" station, would this relative muteness and invisibility, as it were, then align women with other peripheral creatures? In "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" Sherry Ortner argues that culture defines itself as superior to nature, and that superiority rests on the ability to transform, to "culturalize," nature (73). If women are conventionally aligned with nature due to their procreative functions and physiology, are they then in opposition

to men who are more symbolically aligned with culture, fulfilling a different creative function? Ortner states that such a recognized kinship between woman and nature accounts for women's subordination by men, as it is the spirit of culture to subordinate nature. She further develops her theory by explaining that, rather than functioning in a binary system, women intermediate; "mediatrices," they function as agents between man and animal:

Shifting our image of the culture/nature relationship once again, we may envision culture in this case as a small clearing within a forest of the larger natural system. From this point of view, that which is intermediate between culture and nature is located on the continuous periphery of culture's clearing; and though it may thus appear to stand both above and below (and beside) culture, it is simply outside and around it. We can begin to understand then how a single system of cultural thought can often assign women completely polarized and apparently contradictory meanings, since extremes, as we say, meet. (85)

Ortner claims that women's ability to use dialogue franchises them as cultural participants. Yamamoto adds that, even more than "above and below (and beside)," women are *part of* culture, but "*both* wholly present *and* wholly absent, from the dominant, male point of view" (206). Yamamoto's claim explains both Mother Hubbard's presence in and absence from her tale: although the tale is named for her and told in part through her narrative frame, the presence of her persona in the poem is wholly under the control of the male narrator evaluating her.

The double title's use of "*Or*" binds "Mother Hubbard" to the quality of "prosopopoeia." The personified animals' power to think and speak binds Mother Hubbard to the characters of Ape and Fox. These shape-shifting linkages suggest and reproduce the boundary confusions experienced by Spenser's readers. The form and content mutabilities accentuate the satyr-genre's thematic concerns with being unable to

distinguish true natures. Mother Hubbard occupies her station (tending the sick) and performs its concomitant duties, but her tale subverts such boundaries, while the lettered male narrator asserts his supremacy over her through his pen; but their stories become mixed. Paradoxically, the servitude of Mother Hubbard and the service the tale itself performs highlight vulnerabilities of the dominant male narrator's presumed control over both, and his failure definitively to dominate. Mother Hubbard's fable and her fabled beasts display that the parameters of differences are fictions, vulnerable boundaries able to be breached.

Keeping people distinct from animals allows humans to forget the particularities of their biological natures and, thus, their weaknesses and mortality (Beatson; Goldenberg). Stripped of their distinguishing qualities—looking somewhat human in form but behaving animalistically—humans are revealed in traditional beast fable as more bestial than human. The stripping does not stop with the loss of “humanity”; “animals have been used to highlight hierarchies of gender, race and class, particularly the disgrace associated with transgressing traditional social boundaries” (Kalof viii). Categorizing subordinates with animals suggests an instinctual nature without the civility and virtues of the “higher” (male) human. But in “Mother Hubbards Tale” an understood kinship evolves in several instances of the birth of “class consciousness.” The simple farmer recognizes a shared experience of suffering when Ape first speaks, “was griev'd, as he had felt part of his pain” (l. 260):

This yron world (that same he weeping says)  
Brings downe the stowtest hearts to lowest state:  
For miserie doth bravest minds abate,  
And make them seeke for that they wont to scorne,  
Of fortune and of hope at once forlorne. (ll. 254-258)

The farmer feels compassion for Ape's demonstration of sorrow and recognizes Ape's grieving consciousness. If animals possess emotions and morality (even negative morality as Ape and Fox reveal through their duping of humans and dissembling feelings), humans have the responsibility to regard them with respect, as the farmer shows esteem for Ape when he believes Ape to be human. Ape's display of "human-like" emotional traits and the farmer's shared point of view further complicate the boundary slippage between "species." Thus Ape "slipt the collar handsomely" (l. 269). And by the second half of the poem, the reader must acknowledge "natures" between Ape and human indistinguishable.

By constructing what is human from what is "animal" (Agamben's "inclusive exclusion" of animality) to value one group over another, non-human animals are oppressed, abused, and marginalized. But so too are humans whose beliefs, behaviors, and even physical makeup differ from the standard set by the distinction. Ape's and Fox's abilities successfully to impersonate members of increasingly higher levels of society effectively indicates the uncontrollability of social mobility and the porous fluidity of class boundaries in Elizabethan England, an eventuality Spenser himself benefited from.

Upsetting the liminal boundaries between human and animal, impersonation in "Mother Hubberds Tale" troubles humans' regard for a sense of meaningful social polarities and fixed hierarchies. In the fourth section of the tale, Ape and Fox squabble over who should don the stolen skin of Lion, basing their reasons on who appears more human. The Ape reasons that he is most like a human "in stature":

Thereto I am in person, and in stature  
 Most like a man, the Lord of everie creature;  
 So that it seemeth I was made to raigne,  
 And borne to be a Kingly soveraigne. (ll. 1029-1032)

But Fox argues that, in “spirite,” he is most human:

And where ye claime your selfe for outward shape  
 Most like a man, Man is not like an Ape  
 In his cheife parts, that is, in wit and spirite;  
 But I therein most like to him doo merite  
 For my slie wyles and subtill craftinesse,  
 The title of the Kingdome to possesse. (ll. 1041-1046)

Each well knows his own “nature”—rehearsing the conventions the bestiary assigns him. In their argument over signifying natures, each chooses a different feature of humanness as justifying rule. Together, these two animals personify the unruly body of the satyr-genre itself, a sort of body/mind duality (Fox as the spirit or mind part of the satyr’s human head; Ape as the more corporeal substance of the satyr’s horse parts). The contrary forces of the argument pull apart the human as a coherent sign even as they collect its features in order to mimic them. Thus the “human,” and any “meritable” claim to sovereignty, is satirically degraded.

Their punishment as frauds can occur only within the animal kingdom. Although previously detected due to their greed, that they escaped consequences for their behavior in the human realms suggests incompetent laxity in the justice system’s ability to detect and punish impostors (Brown 202). This system requires the submission of animal bodies to the hierarchies on which it relies for order.

This same fourth section addresses the crisis of early modern freedoms to mutate through various social positions, which carries the potential to unleash an untamed beast in the heart of humanity. Having taken the throne from the sleeping Lion, the “stryfull,

and ambitious” (l. 1021) Ape insists upon his royal station. The “guilefull, and most covetous” (l. 1022) Fox claims that Ape will “have both crowne and government, / Upon condition” that Ape’s reigning “bee / In all affaires, and counseled” by Fox (ll. 1050-1053). Fox’s drive stems from personal gain, to feed his cubs “with fat of all the soyle, / And with the sweete of others sweating toyle / . . . For to increase the common treasures store; / But his owne treasure he increased more” (ll. 1151-1172). The courtly attack seemed aimed by contemporary readers, according to Louis Montrose, at William Cecil, Lord Burghley—the Lord Treasurer and counselor to the queen (915).<sup>5</sup> Elizabethan political imagery leaves the door open for multiple interpretations as to whom the Ape truly represented (Judson 146-8).

Throughout Mother Hubbard’s story, Fox and Ape engage in cunning subterfuge, with Ape experiencing an enforced physical change by Lion at the end of the poem. Disguises aid the two beasts in their social mobility, gaining them entrance into worlds in which animals would not otherwise be permitted passage. But clothes are not the only disguise utilized. Ape and Fox also rely on body posture, as when Fox either saunters on two legs—when passing for human—or disguises himself as a dog trotting on four legs. Ape and Fox exploit human perceptions of both body and language, knowing the “natures” of both themselves and humans. In the third section of the poem, due, in part,

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<sup>5</sup> For a contemporary reading of Ape, Fox, and Lion as figures for Burghley, Burghley’s son Robert Cecil, and the queen, see Richard S. Peterson, “Laurel Crown and Ape’s Tail: New Light on Spenser’s Career from Sir Thomas Tresham” (*Spenser Studies* 12 [1991]): 1-31.

to his body type, Ape fools the human court into believing he is not only human but also courtly:

And seene the manners of all beasts on ground;  
 Now here arriv'd, to see if like he found.  
 This did the Ape at first him credit gaine,  
 Which afterwards he wisely did maintaine  
 With gallant showe, and daylie more augment  
 Through his fine feates and Courtly complement;  
 For he could play, and daunce, and vaute, and spring,  
 And all that els pertaines to reveling,  
 Onely through kindly aptness of his joints. (ll. 687-695)

Such superficial costuming allows for the beasts' "true" (bestiary) "nature" to remain unchanged. But within section three, Ape abhors the apathy and deception at court—the insincerity and the deceptiveness of the elite, thus challenging bestiary conventions for his "type":

He will not creepe, nor crouche with fained face,  
 But walkes upright with comely stedfast pace,  
 And unto all doth yield due curtesie;  
 But not with kissed hand below the knee,  
 As that same Apish crue is wont to doo:  
 For he disdained himself t'embase theretoo.  
 He hates fowle leasings, and vile flatterie,  
 Two filthie blots in noble Gentry;  
 And lothefull idleness he doth detest,  
 The canker worme of everie gentle brest. (ll. 727-736)

Ape distains "apish" behavior at court, thus distinguishing himself above the "noble Gentry." Ape misanthropically distains courtly poseurs not for manipulating their "nature" but their subversive negligence of place. If Ape and Fox can perform human actions of civility and nobility, their moral judgments surpassing even the nobles, what separates human from "lower animal" has lost its ability to signify and human superiority vanishes. Spenser's reader recognizes the boundary distortion of animal nature in

humans and humans reducing themselves to being animals, most prominently in the human court section. Ape refuses to disgrace himself to the “common” ill practices of

Court:

common Courtiers love to gybe and fleare  
At everie thing, which they heare spoken ill,  
And the best speeches with ell meaning spill;  
Yet the brace Courtier [the Ape], in whose beauteous thought  
Regard of honour harbours more than ought,  
Doth loath such base condition, to backbite  
Anies good name for envie or despite. (ll. 714-720)

The “Courtier,” Ape, is the most “noble” in (human) nature in section three, even while, or perhaps because of being, surrounded by his aping human counterparts at court.

The beastly pair prey on their human counterparts for three sections, deceitfully taking and never giving. In the first two sections of the poem, the Ape and Fox abuse their patrons’—the farmer’s and the priest’s—ignorance. In the third section, the pair abuse their patrons, coaxing “the silly man [a courtier] by treason / To buy his Masters frivolous good will, / That had not power to doo him good or ill” (ll. 888-890). In the fourth section, Ape and Fox exploit the animal kingdom, having the ability to gain sovereign power over other animals. In the first three sections, Ape’s and Fox’s adopted roles limits their undertakings. In the fourth section, however, Ape and Fox violate the foundation of royal authority and award themselves absolute reigning power of the animal monarchy. Futile faith in the authority of human society is corrected in the prevailing justice of the animal kingdom. In fact, justice in the animal kingdom only takes six lines. When the awakened Lion (thanks to *deus ex machina*) catches the thievish impostors, he assembles all the animals as audience to Ape and Fox’s sentencing:

The Foxe, first Author of that treacherie,  
 He did uncase, and then away let flie.  
 But th' Apes long taile (which then he had) he quight  
 Cut off, and both eares pared of hight;  
 Since which, all Apes but halfe their eares have left,  
 And of their tailes are utterlie bereft. (ll. 1379-1384)

Defined by the *OED*, to “uncase” means “to skin or flay” or “to undress.” This term also indicates “to uncover, lay bare, expose to view or observation” and “to strip or deprive of something.” That Lion “uncases” Fox could mean stripping him of his clothing, a fitting punishment of stripping him of his costume, his tool of deceit. Worse, Lion may have stripped him of his skin (just as he had to Lion), his natural animal hide lost within the beastly court. Ape, on the other hand, has his outward animalness pruned and cropped, and, as stated earlier, becomes unsettlingly more human-looking for it. Lion, even without his hide, strips Ape and Fox of their hide, ears, and tail, and takes back his own skin. Both animals’ animality exposed by clothes or hide demonstrates how easily truth can be costumed or, just as easily, defrocked of false ideas.

Ape’s and Fox’s deceptive assent through three levels of human hierarchy and the one of animal—the last two being of high court (one human, one animal)—caused an undoing of God-given dominion. Although Spenser clearly trusted in his queen, an authority providentially ordained by God, “Mother Hubberds Tale” stands as thinly veiled advice to warn against those who sought to undermine the Divine Right of who Charles Beem terms “the female king” in *The Lioness Roared* (40). The concept of sovereignty implicit in the Divine Right of Kings theory—that all social ranks are obligated to obey their ruler—implies that questioning the ruler was akin to blasphemy against God. That the gods, Jove and Mercury, intervene in the animal kingdom depicts a

shared interest and realm of existence between animals and god. As the confines disintegrate between animal courtly kingdom and human courtly kingdom, so, too, do the lines between earthly and heavenly kingdoms blur. The boundaries between the royal and Heavenly kingdoms, animal and human court, disappear for want of recognizably distinguished natures, further complicating once static stations.

The ending of “Mother Hubberds Tale” acknowledges not only the frailty of humans but the penetrable power of ultimate hierarchical rule, its corruptibility a blasphemous and treasonous, but emerging opinion. The humans in Spenser’s poem have difficulty interpreting their world correctly; as Erica Fudge states, “knowing nature is, importantly, about knowing oneself” (*Brutal Reasoning* 109). The animals’ ability to deceptively ascend so easily posed clear doubts to contemporary readers concerning the divine power of the overseeing monarch. Hadfield declares that one does not have to look deeply to see the message being sent to Spenser’s Lion(ness) about her court in an attempt to alert Elizabeth I to improper machinations behind her proposed marriage to a French duke (*Cambridge Companion* 49). But Spenser’s poem sent a concurrent political statement: while Ape and Fox reigned supreme over the kingdom, with the intervention of Jove and Mercury, Spenser detailed one level of authority denied to Ape and Fox. In Spenser’s historical moment, ultimate order could be restored, not by the gods, but by Lion. Even without crown, scepter, or hide, the gods recognize the true ruler of the “animal” kingdom. Lion does not need supplementary clothes or language to prove his true nature, his divine right to rule. However, Jove and Mercury must awaken the sleeping Lion to the corruption of his court taking place.

Einar Bjorvand states in *The Spenser Encyclopedia* that Spenser sought “through his art to restore to order that social and moral chaos brought about by the cunning creatures of the world” (185). In “Mother Hubberds Tale,” the corruptibility of lowest estate of the pastoral farmer to the highest of the royal Lion succeeds mostly by simple disguise. If only costume or declaration can deceive a kingdom, were all hides to disappear, would, too, social hierarchies? The destruction of humanity occurs from animal crossing the threshold into human. So, too, should the creation of morality arise from this negotiation:

Animality . . . marks the origin from which human male brutality towards women is considered a degradation, and it marks the perverted form to which he seemingly devolves in that degradation . . . a contrasted vision of the civilized human. In order to be civilized, we would not be animal-like and similarly not savage. And yet the concurrent appeal to the animal will also indicate what humans . . . ought to be like. (Deutscher 6-7)

In other words, Spenser’s having his redoubled characters of Ape and Fox concerned with the court’s corruption is not at all a degradation of the human. In fact, his conservative appeal using the medieval beast fable expresses the hierarchical order of pre-eminent rule. If Spenser’s Lion(ess) does not awaken to punish those usurping her power, the “natural” order of human social hierarchy disappears.

Writing from the perspective and perception of another life form defines more clearly human understanding, that “human projections onto the nonhuman . . . tell the historian about the most deeply rooted assumptions concerning the human mind and their mutability over time” (Datson 40). In many instances in “Mother Hubberds Tale,” the reader is aware of just how animalistic or “subhuman” in nature Spenser hints the human characters behave. Likewise, “animals” seem to rise fluidly in register through their

conduct and costuming. The animals produced by Spenser simply mirror (or “ape”) aired misdeeds, but do not reflect upon that the treatment of these animals sets a true marker for “a higher nature.” That little separates Ape and Fox from the human identity they impersonate makes their slipping bestial “nature” an important aspect of modernity.

By his complex narrative technologies, Spenser implores his readers, especially Queen Elizabeth, to read carefully the poem’s thinly costumed insinuations. Mother Hubberd’s story moves beyond a simple “old woman’s tale” to something higher than its base beginnings, indeed to the level of the genre of “advice to princes.”<sup>6</sup> In fact, with each section, the register rises with the beasts’ climbing of the social structure. This is where, it seems, the transparency of the masks shows Spenser himself talking through both the male narrator and Mother Hubberd as a historical personage. “Mother Hubberds Tale” deals with thorny political issues such as courtly nature, state-sanctioned corruption of clergy, and the liminality of estate barriers, and the problematic relation of literacy to sectarian violence, making the “satyr” the wisest choice to distance the writer from both

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<sup>6</sup> For further reading on the *speculum principis*, or “mirrors for princes” genre, see Lester Kruger Born, “The Perfect Prince: A Study of Thirteenth-and Fourteenth-Century Ideals” (*Speculum* 3.4 [1928]), 470-504; Ritamary Bradley, “Backgrounds of the Title Speculum in Mediaeval Literature” (*Speculum* 29.1 [1954]), 100-115; Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice: The Literature and Counsel of Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996); and Roberto Lambertini, “Mirrors for Princes.” *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Springer [2011]), 791-797.

the target under attack and from personal responsibility in being dangerously critical. His narrative distancing did not, in fact, save Spenser from brushes with authorities over this highly charged writing. Spenser's too transparent critical intentions revoke the denial of accountability which satire, especially talking animal satire, traditionally lends its writers. Much like Ape and Fox donning clothes to fool the humans in the tale but not its readers, Spenser's donning of the "hides" of the satyr-genre's body, the beasts and an old woman's voices, seems to have fooled no one, thus having led to its swift and definitive censorship.

Although greed and corruption have their rightful place within the text of the narrative, deceit is at the heart of "Mother Hubberds Tale." The tale begins with the male narrator's plague illness and builds through the moral diseases of mistaken stations and characters. Simultaneously, Ape and Fox are both real animals and personifications of the "bestial" desires of humans. As beast fable characters, as "Mother Hubberds Tale," Ape and Fox represent the external threats to the order Spenser saw devolving (and yet profited from), conventional representations of the human passions harnessed by "official" Elizabethan mores. But to discuss Ape and Fox in any serious depth as creatures analogous with the human, as "Prosopopoia," with a shared physiology and psychology, would be a revision of the discourse of reason beyond Spenser's purview.

## CHAPTER II

“He Called Me ‘Knave’ in His Language”:

The Sovereign Animal in Baldwin’s *Beware the Cat*

William Baldwin’s purposeful boundary distortions in *Beware the Cat* showcase a reformed sensibility regarding received (Catholic) foundational beliefs as being vulnerable to manipulation, inexact, and intentionally ambiguous. Baldwin’s use of liminal boundaries in the tale disrupts assumptions concerning humans’ superiority over animals. To the people in the tale, the purported absence of animal consciousness allows them to continue behaving as if no one knows their “secrets” (54). From Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (350 BCE) onward, reason—the ability to make rational choices—has been the faculty distinguishing human from animal. But in Baldwin’s tale, animals “intellectually” and legally represent themselves, and report the offences they witness in court. The first part of the novel of Master Streamer’s story figures bestial desire and gluttony in the grotesque tales of cats told by men, but by the third section of the novel, it is the bestial desires and gluttony of humanity in the grotesque tales told by cats. By then, humans are voiceless, as the cats recount a litany of their faults and irrationality. The “inhuman” behavior of those people with whom the cats have discretely lived obscures any real division between animal and human natures. In his novel, Baldwin makes use of the generic expectations for talking animals in beast fables, but goes well beyond them. Through an elaborate feline social structure, Baldwin reveals in the novel an emergent notion of sovereign animality that bears on larger political controversies in mid-Tudor England. In Baldwin’s tale, as in Cervantes’ (discussed in a Chapter III),

animals are the shrewdest of spectators, contributing meaningfully to a critique of social ills from a position of full membership and vested interest.

*Beware the Cat*, written in 1553 in Protestant England under Edward VI but first published in early 1570, seven years after its author William Baldwin's death, is a satire concerning the religious reformation.<sup>1</sup> Because of its anti-Roman Catholic stance, Baldwin's work could not be published when completed, as Edward VI had died and Queen Mary, a deeply devout Catholic and cousin to the Holy Roman Emperor, had ascended to the throne (Ringler xvi). Beyond being religious satire, however, Baldwin's fictional narrative, longer (at 56 pages) than a short-story and with an element of realism typical of Defoe, makes it the first English "novel." In his essay "*Beware the Cat* and the Beginnings of English Fiction," William A. Ringler, Jr.—who restored and modernized the text of *Beware the Cat* in 1988—summarizes the development of sixteenth-century English prose fiction and Baldwin's place within it. Ringler observes that most of the prose works of the period were translations or adaptations, and celebrates Baldwin for his originality and invention. Ringler describes not only the stylistic and thematic complexities of the novel, but also its narrative depth, and what he terms the "inter-

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<sup>1</sup> William A. Ringler, Jr. notes in his introduction to *Beware the Cat* that Roger Ireland gained license to print "beware the Catt by Wylliam Bawdw[i]n" in July 1569, but that Joseph Ritson notes a 1561 edition in *Bibliographia Poetica* (1802) (xxix). This earlier edition, Ringler states, is probably an error. A transcript of the 1570 now-lost edition printed by John Allde served as the primary textual authority from which Ringler's edition is based (xxx).

nesting boxes” (122) of the fictional frames. Robert Maslen calls the technique of storytelling in Baldwin’s work “a Chinese box, story secreted within story” (77).

The principle, and unreliable, narrator, Master Streamer, recounts in an oration of three parts how he had prepared and administered a potion that enabled him to understand animal languages, and particularly the discourse of cats. These cats, while registering the enduring cultural influence of beast fables, emerge as more than “beasts”—sovereign animals similar to Jacques Derrida’s “real cat [and not] the *figure* of a cat” (7).<sup>2</sup> Streamer relates in the novel the talking cat tales that he has heard told by others, as well as his own experience overhearing a cat court, to an audience of friends that includes “Baldwin,” a persona of the author. “Baldwin,” the principle narrator, recounts Master Streamer’s stories, but adds an extensive apparatus of glossing, commenting continuously on the content of Streamer’s tales through explanatory marginalia facilitated in format by the technologies of print, with which Baldwin, the historical personage, was intimately familiar. As “Baldwin” explains, he reproduces Streamer’s stories “with such notes as

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<sup>2</sup> In “The Animal That Therefore I Am,” Derrida’s cat walks into the bedroom and finds Derrida “naked as a beast” (6). This encounter leads Derrida to meditate on his cat not “as an allegory for all cats on earth” (7) that carries “the immense symbolic responsibility with which our culture has always charged the feline race” (11), but on the mind of an actual cat.

might be gathered thereof, so making it book-like” (3).<sup>3</sup> An analysis of the remarkable complexities of the novel’s narrative structure, which rely in part on the technologies of print, and the treatment of animal language in the tale, contributes significantly to the role of language and literacy in the question of what it means to be “human” in early modern continental philosophies influential in England.

In “The Argument,” the narration proper begins at Court on the evening of December 28, 1552, with Gulielmus Baldwin (GB) establishing the particulars of Master Streamer’s tales. On this night, Master Ferrers, “master of the King’s Majesty’s pastimes” (5), and Baldwin are bedfellows lodging with Master Willot and Master Streamer, the King’s Astronomer and Divine, respectively.<sup>4</sup> These four men fall into a controversial discussion concerning “whether birds and beasts had reason” (5) but are not able to decide among themselves what constitutes “reason” from “natural kindly actions” (6). Streamer discounts the “authority of most grave and learned philosophers” (6) in lieu of his presumably more reliable, direct experience. To argue that animals do reason, he

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout his literary career, Baldwin worked at Edward Whitchurch’s print shop, beginning in 1547. Whitchurch, a London printer, published such works as Baldwin’s *Treatise of Moral Philosophy* (1547) and *Canticles or Balades of Salomon* (1549) (King).

<sup>4</sup> George Ferrers (c. 1510-1579), courtier and poet, served under Thomas Cromwell, King Henry VIII’s chief minister. For further study on his life, work, poetry, and friendship with Baldwin, see Mike Pincombe, “Ferrers, George.” *The Encyclopedia of English Renaissance Literature*, ed. Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr., Alan Stewart, Rebecca Lemon, Nicholas McDowell, and Jennifer Richards (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 341-2.

shares eyewitness testimony of animals deploying rational faculties through the one register philosophical discourses have held humans possess exclusively: language.

Master Streamer's tale is divided into three sections. In "The First Part of Master Streamer's Oration," Streamer establishes himself as an erudite man, although through his braggart account, the reader easily surmises how far he has gotten in life by impersonating erudition, parading inaccurate information and false associations. After displaying his performed cleverness to his audience, he recounts an earlier, similar situation while lodged in a printing house. He had told that earlier group of his having heard cats' caterwauling outside on the previous night, which led to the earlier group's exchanging cat and animal stories. One man from Staffordshire had shared a tale of a man who, forty years previously, was walking through Kankwood when a cat leapt out of a bush, addressed the man by name, and told him to relay to other cats that "Grimalkin is dead" (11). When the man returned home, he told his wife what had happened. His kitten, who overheard his story, asked him, "'And is Grimalkin dead? Then farewell dame'" (11). A second man from the earlier group had then stated that this may be a true tale, as in Ireland around thirty-three years ago, a man had shared a somewhat similar story with him, concerning Grimalkin, chief of cats. This Irish man had disclosed to the second man from the earlier group that seven years previously, a man and boy broke into two homes, slew the owners, and stole their cow and sheep. Hiding out in a church that night, the two lit a fire, and slaughtered and roasted the sheep over the fire. A cat came and sat next to them, stating, "'Shane foel,' which is [Gaelic for] 'give me some meat'" (13). Astounded, they fed the cat the sheep in quarters until the sheep was consumed, and then still she demanded more. They then slew the cow, and when the cat had eaten

the entire cow, the men rode off, fearing for their safety. But after riding only a few miles, they realized the cat had hitched a ride on the back of the man's horse. The man turned and killed the cat, but the two were then almost immediately swarmed by cats trying to kill them. The boy was slain and eaten by the cats, while the man escaped to return home, only to tell his wife and be set upon by his own cat, who cried out, "Hast thou killed Grimalkin!" (14), and took the man by the throat, strangling him.

Baldwin destabilizes narrative authority by employing multiple, dissenting authorial narrators in this satire. Within this first section, the tale commissions six voices of storytellers within three levels of narration. In one assembly, the narrative voices include Baldwin (author), "Baldwin" (persona of the author), and Master Streamer; in the gathering embedded within Streamer's account, stories are told at the printing house by the Staffordshire man, the Irish man, and, removing the narration one level further, the man who earlier recounts to the Irish man the story of Grimalkin's murder. The layering of narrative authorship in Baldwin's tale mocks the rhetorical authority of medieval scholasticism.

The first printing house group discusses the plausibility of these stories and the nature of cats. From these tales of first-hand experiences, to this group of interlocutors (and anticipating Montaigne), "it doth appear that there is in cats, as in all other kinds of beasts, a certain reason and language whereby they understand one another" (16). But the members of this group finally propose that perhaps Grimalkin is not a cat but a witch. This then leads into a discussion of metamorphosis—shape-shifting—and transubstantiation, and a heated debate on how a witch might take on a cat's body, or if she is able to alter her own shape and others', thus leading the conversation to

werewolves. Accounts and examples end with the tale of the Bishop of Alexandria, who ““found the means, either through diligence so to mark [beasts], or else through magic natural so to subtilitate [rarefy or refine] his sensible powers”” (21) in order to understand the speech of all creatures. From these tales Streamer concludes that animals possess speech, and man the ability to understand them.

“The Second Part of Master Streamer’s Oration” consists of Streamer’s reading the works of Albertus Magnus to find a recipe to enable him to “understand birds’ voices” (24). He explains in farcically specific detail how he went about gathering and preparing the potion’s ingredients, an improvised collection of available animals:

And then I took a piece of the cat’s liver and a piece of the kidney, a piece of the milt and the whole heart, the fox’s heart and the lights, the hare’s brain, the kite’s maw, and the urchin’s kidneys. All these I beat in a mortar together until it were small, and then made a cake of it, and baked it upon a hot stone till it was dry like bread. And while this was a-baking I took seven parts of the cat’s grease, as much of her brain, with five hairs of her beard (three black and two grey), three parts of the fox’s grease, as much of the brain, with the hoofs of his left feet, the like portion of the urchin’s grease and brain with his stones, all the kite’s brain, with all the marrow of her bones, the juice of her heart, her upper beak and the middle claw of her left foot, the fat of the hare’s kidneys and the juice of his right shoulder bone. (27-8)

Streamer notes how each step in the process of potion-making must align with specific planetary phenomena, although from both his accounting and Baldwin’s glossing, it is clear Streamer is ignorant of astrology: “At twelve of the clock, what time the sun began his planetical dominion, I went to dinner” (28), Streamer states, and Baldwin glosses the passage, “*Master Streamer varieth from the astronomers in his planet hours,*” noting that Streamer misunderstands planetary and solar hours to be the same. Overlooking the irony of slaying numerous animals—including a cat—to cook a potion to find whether beasts speak, Streamer prepares a meal of urchin (hedgehog). After an hour he notes the

pint of multi-colored humors purging from his head, which, he finds, purges his brain, too, leaving his mind refreshed and refined. He then recounts the process of forming, and frying, pillows made from animal organs and herbs, placing them to his ears, as lengthy and convoluted an activity as the gathering and preparing of their ingredients. These pillows do not work well. According to the erudite Streamer, “As I perceived the cell perceptible of my brain intelligible was yet too gross, by means that the filmy panicle coming from dura mater made too strait oppilations by ingrossing the pores and conduits imaginative” (29). He must create a supplemental lozenge, the ingredients of which include “the cat’s, the fox’s, and the kite’s tongue.” He “sod them in wine and put them in a mortar and added to them of new cat’s dung an ounce; of mustard seed, garlic, and pepper as much” (29). With these pillows tied to his ears and lozenges in his mouth and nostrils, he first hears a cat and a crow speaking in their own languages, along with more sounds than were in Chaucer’s House of Fame, including “the harmony of the moving of the spheres” (31).

“The Third Part of Master Streamer’s Oration” reports how Streamer waits for the moon to rise and, facilitated by his potions, listens to cat court. Streamer discovers that on the two previous nights the cats had held council to try Mouse-slayer on the accusation that she had denied Catch-rat “his lecherously offered delights” (37), violating the cat rule which forbids “females to refuse any males not exceeding the number of ten in a night” (47). Mouse-slayer clears herself by recounting details of her life including the appalling conduct of “Catch-rat” when she was heavily pregnant. Thus, through reasoning and binding herself not to the letter of the law but to its spirit, Mouse-slayer is able to show “just cause” for her refusal. During the last two evenings of cat

council, Mouse-slayer has described the last four years of her life, which has shown her high claims to feline morality and has established her sterling character for those assembled, including her jury. On the council night that Streamer hears, she tells about the previous two years of her life leading up to the present events. Those assembled are engaged with her stories of moving from household to household, describing the entertainingly immoral and corrupt behaviors of those humans with which she has lived, and especially how she returns favor for their behavior. Streamer reports that when the night is over and he dines the following day, his “humors” return, and his capacity to understand animal language ends.

Similarly to Spenser’s techniques in “Mother Hubberds Tale” and Cervantes’ in *The Dialogue of the Dogs* (addressed in Chapter III), *Beware the Cat* relies on complexly framed narrative. Using first-person narration, Baldwin (the author) speaks in his own work as the first-frame narrator (his persona “Baldwin”). Baldwin’s metadiegetic narration occurs at the beginning in “The Epistile Dedicatory,” noted as written by “G[ulielmus] B[aldwin]” (4) or “GB,” and in the following “Argument,” where he sets the stage for Master Streamer to take up the next narrative frame (the “Chinese box” within a box). “Baldwin” (the author’s persona) again returns to frame the ending of the story in “An Exhortation” after Streamer concludes his part. The second frame rests with Master Streamer, who is recounting to “Baldwin and company” subsequently framed eyewitness accounts told to him by four other men, as well as the framed feline autobiographical tales he has overheard told by cats (specifically Mouse-slayer) to a cat audience.

What makes *Beware the Cat* technologically narratively distinctive from the other two works in this study is its use of marginalia. While glossing has often been used to synopsise and clarify a text's key points (as, notably, in the Geneva Bible [1565]), G.B.'s marginal glossing is full of clichés and aphorisms. When Streamer first uses his potions and first hears a crow call him "knave," G.B. glosses in the margins, "*A man may die only by imagination of harm*" (33). When Mouse-slayer bites the genitals of an adulterer, G.B. glosses, "*It is justice to punish those parts that offend*" (50). Due to the technologies of print, Baldwin's marginal glossing also spatially frames Streamer's tale. With the typeset glossing arranged to textually frame the narrative, *Beware the Cat* becomes a "Chinese Box," placing a tale visually within a tale. While using a framing narrative compounded by marginal glossing, Baldwin, as a critic, can stand beside Streamer's narration and comment satirically. Examples of Baldwin's use of glossing to create satire include when Streamer discusses his astronomical knowledge (the earlier cited passage). Demonstrating Streamer's actual lack of knowledge but fearless self-importance, G. B. notes, "*Master Streamer varieth from the astronomers in his planet hours*" (28). When Streamer begins a rhyming list of all his varied potions that allowed him to hear animals of all sorts ("barking of dogs, grunting of hogs, wawling of cats, rumbling of rats"), Baldwin glosses, "*Here the poetical fury came upon him*" (32). In "'I Know the Place and the Persons': The Play of Textual Frames in Baldwin's 'Beware the Cat,'" Edward T. Bonahue, Jr. argues that using multiple narrative frames leads to uncertain narrative authority:

The component narratives establish generic ambiguity, construct realistic yet fictional scenes, invoke three separate narrative voices, and interpenetrate in such a dazzling way that the “centrality” of Master Streamer’s oration and the “authority” of its marginal gloss are finally left in question. Moreover, such an investigation of narrative reliability throws into doubt readings conducted along simple lines. (287)

Baldwin’s marginal glossing is not meant to be taken as authoritative but rather to distort the book’s authority. This “satyr” body of Baldwin’s text further displays the satyr-genre’s concerns of authorial ambiguity.

Other narrative techniques Baldwin employs include embellishing his fiction with verifiable facts, including both time and place, and historical persons as characters. For example, Bonahue notes that the characters George Ferrers and Thomas Willot (and, of course, Baldwin himself) were, in fact, well-known court attendants of that time (289). Ringler observes Baldwin’s interest in chronological accuracy in the “Introduction” to *Beware the Cat*. Examples of Baldwin’s temporal precision include when Streamer mixes his potion “about solstitium estivale” (27)—June 11, 1551; when he hears Mouse-slayer report her last two years of life beginning “in the time when preachers had leave to speak against the Mass,” even noting “but it was not forbidden till half a year later” (37)—or early 1549; and Mouse-slayer’s bite of the man’s genitals “at Whitsuntide last” (50)—May 17, 1551 (xxii). Ringler also notes Baldwin’s authentic descriptions of London landmarks that would have been instantly familiar to his sixteenth-century readers—for instance the printing house above Aldersgate, where Streamer prepares his potions and eavesdrops on cats, as that of the Reformation printer John Day. Within this building, Streamer’s chamber has windows that look out onto the steeple of Mile End Church and the leads of Aldergate (where impaled quarters of men were sometimes

mounted). Such details of verisimilitude—flanking Master Streamer with actual contemporary political figures, situating the story using recognizable locations and landmarks, and employing known events to mark time—William Baldwin establishes credibility for the “marvelous history intitled, Beware the Cat. Conteynyng diuerse wonderfull and incredible matters. Very pleasant and mery to read” (xxxix), effectively obscuring the lines between spatial and temporal “historical” realities and “incredible” fictions—tales of “marvels.”

Boundaries between facts and fantasy are further transmogrified by the use of (William) Baldwin, author of *Beware the Cat*, and the character (Gulielmus) Baldwin, writer and editor of the dedication letter, the introducing argument, the glossing marginalia, and the exhortation, and editor of Streamer’s tale in *Beware the Cat*. Bonahue comments on the hazy fictional and factual boundaries and their impact on narrative confidence:

*Beware the Cat’s* successive frames constantly entice the reader to forget the ever-increasing distance between fiction and actuality, as if a single, historically present narrator composed all components of the book. The narrative, however, never comes to rest in a single voice: authority resides sometimes in Baldwin, sometimes in the persona G.B., sometimes in the fictional Streamer, and sometimes in a dynamic tension among them, a tension contrived within framing elements of purported actual occurrence. (290)

William Baldwin would have personally known both George Ferrers and Thomas Willot from court, while Gulielmus Baldwin (G.B.) claims to know the fictional Streamer along with Ferrers and Willot: G.B. states that “seeing I know the place and the persons with whom he talked of these matters before [Streamer] experimented his wonderful and strange confections, I am the less doubtful of any truth therein” (54). By using such liminal personae alongside distinct details of well-known local landmarks and

contemporary events, William Baldwin blurs conventional paradigms of “fiction.” From the blurred boundaries between “history” and tale-telling arises an implicit sense that the subject matter, too, while surely “marvelous,” is not purely feigned: animals conversing and maintaining their own separate society becomes plausible beyond fiction.

Terence Bowers claims that English reformers viewed the printing press as a divine gift to help them convert England into a Protestant country. *Beware the Cat* is one of many anti-Catholic satires printed during Edward VI’s Protestant reign (1547-1553). But by encouraging the literacy of the laypeople, “Baldwin, in particular, with his deep experience as an editor, printer ... and writer, was in the forefront of those who were attempting to advance and shape a Protestant culture through the medium of print” (3). *Beware the Cat* is a text that troubles the authority of the written over the oral, and aural, through its genre as satire. Through the novel’s main argument—whether or not animals have reason and language—this work favors skeptical over uncritical instruction. Under Queen Mary’s rule (1553-1558), Counter-Reformation control of printing restricted laypeople’s access to read and interpret the Bible, along with religious works unauthorized by the Church, concerned about the social chaos unregulated discourse would produce.<sup>5</sup> Relying on the liberties traditionally granted to satire, William

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<sup>5</sup> With the move from script to print in early modernity, the prevalent power of the press met with royal restrictions of profitable privileges. According to Cyndia Susan Clegg’s entry on censorship in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*, under Henry VIII’s rule print authorization could take two forms: the royal patent and licensing. Both forms were used as tools of censorship. Under Edward VI, licensing was used to advance the

Baldwin's novel illustrates the need for a literate population to sort through ideas based on its own reading rather than the restricted learning of a state-sponsored church. But it also more quietly advocates for discernment through critical reason, not "reasons" by order of fiat. The cognitive abilities needed for interpretation, though, are called into question partly through the complex structures of the work itself. Baldwin demonstrates both impressionistic and superficial interpretation, through Streamer's use of eyewitness accounts as authoritative and his chronic misrepresentation of received knowledge, as well as thoughtful apologetic through Mouse-slayer's oration, which is both persuasive and entertaining, as well as morally edifying.

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Protestant Reformation, and under Mary to penalize Protestants. When Elizabeth I took the throne, she granted the Stationers' Company a royal charter in 1557 and, thus, a nationwide monopoly of printing. Under this ruling, publishers were prohibited from publishing books "against the law of the land" (420), meaning against both state and Church. Stationers could confiscate and burn prohibited books and incarcerate publishers. For further study on licensing printers and printing in early modern England, see Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Lotte Hellinga, *William Caxton and Early Printing in England* (London: British Library, 2010); and Kevin Sharp and Stephen Zwicker, ed., *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

By putting in question the unstable possibilities for interpretation through the varying cognitive responses to eventualities of Streamer and Mouse-slayer, Baldwin also deforms boundaries between man and animal. The deformation implies the fallacy in categories of thought, so that authorized truth is also put in play. The “proof” that animals have language and reason becomes plausible as a consequence of the incoherence of an “authority” that says otherwise.

The heart of *Beware the Cat* is divided into three main sections that build a case on the question of whether animals speak and on the nature of reason. In the first section, Master Streamer explains to his audience his rationale for believing cats have speech and, thus, reason. This rationale is based solely on second and third-hand accounts of men speaking of and with “lower animals” such as cats and werewolves. Streamer’s evidence for “animal” reason floats from instinctual, biological, or coincidental actions, to rumors and tales, to subsequent “credible” written accounts, to eyewitness accounts. In the second section Streamer describes in great detail how he concocts a brew which enables him to understand, not just the language of beasts, but “the harmony of the moving of the spheres” (31) as well. In the third section, he reports the conversations of the animals upon which he spies. By building the credibility of his argument he builds a case (although using far from credible scientific reasoning) against the idea that humans are the privileged species.

Laurie Shannon notes in *The Accommodated Animal* that in gaining knowledge, instead of altering the subject of study through practices such as vivisection, Streamer alters himself. Although his alchemy initially relies upon mutilating animals and transforming their parts into a potion, his ultimate goal is to change himself.

Not yet an experimental regime that tortures the target object to force it to yield up its truths ... this experiential science instead alters the investigator by medicating him as an observing subject. This science, in other words, strives to repair or enhance the faculties of a dysfunctional *cogito*, taking human subjective weakness as the obstacle to knowledge rather than any particular resistance in the object itself. (204-5)

In other words, Streamer's objective is to augment his own perceptive abilities, making himself the focus of scientific experiment to gain knowledge. Dissecting a cat simply transforms its body into the projections of the human brain, in a sense decoding animal languages and transforming them into human language. When Streamer first takes the brew to penetrate the code of cat language in the second part of the narrative, his brain is molested by the sounds of humans and beasts.

I heard such a mixture as I think was never in Chaucer's House of Fame . . . barking of dogs, grunting of hogs, wawling of cats, rumbling of rats, gagging of geese, humming of bees, rousing of bucks, gagging of ducks, singing of swans, ringing of pans, crowing of cocks, sewing of socks, cackling of hens, scrabbling of pens, peeping of mice, trulling of dice. (31-2)

He is so confused that he must cover his ears with the medicine pouches and hide before he can begin to discern one sound from another.

The universal translating potion enables Streamer to understand animal languages as if he were hearing his own. A crow flies into the room, and when Streamer touches him, the bird calls Streamer "'knave' in his language" (33). Streamer all at once understands not only the bird's insulting remark but that the bird has spoken using its own language, that is, bird, not human, language. The potion Streamer uses induces automatic apprehension of animal languages. The same ability to understand occurs again with the cats: Streamer states that Grisard began to speak "in his language (which [Streamer] understood as well as if he [Grisard] had spoken English)" (36), and Mouse-

slayer, “in her language” (37) that Streamer overhears, speaks to the cat council. In the first section of the narrative, however, Streamer recounts stories of cats and wolves that speak outright with humans in human languages, in English and Irish (13). He also notes that there have been recorded instances of other men for whom no potion had to be applied to understand the language of birds (21). Taken with the narratives of the cat council in the third section, the stories of cats able to speak human languages indicates that at least some animals have their own species-specific languages while also possessing the ability to communicate fluently in human languages. If they so choose, cats and other animals can transcend linguistic species boundaries to speak with humans. For Aristotle, a common spoken language creates the forum in which to discuss kinship—the *gens*, which becomes the *polis*; when a common language exists then so may membership in a group—in a political community. So why would the cats choose so infrequently to employ a language uniting them with humans?

Streamer wishes to gain access to cats’ language after hearing the Grimalkin tale. Finding that cats have a highly ordered and controlled society, well-hidden within his own, piques his interest. Robert Maslen states in *Elizabethan Fictions: Espionage, Counter-Espionage, and the Duplicity of Fiction in Early Elizabethan Prose Narratives* that “cat culture occupies the spaces left vacant by human society: cats convene under cover of darkness, on the roofs of city gates, in the holds of ships, in the furtive corners where adultery takes place, and in the private chambers where clandestine masses are celebrated” (79). This covert cat underworld contains double-agents: as domestic pets and familial creatures to their “owners,” cats observe and report to one another on the goings-on in their households. They meow and purr, play with dangling beads, and curl

in the laps of their human companions, all the while taking inventory of human society and behaviors. Reimer states that cats' reserved natures keep them both peripherally "integrated" into human society as dependent associates, but also sovereign, as spies.

Their aloof natures . . . keeps them from being fully integrated into the lives of the humans around them. Most cats enjoy human contact—the soft touch of a hand—but always on their own terms. The ability to fend for themselves allows them an independence not possible for other animals, like dogs or horses . . . The cat's seeming self-sufficiency renders him less valuable than more social domesticated animals . . . Their imperious and arrogant gaze troubles humans who are accustomed to deference from "lower" animals . . . Yet it is precisely their position, as observers rather than participants, that makes them an excellent choice for talking about what happens behind closed doors. (306-307)

Baldwin shows animals behaving in ways anthropomorphically similar to humans, interested in the lives of humans, and living side-by-side with humans. But these cats also live lives following their own myths, mores, and laws perhaps more rational than those of their human counterparts.

Moral laws suppress instincts by rationality through accepted definitions of right and wrong. Streamer speaks of human moral law when he states that the impaled parts of quartered humans (visible from the London street on which the tale is set) should be buried before sunup the following day, thus following Scripture.

Sometime quarters of men, which is a loathely and abhominable sight, do stand upon poles. I call it abhominable because it is not only against nature but against Scripture; for God commanded by Moses that, after the sun went down, all such as were hanged or otherwise put to death should be buried, lest if the sun saw them the next day His wrath should come upon them and plague them. (10)

On the one hand, Streamer's morality is so tied up in religious rituals, such as the precise time to have buried the parts of quartered men, that he negates the brutal practices of laws—of the quartering and impaling of fellow humans. He focuses instead on the presupposition that the feral cats in attendance are caterwauling in anticipation of eating

the forked remains. On the other hand, Streamer has heard anecdotal evidence concerning the sympathies of cats. He repeats a story he heard from ““certain of the house”” (10): a house servant asserted that “love and fellowship and a desire to save their kind is among cats”” as a truth he knew because of a story he heard. In the metadiegetic looping of narratives, the servant tells the story of a man who hired a friend of the servant ““in pastime, to roast a cat alive, and promised him for his labor twenty shillings” (16). When the burning cat was crying upon the spit, “there came such a sort of cats that if [the servant] and other hardy men ... could not have kept my cousin from them” (16), that the cats would have attacked. The cats’ reactions imply that the roasting cat cried out to its kin for aid, and many fellow cats headed to help when called. Streamer and his audience gloss over the ethics of brutality and kinship and discuss how the cats would linguistically understand a moral call to rescue. If cats did have the language skills to call for help, then that would mean that cats do reason, and therefore, warrant “humane” treatment. Instead, Streamer and the servants rationalize among themselves that the cats could be an embodiment of a witch.

These men would prefer rationalizing witches, demons, and transubstantiation than to suppose that animals have reason, kinship, and loyalties, that “Cat will to kind” in the face of abusive power. Instead of accepting the simplest explanation, that cats possess their own language unknown to humans, one of the servants insists that such cats are actually shape-shifted witches: “witches may take upon them cats’ bodies, or alter the shape of their or other bodies, yet this is not done by putting therein, but either by bringing their souls for the time out of their bodies and putting them in the other, or by deluding the sight and fantasies of the seers” (17). These cats must have been witches if

they had reason enough to solicit aid from their kin. If the cats were not witches in animal form, then these men (and others in the period) would be guilty of cruelty against another “reasonable” creature, or at the very least as accessory to abusive authority (although cruelty against a witch was permissible).

Abuse of judgment and consequent oppression can clearly be seen in the tale not only in the treatment of animals but in that of women. Oftentimes in *Beware the Cat* women are aligned with animals as lacking the faculties with which to rise to the level of “man.” In the narrative technology of glossing, women prattle and tell tales, fear much, and use their copious tears to manipulate men: Baldwin the glosser notes “it is as much pity to see a woman weep as to see a goose go barefoot” (43); “women’s answers are never to seek” (45); (sarcastically) “women are orators by nature” (42); “women are afraid of their own shadows” (45); and, “women can weep when they will” (42). As witches, however, women lose the qualities of their “nature,” as governable by men, to become more than dissembling and misleading. “Witches” are culturally understood to be manipulative women who are both dreaded and respected, who “are by nature exceedingly malicious” (19), but “are for fear had in high reverence” (17).

Through representations of similarity, women have been aligned with animals as objects of dehumanization. In “Women, Animality, Immunity - and the Slave of the Slave,” Penny Deutscher explains that practices of violence against women reflect macrocosmic power relations exemplifying society: “the concern about violence towards women overlapped with a concern about the fate of civilization, its direction—progress or regress—and concerns about the human, and the character of civilization” (5). In modernity, the state too often depended upon its displays of brutality. Women are like

animals in their being brutalized by men. Increasingly the period became aware that man takes on animality when brutalizing women as they do animals. In discussing the interrelated subordinations of animals and women, Deutscher maintains that in the period's literature, representations of many male animals behave better than humans with respect to their mates. In "The Production and Communication of Knowledge in William Baldwin's 'Beware the Cat,'" Terence Bowers notes that the gendered hierarchy of knowledge distribution is reversed in the tale. Women are considered in the novel as timid but cunning telltales, but, as with Mother Hubbard in Spenser's tale, they are also able to destabilize the male purview of narrative authority.

Almost all the cats, for example, are female; witchcraft is something handed down from mother to daughter as an exclusively female kind of knowledge; the old bawd not only corrupts young gentlemen, but in gulling the merchant's wife into committing adultery, she also undermines family life; and throughout, females are depicted as devouring creatures (most strikingly in the story of how Grimalkin consumes an entire cow in one feeding). The graphic scene of the female cat castrating the man in part III serves as a culminating representation of female rapacity. That this same cat narrates the end of the story underlines the connection between physical and mental emasculation: no longer are we hearing about devouring females, they are now doing the storytelling, taking over the male function of producing and transmitting knowledge. (8-9)

Bowers maintains that concerns of "emasculation" through the male "surrendering" of authorially transmitted knowledge to women prevailed at the time. While the discussion concerning the cat and human females in Baldwin's tale as threatening to patriarchy has merit, Bowers fails to take this idea further to explore the relations between gendered (indeed species-specific) power and command of speech—between language and oppression. Although both male and female characters (cat and human) in *Beware the Cat* are remarkable for their immoralities, the accomplished oratorical skills of the female characters border on dangerous displays.

Mouse-slayer's eloquence in front of the cat council not only leads to her exoneration, as she is able to prove her behavior to be in accordance with feline law, but its entertainment value fosters the council's urging her to continue at no hurried pace her tales of humans. The council enjoys her entertaining storytelling skills and gives her generous benefit to exercise her oratorical prowess. Mouse-slayer's exposition is esteemed by all in attendance—by both male and female cats—and respected quite differently than the period's sentiments concerning female human prattle or gossip. Mouse-slayer's articulate voice comes through as the most authoritative and persuasive in the tale, even surpassing those of Streamer and G.B. In fact, William Baldwin chooses to place most of the critically satirical messages in *Beware the Cat* concerning religion within Mouse-slayer's tale, not in Streamer's.

Mouse-slayer's strongest critique of religious conventions occurs in her account of the persuasive discourse of human female, that of her secretly Catholic mistress who profits to deceive and procure the virtue from an innocent young woman. This Catholic mistress kept ““one of Our Lady in her coffer”” (40), praying in secret to her Virgin idol outlawed under the Edwardian Reformation. One of her mistress's boarders was enamored of a merchantman's wife, but he was unable to convince the wife to satiate his lust. Mouse-slayer's mistress agreed to help the man and invited the young wife to dinner, having fed Mouse-slayer mustard-filled pudding and blown pepper in her face before the wife's arrival. Upon the young wife's noticing the weeping of Mouse-slayer, the Catholic mistress narrated the sad tale of her husband and son dying, leaving her alone in the world save only her married daughter. The mistress's daughter was turned into a cat because, even though married, she had rejected the advances of a young man

who then died for want of her. Stating in the letter he left for her daughter that “as without any kind of either love or kindness you have caused me to die” (44), the young man compelled the gods to disfigure her. Her son-in-law, so the mistress told the young wife, died abruptly and her daughter morphed into a cat, the very cat the young wife now sees sitting here crying before them. The gullible merchant’s wife was so convinced by the mistress’s sad tale that she did ““consent to commit whoredom”” (46). Through her eloquent and compelling narrative, *Mouse-slayer* reveals not only Baldwin’s message of the mendaciousness of Catholics but also her own message of the hypocrisy and perversions of misplaced human morality and human abuse of logic when evaluated against those of her own feline culture.

The male narrators abruptly close *Mouse-slayer*’s tale when she finishes her oration on the indignity of man, leaving G.B. to wax philosophical, if only to warn “all men to take heed of wickedness, and eschew secret sins and privy mischievous counsels,” because “the Devil’s cat, which will we or nill we seeth and writeth all our ill doings” (54). The cats and females in the tale highlight the vulnerability of authorial power, that the “independence of cats—and perhaps by extension of women, of Catholics, of languages other than English within the Tudor demesnes, and of the written word” (Maslen 81) threaten those who seek to retain hierarchical dominance. Being related to both virtue and the Devil; having secret abilities to harm men’s genitals, suck their breath, and change form; thriving within a matriarchal system; and having the ability to speak in the tongue of both animal and man, these female cats stand as examples of the Catholic social subterfuge against which Baldwin cautions. Simultaneously, the narrative handling, including the technologies of glossing which frame and contain them, of

females in the tale manifest the fear of the power of repressed voices and the ability of the oppressed to disrupt, form an alternative political community, and retaliate state-sponsored offences wrought.

Baldwin gestures to English assaults on the Irish language and community. Although Irish and Catholic were often conflated at the time, as they were both “fundamentally antagonistic to English government policies” (Maslen 78), the exploitation within the tale of the Irish language should not be overlooked as a commentary on the politics of language oppression more largely. Of the Irish stories of the first oration, Maslen recalls the power politics of language manipulation and opposition to Tudor language laws: “the Irish successfully resisted [English judicial] attempts to limit the use of the Irish language—Baldwin’s Irishman speaks a few words of Gaelic to remind his readers of the fact” (*Elizabethan Fictions* 78). Although Maslen insists that Baldwin’s cats “exhibit a number of characteristics which Protestant propagandists attributed to the Catholic clergy: they are sexually promiscuous, inordinately greedy ... and given to meddling with magic” (79), these cats should not necessarily be equated to Catholics. Instead, by reading the concluding Exhortation, as Thomas Betteridge suggests, we see that all humans have their own “cats”—symbols of an externalized lurking moral consciousness: “And that we may take profit by this declaration of Master Streamer, let us so live, both openly and privily that neither our own cat, admitted to all secrets, be able to declare aught of us to the world save what is laudable and honest” (54). Although there are similarities between Baldwin’s cats and Catholics, perhaps the larger point of the novel lies in the language and social exploitation of the Irish as compared with the cats, for to control language (as English

litigation attempted to do in Ireland) is to control a population. By retaining their language and political community, as the Irish had, the cats collectively undermine the stability and order of the dominant state's authority. And just as the Irish resisted, so too do the cats: the cats retain their feline tongue and, although they understand and can communicate using the language of the oppressors, they do so sparingly—prudently and carefully.

To what degree can true communication cannot exist between oppressor and oppressed, human and “animal”? The male human characters in *Beware the Cat* grant themselves exemption from animalistic natures they see human females and “lower creatures” such as cats exhibiting, and by this immunity, treat women and indeed all linguistic Others as they would ontologically lesser beings. Through his immunity and authority—his exclusive inclusion—the “civilized” man becomes rough, unrefined, even bestial in his treatment of both Other and Derrida's *other* other, the animal. Most humans in *Beware the Cat* have lost their moral sense, have become “uncivilized,” and, in accordance with beast fable expectations, their “natures” are more aligned with the tradition's “bestial” than with the animal natures exhibited by Baldwin's remarkable cats:

Animality . . . marks the origin from which human male brutality towards women is considered a degradation, and it marks the perverted form to which he seemingly devolves in that degradation . . . a contrasted vision of the civilized human. In order to be civilized, we would not be animal-like and similarly not savage. And yet the concurrent appeal to the animal will also indicate what humans . . . ought to be like. (Deutscher 6-7)

In many instances in *Beware the Cat* the reader is acutely aware of just how (beast fably) animalistic in nature the human characters behave and, likewise, how “animals” seem to rise in register through their actions. For example, one of Mouse-

slayer's "owners" lives with "an ungracious fellow who, delighting much in unhappy turns" (47), shoes Mouse-slayer with pitch. But upon nightfall the same man mistakes the now shod walking cat for the Devil coming to get him, and he yells for all to come save him. When the neighbors and priest glimpse only Mouse-slayer, they fall down the stairs into a pile, complete with one priest's buttocks singed by a candle and another priest falling face first into the bare, and very soiled, backside of a boy, a most uncivilized and slapstick spectacle:

Down [the priest] fell upon them that were behind them, and with his chalice hurt one, with his water pot another, and his holy candle fell into another priest's breech beneath . . . [and] the old priest, which was so tumbled among them that his face lay upon a boy's bare arse, which belike was fallen headlong under him, was so astonished that, when the boy, which for fear had beshit himself, had all to-rayed his face, he neither felt nor smelt it, nor removed from him. (49)

So embarrassed were they all that "they desired each other not to be aknownd of this night's work" (49), and make a pact of secrecy. Embarrassed by the uncivil pile of indecent parts and excretions, they do not find their own superstitions, their illogical and gullible natures, to be more humiliating. The use of language and rationality that was meant to separate human from "lower animal" entirely loses its significance in *Beware the Cat*. The cats in this tale masterfully deploy both language and logic more fluently and equitably (judiciously) than their human counterparts.

The discernments of reason supposedly make humans distinct in the animal kingdom, but according to Streamer, birds and beasts possess it, "and that as much as men, yea, and in some points more" (6). Master Streamer, Baldwin's arrogant orator, makes claims for "animal" reasoning by declaring that animals have the ability to think.

Baldwin debates in narrative asides as to whether Streamer's examples illustrate an unconscious inner-sense (instinct) or conscious higher-order thought.

And when Master Streamer had for proof of his assertion many things (of elephants that walked upon cords, hedgehogs that knew always what weather would come, foxes and dogs that after they had been all night abroad killing geese and sheep would come home in the morning and put their necks into their collars, parrots that bewailed their keepers' deaths, swallows that with celandine open their young ones' eyes, and an hundred things more), which I [Baldwin] denied to come of reason, and to be but natural kindly actions. (6)

Because his examples do not entirely convince Baldwin outright, Streamer goes on to elaborate to his captive audience that cats "understand and speak, have a governor among themselves, and [are] obedient to their laws" (54). Not only do these cats litigate and keep council, they also keep time—"I perceive by the tail of the Great Bear and by Alhabor, which are now somewhat southward, that the fifth hour of our night approacheth" (36). They also follow religious practices involving the worship of gods, goddesses, witches, and warlocks—"by the grace of Hagat and Heg" (36). Propositional mental states such as following a calendar and having a religious tradition are exactly what humans cherish to separate the human race from all other animals. By the cats having these traits, one could not deny their reasoning, and thus their membership in the exclusive inclusion.

The clearest example of animal reason occurs in the courtly respectability and civility of the cat council. "*Cats have laws among them which they keep better than we do ours*" (46), Baldwin glosses alongside this passage. When the council calls upon Mouse-slayer to explain why she disobeyed holy cat-law, she uses logic and reason to defend against fulfilling laws if and when the situation warranted, such as her recent premature giving birth. The cat court gives Mouse-slayer full liberty to tell her story.

Margaret Reimer explains that, were Mouse-slayer a human female, she most likely would not have been granted the sovereignty to have her “say in court”:

It is apparent that the proverbial curiosity of cats, and the entertainment value of Mouseslayer’s stories of human depravity, has required the continuation of her testimony. In England, where married women did not have separate legal identities until the nineteenth-century, unless they were “lucky” enough to continue for long in the widowed state, the ability of Mouseslayer to have her full say in a court of law seems remarkable. (310)

Baldwin’s glossing emphasizes the courteousness of the cats’ legal process, more urbane and considerate than those of the corrupt human world around them. Commenting on Mouse-slayer’s predicament, the gloss notes, “*There be false accusers among all kinds of creatures*” (51). The gloss thus gestures toward the judicial misdeeds of humans and the consequent abuse of legal procedures, highlighting them.

Charged with breaching the “holy law, which forbiddeth us females to refuse any males not exceeding the number of ten in a night” (47), the council allows Mouse-slayer to declare her life and honorable living without being hurried or interrupted. She is able to give reasons why she refused “lecherously offered delights” (37), both refusing to take the law in its strictest sense and using the law’s interpretation as a method of gauging moral behavior. Mouse-slayer stated that yes, she did refuse Catch-rat, and “bit and scrat him, which” cat “law forbiddeth” (46). When she was quite pregnant, Mouse-slayer explains, Catch-rat refused to give her food, alleging that she was lustful in wanting victuals, and ate all food in front of her, including her share. She birthed early due to malnourishment, and thus was in no condition to fulfill the cat law of female compulsory copulation, though he tried to force her. The council quickly rules that, upon great consequence, no males in this or such similar case should force a female into fulfilling

this copulation law, and bids Mouse-slayer, with much delight, to continue her stories, especially those of human indiscretions.

The “holy law” of taking ten males a night, while “unreasonable” perhaps to a human way of thinking, is based on the “natural” short and repeated copulations of cats. Cats are polygamous, even promiscuous, in their mating practices. Polygamy or promiscuity is not seen as an immoral behavior by cats—it is cat “nature” to act in certain ways. In humans, however, promiscuity is not a biological but a cultural construct (based on taboo), and in early modernity, Christian notions of monogamous matrimony were legally imposed. Monogamy and sexual restraint were part of early modern social control of sexual behavior. Viewing cat promiscuity against human sexual “nature,” cats by comparison seem dangerously sexually liberated and independent, uncontrollable. However, this tale makes plain that reasonable morality in humans is questionable, even perverted. For example, Streamer is worried about God’s wrath and plague for not properly disposing of torture victims’ remains as per his holy law. Streamer either fails to recognize or condones the perverted torturing, killing, and displaying of his fellow human’s quartered body. This manner of sentencing also underscores the perversion of reason in the execution of justice in human legal systems when compared to cat court processes. Although Mouse-slayer breaches the letter of cat holy law, she uses sovereign powers of discernment and interpretation to explain the law’s unreasonableness in particular situations. Streamer’s concern not with cruelty against humans but with the breaching of holy laws pertaining to rituals of burial shows a moral debasement, inviting the reader to speculate about the potential of man’s “reason” to self-regulate.

In her testimony, Mouse-slayer moves through a list of her various “owners.” Those “owners” listed include “a priest, a baker, a lawyer, a broker, and a butcher; all whose privy deceits” (51) she declares openly, and “a bishop, a knight, a pothecary, a goldsmith, an usurer, an alchemist, and a lord; whose cruelty, study, craft, cunning, niggishness, folly, waste, and oppression” (52) she abhorred. Mouse-slayer exposes the private transgressions of her various masters and mistresses to her cat community and to any wronged readers who may identify with her position in the power hierarchies. She does not seem to care if her human affiliates are Catholic or Protestant, fraud or harlot, rich or poor, but only if they live with moral decency.

In one case, Mouse-slayer wishes for one of her masters to know of her mistress’s indiscretions. In order to show how her mistress’s adulterous behavior was cuckolding him and withering his resources, when her master nearly walks in on the affair, Mouse-slayer bit the hiding adulterer in the genitals so that he cries out and is found. In another household, her master was a bookish knight with a fair wife, who too seldom “lay with her” (52). As a “wake-up call,” Mouse-slayer sucked the breath from her sleeping master, almost overwhelming him. She also speaks of the Madame who used her “wicked practices” to procure stolen goods, but hypocritically, “yet was she very holy and religious” (40), praying to the outlawed image of the Virgin to watch over all in her household to keep from danger and shame. It was this woman who tricked another into disloyalty, the young wife who wanted nothing more than to be faithful to her new husband, by making the young woman believe she could cause the death of another, or be transformed into a cat for denying physical pleasure to a lover. Not wishing for the man’s early earthly departure, “this innocent woman, otherwise invincible, [is] brought to

consent to commit whoredom” (46). As in the narrative juxtaposition of Master Streamer’s violation of his holy law with Mouse-slayer’s disobedience to her own culture’s holy law, the young wife’s illogical adultery stands in stark contrast to the charges brought against Mouse-slayer for her reasonable transgression. Marital monogamy is a construct of social order and authority in human law, and especially in monarchical rule. The madame’s deceitful scheme undermines the authority of marriage and the church and, thus, the political state. In cat law, however, the authority of the cat kingdom was left unchallenged by such an exception. In fact, feline “infidelity” is not always immoral. Human laws are shown as based on an arbitrary need for dominance and control, while cat laws are reasonably enforced and based on cats’ “natures.”

Although Mouse-slayer often enjoyed living with her masters and mistresses and was, as a rule, loyal to fair ones, she is completely loyal to none save herself and her own cat “nature.” She wanders in and out of her owners’ lives with disregard, and the margin notes, “*Cats change their dwellings often*” (52). In *Beware the Cat*, cats often choose to live side-by-side with humans but almost never wish for their separate cat society to be known to their human “owners” and human society. The novel’s depiction of cat motives is easily believed by anyone who understands the aloof nature of cats. After Mouse-slayer’s testimony, Streamer spies two cats discussing their enjoyment of “privy deceits” (52). The salacious testimony allows the reader to get pleasure from human folly through the cats’ superlative structural social integrity. Baldwin’s use of beast fable conventions prepares his readers for the story to meet certain scripted expectations, but his satire goes well beyond them. Baldwin’s tale draws the reader to reflect upon mid-Tudor England political practice: “The satire inherent in inverting the expected order—that humans are

morally grounded and cats are marginal creatures with no moral center—draws attention to the failures of human compassion and morality that prompted the writing of the work” (Reimer 312).

*Beware the Cat* deals with “closed door” issues—subjects dealt with privately or secretly—making “cats” the perfect audience due to their “sharp eyes” (Aberdeen Bestiary 23v) and their observational faculties rather than their participatory natures. How many of Baldwin’s readers were “cats” themselves? The title of the novel, *Beware the Cat*, stands as a warning, cautioning readers to be mindful of who may be listening and watching, as cats can and will discuss others’ doings amongst themselves. But it also invites empowerment of readers through their own identification with “cats” and their subversive power in the tale.

By his infiltrating the abstruse cat society through alchemy, wishing to learn their secrets and discuss them among men, Streamer reveals himself more interested in cracking their linguistic code than in hearing what the cats are actually saying. Streamer could hear the sounds the cats made—the sounds he considers may be their speech—but the languages of animals remain unperceived by unmediated powers of human perception, leading to larger early modern philosophical questions concerning the limits of human understanding. Following the logic of anthropocentrism, if no human could perceive cat language, no cat language would exist (but it may). The possibility of the unperceived existence of cats’ language, though, leads Streamer to research and concoct his fanciful potion, pillow pouches, and lozenges. He follows an empirical model of scientific experimentation.

Although cat language exists outside human perception, the ability to understand their language is acquirable through the natural sciences of alchemy and astrology. Thus Baldwin shows the fallibility of anthropocentrism, but also, through its satirical treatment, the limitations of any experiment conducted to counter it. Cat society subsists parallel to and under human society, with both shown as having intrinsic value. One only needs to “hear” cats to reveal their idealized society, studiously unheard within a precarious human social network of power and privilege. But Streamer did not really want to listen to cats, only to hear them, a kind of auditory scopophilia much like humans wishing to define not what they are but what they are greater than, and subsequently missing the message for the method.

Why do the cats in *Beware the Cat* not wish to talk with humans even though their species has the ability to do so? Perhaps the “animals” do not wish for human kinship and thus choose not to communicate unless necessary. Conceivably the cats, as did the Irish the English, and women do men, warn each other to “Beware the humans.” The humans in this tale seem unable to properly understand that the falsehoods they concoct, cloak themselves with, use to understand the world, labor to keep hidden from others, if released, would actually set them free to embrace a more wide-ranging kinship. Baldwin wrote *Beware the Cat* as religious satire, but by his obscuring the lines between real and “incredible” (“marvelous”), he also satirizes social hierarchies and their liminal boundaries. Baldwin uses early modern anthropocentrism and an emerging notion of animality to show the growing social mutability in mid-Tudor England, purposefully hearing the stories through the language of the oppressed. The boundaries humans invent—paradigmatic separations between man and woman, master and slave, human and

animal, culture and nature, man and Other, knowledge and instinct—are secured by distance (an exclusive inclusion). Building identity based on difference or positive transcendence from a negative—the Other, the animal—leaves each being incomplete. Cat culture and human culture exist in sovereign worlds overlapping in minor measures. But in the narrative lines and their technologies in the tale, Baldwin completely destabilizes the separation between man and animal. If the boundary between man and animal—the foundational belief upon which all other boundaries are framed—collapses, then so too do they all.

Just once in *Beware the Cat* does mutuality and true community accidentally occur, when Streamer, along with the cat audience to Mouse-slayer's tales of human irrationality, according to the gloss, "*laughed in a cat's voice*" (49). Streamer's ability, or inability, to speak in cat language goes unreported in his account; it stands that he remains unaware of his formal boundary crossing, although Baldwin the glosser notes it. What Baldwin shows with this one line of gloss is a secondary and supplemental transcendence of boundaries and Otherness. Streamer knows that these cats have the ability to speak human languages (both Irish and English), that these animals have proven themselves reasonably to be "human" (exclusively included). In their ability to speak human language, the tale's cats have negated human exceptionalism by proving their cognitive faculties. But these sovereign cats have hidden their language and reasoning abilities from the humans. The cats wish to remain sovereign from the humans, their "infeline" Other. Streamer's ability to speak in cat language does not reduce him to the status of animal but, rather, further shows the liminality of the binaries to actually be blended complexities. The dualisms inherent in early modern culture—man and animal,

male and female, or culture and nature, for example—are not hierarchical but rather corresponding and occasionally mingling, much like cat and human cultures. The ability to speak the language of the Other, in a larger ontological context, allows Streamer an association with the Other, to laugh along with the cats in one “voice” at the absurdity of humans, to be—if only rarely—“admitted to all secrets” (54), to recognize that cats value themselves—although circumspectly—against their Other.

## CHAPTER III

“We Don’t Just Speak, We Talk”:

Complex Partnerships of Social Interaction in Cervantes’ *The Dialogue of the Dogs*

Partnerships between dogs and humans in Miguel Cervantes’ *The Dialogue of the Dogs* provide focused commentary on the deformations consequent on changing material conditions of the world of early modern capitalism. In Cervantes’ novella, the philosophical consideration at issue is no longer only an ontological one, bearing on the place of morality in government, of dog and human, or of animal and sovereign animal. Instead, man and animal both belong to part of the same disenfranchised class, now equal partners in peripherality—objectified and marginalized from power that is increasingly economic. Further, the identification of the human position to “dog” and the literal transmutation of a human into a dog emphasize the emergence of a class consciousness in a shared—vulnerable and “creaturely”—relegation of social status. Cervantes’ use of the story’s dogs’ restless and serial disillusionments in forming bonds with people reflects upon the displaced power of “humans” as trustworthy signifier. In *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, dislocations in the face of forces of modernity showcase a shared helplessness that recognizes an equally powerless creaturely experience of life, whether man or animal.

The framing of *The Dialogue of the Dogs* by the surrounding tale of *The Deceitful Marriage*—as interdependent stories—shapes the narratives quite differently than if the two are read simply as separate, self-contained works collected in the same volume. The complicated print history of the two novellas along with developing technologies of print culture, also trouble their narrative relationship. *The Dialogue of the Dogs* was first published in Spanish as *El Coloquio De Los Perros* in a 1613 collection of twelve short

works by Cervantes entitled *Novelas Ejemplares* (*Exemplary Stories*). Later translated versions of the *Exemplary Stories* chose to rearrange the stories in the original collection, and, in some cases, omit certain of the novellas; one tale often omitted in subsequent printings has been *The Dialogue of the Dogs*. The translated 1640 edition of *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, printed by John Dawson in London, for example, contains only six of the twelve stories, with *The Deceitful Marriage* and *The Dialogue of the Dogs* being two of the omitted stories. A translated 1694 compilation printed in London lists one novella from Francis Petrarch (*Patient Griffel*) and six of Cervantes' twelve *Exemplary Tales*, again with *The Deceitful Marriage* and *The Dialogue of the Dogs* being two of the omitted stories. The translated 1728 printing by S. Farley in Bristol, contains six of the twelve novellas, with *The Dialogue of the Dogs* preceding *The Deceitful Marriage*. Later printings, such as the translated 1822 printing by Luke Hansard and Sons in London, broke apart the works into volumes. The first volume contains five stories, two of which are *The Deceitful Marriage* and *The Dialogue of the Dogs*. Similar to the 1640 printing, the translated 1742 London printing collects six of the twelve *Exemplary Tales*, excluding *The Dialogue of the Dogs* and *The Deceitful Marriage*. A translated 1766 London printing by Caesar Ward of *The Dialogue of the Dogs* includes only *The Dialogue of the Dogs* and *The strange History of Cortado and Rincon*, omitting *The Deceitful Marriage*. A translated 1881 London printing by George Bell and Sons contains all twelve *Exemplary Tales*, including *The Deceitful Marriage* and *The Dialogue of the Dogs*. The 1881 printing also includes *The Serpent* and *The Pretended Aunt*, assembling a collection of fourteen tales. The last story, *The Pretended Aunt*, had remained unpublished until 1818.

*El Casamiento Engañoso* (*The Deceitful Marriage*) was published as a separate tale within the same 1613 collection of stories, preceding *The Dialogue of the Dogs*. Critics such as Thomas Hart, Nicholas Spadaccini and Jenaro Talens have argued whether *The Deceitful Marriage* and *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, due to the tales' thematic and narrative links, are actually two separate novella by Cervantes or works that should be read as one. The 2008 translated version by David Kipen, used in this study, employs *The Deceitful Marriage* to frame *The Dialogue of the Dogs* (as in the original 1613 Spanish edition), both before and after the dogs' tale, thus placing *The Dialogue of the Dogs* as a metadiegetic tale told within *The Deceitful Marriage*, and naming the merged works together simply as *The Dialogue of the Dogs*. Kipen's insertion of tale within tale functions much like the 1822 printing (noted above). However, in the 1728 printing, *The Dialogue of the Dogs* precedes *The Deceitful Marriage*. The 1728 printing of *The Dialogue of the Dogs* ends with Campuzano's awakening by Peralta to discuss and reflect on the dogs' dialogue just read. The 1766 printing excludes *The Deceitful Marriage* altogether from its narrative and thematic association to *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, going so far as to entirely omit Campuzano's framing narration when printing *The Dialogue of the Dogs* as a separate novella. In the 1822 printing, *The Deceitful Marriage* contains *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, and the framing separation occurs within *The Deceitful Marriage*, by the offset title "CONVERSATION / Between Scipio and Bergance, / Two Dogs belonging to the Hospital of the Resurrection, of Valladolid, generally called the Dogs of Mahudez." From this point onward in the text, the chapter heading changes from "THE DECEITFUL MARRIAGE" to "CONVERSATION OF THE TWO DOGS," and remains

“CONVERSATION OF THE TWO DOGS” even at the end when the frame of *The Deceitful Marriage* returns to close the story.

The 2008 Kipen translation of *The Dialogue of the Dogs* is framed by the preceding novella *The Deceitful Marriage*, wherein the protagonist, Campuzano, presses his friend Peralta to read his transcription of a conversation between two hospital guard dogs he happened to overhear on two sequential nights while he was a patient at Hospital de la Resurrección (in Valladolid). Campuzano explains to his friend, “‘I’ve written [the conversation] out as dialogue, to avoid the unwieldy repetition of “said Scipio,” or “replied Berganza,” which, for even the best of us, gets old in a hurry”’ (19). The title page of Campuzano’s manuscript (as translated by Kipen) reads, “THE DIALOGUE OF THE DOGS SCIPIO AND BERGANZA,/ A.K.A. THE DOGS OF MAHUDES, AT RESURECTION/ HOSPITAL IN THE CITY OF VALLADOLID” (21). The original (1613) title page reads, “novela y coloquio que pasó entre Cipión y Berganza,” the *story* (my emphasis) (“novella”) and dialogue (“coloquio”) that took place between the two dogs. The word “story” (“novela”) changes the technology of narrative framing—different for each subsequent edition. Embedding himself into the story, Campuzano forms a metadiegetic narration. Campuzano as a diegetic narrator—a character—tells the story of Scipio and Berganza, who move the narration into the “meta”diegetic (in diegesis, the narrator presents the actions of the story; in metadiegesis, the diegetic narrator tells a story). The framing elements move further into the metadiegetic when, later, Berganza tells Scipio of the witch Cañizares’ account of her own life (a point to which I shall return). Campuzano’s metadiegetic narration occurs only once, at the beginning of *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, when Berganza asks Scipio if anyone can

overhear them. Scripio inaccurately replies, “Nobody, as far as I can tell, though there’s a soldier near here dozing. This time of night, he’d rather sleep than eavesdrop” (26).

Campuzano is, in fact, listening in on and relating the dogs’ ensuing stories.

In analyzing *The Deceitful Marriage* and *The Dialogue of the Dogs* as interdependent frames, a distinctive discursive form unfolds. In “Holistic Fiction: Cervantes’ *Casamiento Enganoso* and *El Coloquio de los Perros*,” Galen Browkaw points out that framing *The Dialogue of the Dogs* by *The Deceitful Marriage* gives *The Dialogue of the Dogs* its structure, enhancing the dialogic quality of the narrative technology to reveal a complex underlying arrangement. Instead of using the Italianate tradition of serial stories told in more conventional narrative form simply as collections, as he had in *The Deceitful Marriage*, Cervantes uses in *The Dialogue of the Dogs* the Renaissance neo-Platonic tradition (as in Thomas More’s *Utopia*, for instance) of conversation and dialogue:

The use of the dialogic form immediately invokes Renaissance tradition of the didactic dialogue. It is important to note that in spite of this formal difference both works are dialogic: we gain access to the story about the deceitful marriage only through the narrative speech act within the conversation between Campuzano and Peralta, and to the *Coloquio* through the act of Peralta’s reading of the speech acts of the dogs. (461)

Enclosing *The Dialogue of the Dogs* within the larger frame of *The Deceitful Marriage* constructs character-driven vignettes related to one another by their contribution to moral development. Incorporating the discursive Socratic—and early modern—method of dialogue highlights barriers to and limitations of the dogs’ experiences. Without the exterior narrative of *The Deceitful Marriage*, the story in *The Dialogue of the Dogs* would be restrictively dialogue-driven. By this framing and layering of the narratives, a

remarkable transformation occurs: man and dog exchange places. Dogs, as man's companion, are at the sides of their masters, "speechless, although not voiceless" (Brokaw 464), but within the novella of *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, it is man who functions as unspeaking auditor of the dogs—mute at the side of dog. Much like the layers of narrative in *Beware the Cat* and "Mother Hubbard's Tale," the storylines of *The Dialogue of the Dogs* contain marvelous testimonies from their fringe-found narrators. Such stories, told through multiple marginalized voices, leave readers surprised by the subtle and intricate artistry and satirical levity for which Spenser, Baldwin, and especially Cervantes are known so well.

In *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, Berganza and Scipio, two hospital guard dogs, find themselves in possession of human speech. For one night, the two hospital dogs share in considering the misfortunes of Berganza's life's quest to have an inclusive partnership with man. Although guilty of many of the same corruptions he faults humans for committing, Berganza claims that he has led a morally virtuous life. Berganza's scrupulous exercising of virtuous actions identify him, not necessarily as an enfranchised animal, but rather more plainly with the human, "privileged," class. Berganza's didactic discourse expounding humanity's moral corruptions places him as "creaturely" equal—ethically and politically displaced—at the side of man.

The early title of the collection—*Exemplary Stories*—reveals how Cervantes had thought of his works. In Spanish, the word "ejemplar" literally means "copy," or "example." "Ejemplares" are worthy examples of ethical behaviors—exempla—that should be copied, or alternatively, object lessons—warnings of deterrence. Cervantes' *Novelas Ejemplares* is a collection of "novel" (new rather than traditional) exemplary

moral fables. The *OED* gives multiple definitions for “exemplary,” which separate into two general categories: a “type or figure” and “an example, pattern of conduct” (def. 1 a and c); or “a copy or transcript (of writing)” (def. 2b). The earlier definition of “exemplary” is used in much the same way as modern English uses *example* to mean demonstrating a particular or a model of imitation. In medieval literature, exempla provide a model of good or bad behavior in order to teach ethical principles. Beast fable were considered a subcategory of exempla—moralized tales. In the Renaissance, however, “the humanist's disenchantment with imitative symbols of moral conduct” (Rigolot 559) leads to writers turning away from an unproblematized use of exempla.<sup>1</sup> Most critics, such as Alban Forcione in his book *Cervantes and the Mystery of Lawlessness*, do indeed read *The Dialogue of the Dogs* as an “exemplary” tale:

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<sup>1</sup> For further study on exempla in Renaissance literature, see the October 1998 special edition of *Journal of the History of Ideas*, which addresses the Renaissance dilemma of the exemplary, especially Dan Engster, “The Montaignian Moment” (*Journal of the History of Ideas* 59.4 [1998]): 625-650; François Rigolot, “The Renaissance Crisis of Exemplary” (*Journal of the History of Ideas* 59.4 [1998]): 557-563; and Karlheinz Steirle, “Three Moments in the Crisis of Exemplarity: Boccaccio, Petrarch, Montaigne, and Cervantes.” (*Journal of the History of Ideas* 59.4 [1998]): 581-595. For further study of the exempla in Cervantes, see Alban K. Forcione, “The Classical Novella Reconstructed: Exemplary Unexemplarity and the Liberation of the Reader,” *Cervantes and the Humanist Vision: A Study of Four Exemplary Novels* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

We observe human beings everywhere descending to the level of the beast, and we quickly realize that the only heroism visible in its murky atmosphere is ironically to be found in the pathetic figure of a dog, whose principal defense against the swarm of evil adversaries is an ability to flee. The elaborate animal symbolism of the work contributes significantly to its overwhelming vision of people living by instinct, gratifying primitive impulses, allowing themselves to be dominated by one another, living in fear of one another's rapacity, and drawing together only in the form of the pack or mob, the community of the ravenous beast united in the hunt and in the slaughter of the outsider. Such are the implications of the animal imagery which runs through the work and appears in its most concentrated form in Canizares' confession, and like most of the central imagery which emerges here, we feel that it draws its power from a deep Christian tradition. (83)

By using the word "exemplary" ("ejemplares"), Cervantes promises stories of moral edification (a justification of storytelling still highly revered in Spanish culture) as well as the imitative, or superlative, excellence of his models of craft. As Thomas Hart explains in *Cervantes' Exemplary Fictions*, Cervantes went to great lengths to demonstrate that his stories were inoffensive, and to appeal to readers for their entertainment value (11-14). In his bid for an enlarged readership, Cervantes went so far as to submit the manuscript of his work to both ecclesiastical and civil censors, although only legally obligated to present it to the latter (11). Submitting his work to compound sets of censors contrasts markedly with the actions taken by Spenser imprudently to critique the court with such minor discretion that led to Burleigh's recalling of "Mother Hubberds Tale." Cervantes' work was approved by the ecclesiastical censor Fray ("Frère") Juan as a model of proper and wholesome recreation, of "eutrapelia":

I have seen and read the twelve *Exemplary Stories* composed by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, and since it is plainly said by the angelic doctor Saint Thomas [Aquinas] that eutrapelia is a virtue that consists of wholesome recreation, I judge that true eutrapelia is to be found in these *Stories*, for they entertain with their novelty [and] teach with their examples how to shun vices and practice virtues, and the author has achieved his intention, giving honor to our Castilian tongue and warning the nation of the damage that may be caused by certain vices, together with many other merits, so I believe he can and should be given the permission he requests. (qtd. in Hart 15)

Hart goes on to note that Cervantes' insistence of his stories' inoffensive moralities may have been due to concerns about their unpredictable interpretations upon circulation in print. Critics such as John Lyons and Timothy Hampton cite the maturing acknowledgment of reader participation in the period's print practices, and Lyons notes that the sixteenth century "witnessed the decline of the novella collection and the rise of the novel in its place. The novella is a genre that attempts or pretends to show the world through examples, while the novel in the seventeenth century centers on the vain quest for examples" (72). Cervantes' insistence on the inoffensive, indeed edifying, recreational nature of his stories may have been a shrewd gesture to disguise divisive and controversial opinion. Content that could easily be read as an attack on priests and pastoral practice, or an appropriate literary conventions, could be cloaked behind a sanctioned use of the edifying satire of "eutrapelia."

By satirically detaching truth from idealism (as in Platonic, Moravian, or Erasmian dialogue, for instance) in *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, Cervantes is able to "pass" his novella off as literary while allowing the larger world of modernity to be objectively studied and discussed by two dogs. Berganza recounts the pastoral romances that his butcher master's mistress reads, explaining how the shepherds of books "spent their lives singing and playing on exotic instruments": "how the shepherd of Anfriso sang

threnodies to peerless Belisarda, and in all the mountains of Arcadia, there wasn't a tree whose trunk he hadn't reclined against to sing, from the time the sun left the arms of Aurora in the morning until Thetis embraced him at night" (32). The mistress would talk of the charming, virtuous lives of the novelized shepherds in the pastoral romances:

the great shepherd of Filida, a peerless painter of portraits, had been more trusting than fortunate. For Sireno's swoonings and Diana's regrets, she thanked almighty God and the wise Felicia—who, with her miracle elixir, dissolved the spiderwebs that bound her and brought light to the perilous labyrinth. (33)

What Berganza finds, though, when he lives among shepherds, is that the songs are unremarkable and insipid, accompanied only by the cracking of crooks and sung with voices meant for gargled caterwauling: the shepherds "spent most of the day scratching fleas or patching their sandals...all those books are dreamy things, well enough written for the diversion of layabouts, but without a wit of truth. If they were true, my shepherds would have at least a vestige of that supremely happy life" (34). In a pointed critique of ideology, Berganza calls these stories "the ones I used to fall for" (35).

Such a decisive detachment of shepherds of fact from shepherds of fiction allows the dogs to expose the early modern man's less-than-honorable nature. Berganza's disappointment in humanity is a manifestation of a greater nostalgia. Berganza's disillusionment with "true" shepherds, based upon his idealistic impressions—culturally reinforced—speaks to a larger regret concerning stable social expectations. He sees himself as a dog of the medieval bestiary: resourcefully intelligent, sacrificially loyal, and vigilantly brave. But bestiaries reflect a medieval world of known moral interpretation. Bestiaries presented an ideological "truth"—not realistic but only

accepted based on the period's confidence in authority.<sup>2</sup> The medieval reliance on authority had since shifted to an early modern reliance on observation, experience, and interpretation, but Berganza holds himself, and humanity, to the medieval belief of a stable and ideal moral exemplar. The world in which Berganza lives no longer places forms into manageable ethical systems, no longer supports the stable social categories and consequent roles found in the medieval world. Berganza's disenchantment stems from his inability, or refusal, to "read" the modern world around him.

The dogs' dialogue can be read as a type of humanist dialogue, a satirical revolt against residual medieval scholastic rhetorical modes. The dialogue between the two dogs mainly deals with Berganza's reflections on his own life and how his ventures have changed his character through experience. The recreation of orality within the first transcribed and subsequently printed dialogue gestures a conversation between Cervantes and his readers. A reader, like Scipio, is encouraged to follow Berganza's story while reflecting on the justice of the events that transpire. The two dogs use Berganza's autobiography to draw attention to larger discussions of personal responsibility and self-sufficiency.

The dialogue as a genre departs from that of sermon and moves into the cooperative space of meaning-making interlocution. More than an exemplary tale, the story of the exchange between two dogs creates a communal space in which Berganza and Scipio work together to discover "truth." Further, through the tale's multi-leveled

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<sup>2</sup> However, whether or not those in the medieval period believed in the real existence of or knew fantastical creatures to be simply of human imagination could be debated.

framing and use of dialogue, Cervantes employs the metaphor of “reading” dialogue to position his own conversation with his readers. Scipio is not a passive receiver of Berganza’s didactic tales but a restorer of the narrative from digressions, an assessor of Berganza’s actions, an apologist, and a judge of the larger world in which both have similarly served.<sup>3</sup> In Cervantes’ tale, the “evolutionary” idea that human consciousness emerged from animal, requiring a temporal break to develop, to become fully human and thus not animal (Agamben’s *bare life*) is false. In *Canines in Cervantes and Velazquez*, John Beusterien claims that such a fracture between human and animal “is established as ... a fact whose logic is fallacious since the moment of change exists at a fabricated past mythic moment” (35). *The Dialogue of the Dogs* should not only according to medieval habits of mind be read as an animal or beast fable. Nor should it be read as an exemplary tale—as a human author speaking to inculcate morals through an animal—but, radically,

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<sup>3</sup> Multiple critics such as S. B. Vranich and E. C. Riley have cited Sigmund Freud’s lifelong interest in *The Dialogue of the Dogs* as the inspiration for his psychoanalytic narrative theory, even adopting the role of Scipio when corresponding with a childhood friend (who had adopted the name Berganza) into adulthood. Freud’s assuming the name of Scipio—the listening figure with which Berganza shares his life and ethical issues, and who leads him to gainful insights—suggests the importance of the take to the model of Freud’s psychoanalytic “talk” therapy. Critical features of *The Dialogue of the Dogs* significantly contributed to psychoanalysis, such as the use of animal as metaphor for subconscious energies, projections and identifications similar to those found in medieval bestiary.

as a satyre-hybrid, a genre that disavows Agamben's severance of *zoe* from *bios*. The tale is that of a "satyre" animal discovering a sense of self and sovereignty in his place beside man.

Through layered narration, Cervantes distances himself from direct authorship in much the same way that Spenser does in "Mother Hubberds Tale" and Baldwin in *Beware the Cat*. The technology of distancing contributes to the formation of the misshapen beast-satire generic body. Inventing layers of fictitious authorship twice removes the historical author from the "origin" of the work's critical satire—a culturally produced mélange. On the one hand, the narrative framing distracts the reader's attention from the worrisome passing going on in the tales on several levels, including that of the author. On the other hand, Cervantes uses class passing in *The Deceitful Marriage* to appeal to readers. When the two dogs discuss the moral deceptions of Berganza's masters in *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, the reader notes, and identifies with, the humans' shift into a "creaturely" class.

In *The Deceitful Marriage*, both the protagonist suitor Campuzano and his bride Doña Estefanía de Caycedo attempt to pass for stations higher than they hold, each deceiving the other with the intention of personal benefit. When Campuzano first sees Estefanía, her face is veiled although her hands are exposed to show her rings, suggesting a deception and an unveiling to come:

"Her veil hung low and hid her face...she had a hand as white as fine porcelain—and rings just as expensive. That day I was cutting a very dashing figure myself, with that fine chain you've seen me wear, and my hat with the feathered band, and my flashy dress uniform." (5)

Campuzano pursues her, finds himself inside her lavish house, and enters at the behest of her servant. He then discloses that he, too, deceives, although with flattering words: he “sweet-talked” until his “lips went numb.” He “bragged and swaggered, offered and promised, and made all the professions” he “thought necessary to finagle” himself “into [Estafania’s] inmost heart” (6). Estefania tells him of her dowry, and her skills at being both a mistress of the house and a lady, and that she is looking for a husband for protection and commandment; and he in turn tells her of his small fortune. After four days they marry, and he finds himself enjoying the luxuries of wedlock and a newfound fortune, for a week.

Economically ambition-driven deceptions illuminate ill-placed confidences in collapsing early modern hierarchical boundaries. Campuzano and Dona Estefania dupe each other, each believing the marriage to the other to be a rise in social rank. Their lies to each other descend into self-deception. Campuzano explains that, “Such devoted ministrations were even beginning to transmute my base intentions” (9), amending his desire of a higher station to one of unconditional love. Through a comedy of deceits, Campuzano finds himself betrayed by his bride who has “procur[ed] a good husband, whatever subterfuge it entailed” (11). She has “made off with everything” in his trunk “but one suit, unfit to wear except on the road” (13-14), believing in the richness of his possessions. Campuzano says he cannot complain about being duped, though, because turnabout is fair play: he feels “like Don Simueque’s son-in-law in the old story: He tried to marry off his one-eyed daughter,” but on her “wedding night she wished she was blind” (14), Campuzano jokes. All his stolen finery was counterfeit, and he has nothing save the venereal disease his wife gave to him, landing him in Resurrection

Hospital. Cervantes implements humor to present both the absurdity of two frauds deceiving one another and the very real social anxiety concerning their abilities to “pass,” along with the emerging biological realities of the transmissions of disease.

In *Passing for Spain: Cervantes and the Fictions of Identity*, Barbara Fuchs draws on the use of disguise and the trope of “passing” to discuss the unease felt in Spain during the historical and social shifts of the Counter-Reformation. “Purity” was at the forefront of holding together an idealized nation, with identity based on the tenets of honor and family bloodlines (3). Boundaries between social identities were riddled with opportunistic characters who challenged the exclusionary classification system:

The danger of passing, as of the implicit acceptance of others who are willing to perform the hegemonic identity, is that actual cultural difference may disappear. In real terms, passing may involve eventual assimilation and the loss of identity. Yet once the long-term fragility of passing subjects—and the impasse that passing ultimately represents for the marginalized culture—are recognized ... [t]hose stories become more powerful and resonant in presenting the unresolved question of belonging and identity: passing effectively casts repressive categories into crisis, even if it does not necessarily resolve intolerance or afford permanent accommodation within the boundaries of a narrowly imagined Spain. (9)

The ability to pass for something one is not, for purposes of escaping repressive categories enforced by the state, implies that one has agency in the construction of the self. Framing *The Dialogue of the Dogs* with *The Deceitful Marriage* highlights the sophisticated way two individuals both pass and are vulnerable to being duped by the art of passing, duped by the resourceful imitation of claiming a station one does not hold.

The dialogue of Berganza and Scipio, when viewed through the framing narrative of *The Deceitful Marriage*, suggests a deeper cultural anxiety concerning deceivers and infiltration. Moral impostors—specifically those of Berganza’s many masters—find relative success at subverting social order. As in Mouse-slayer’s oration in *Beware the*

*Cat*, Berganza recounts to Scipio how he moved through masters, taking on new roles and proving himself a worthy companion to each as far as his moral behavior would allow him. As with Mouse-slayer, Berganza's commitment to his own moral code forces him to live an honorable life, punish masters for transgressions, and repeatedly seek more deserving ones.

Born to meatpacker watchdogs and as a consequence of this class origin, Berganza inherits his first master, a butcher named Nicky Flatnose. Nicky trains him, "with the older mastiffs," how to attack a bull, and make themselves "a prize of his ears" (27); in no time, Berganza became an expert. His second master, a shepherd, names him Barcino and employs him to protect his flock. His third, a rich merchant, retains him as a watchdog and so admires his attentiveness that he orders Berganza to be well-treated, although his master soon forgets him good will. His fourth master, a constable who employs him as a deputy, Berganza finds out to be a greater lawbreaker than those he arraigns. His fifth, a drum major who names him Gavilan, has him perform tricks for money. His sixth, although he does not term them "masters," are gypsies who seclude him in a cave, hoping to receive a reward upon returning him to his drummer. His seventh master, a tightfisted Moor, employs him to stand guard over his orchard, where he meets an eighth master, a poor but generous young poet. A ninth master stages the young poet's disappointing play. The tenth master is Mahudes at the hospital of the story's beginning. Working on each of his successive masters, Berganza tries, and fails, to reform the larger immoralities of his composite human and dog society.

Berganza's failures at reform are due in part to an inability to speak. Near the close of the dogs' dialogue, Berganza tells of accompanying Mahudes in alms begging to

the home of the city's mayor. Finding himself alone with the mayor, Berganza wishes to pass on to him some political advice concerning the plague of venereal diseases landing so many in Resurrection Hospital:

"It struck me that I should take advantage of our privacy to pass along some advice...about how to remedy the notorious condition of vagabond girls...I wanted to say all this to the mayor and I raised my voice, thinking I already had one. But of course, instead of pronouncing some well-reasoned argument, I barked so fast and so loud that I annoyed him, and he ordered his servants to chase me out and beat me senseless. Ah, if only one lackey in particular had been without his senses. But instead he heard his master's command, rushed in and grabbed a copper amphora that came to hand, walloping me about the ribs so hard that I bear the scars of those blows yet." (103-4)

Although he withdraws from the world and his serial masters due to his disillusionment with their immorality and corruption, Berganza still seems unable to accept his own limitations, specifically his lack of articulate human speech, which frustrates his ambitions as moral reformer. Told by a disillusioned Berganza, *The Dialogue of the Dogs* is the story, not so much of one dog serving serial masters, but of a life of social instability and creaturely displacement.

From his first station, Berganza realizes absolute disillusionment regarding his duty and integrity. The butchers "are people of little conscience and less soul, merciless, fearing neither king nor justice ... most of them ... living in sin" (27). Berganza's master Nicky aggressively trains him in bullbaiting from a young age. His master teaches Berganza, then named Gavilan, to also carry a basket of stolen meat to Nicky's girlfriend, and he does so without eating the meat. Berganza shows control over his carnal desires, especially commendable given his predilection for bullbaiting. Beusterien notes that "The butcher has the telltale signs of sexual disease on his face; his name is Flatnose or 'Romo,' a word that indicates his face, particularly his nose, was damaged by syphilis"

(42). Along the way a beautiful girl exchanges the meat for an old moccasin, informing Berganza to tell “‘Nicky Flatnose never to trust an animal. From the wolf’s mane, trust only a hair—and even that, only when he’s dead’” (30). Berganza knows that he should take back what she has stolen, but he reveres her, and “didn’t want to sully those clean white hands” with his “dirty, bloodstained mouth” (30). Berganza rejects the impulse to both eat the meat and to sully the idealized woman. He refuses to glorify his animalistic “being,” and instead elects to honor his “becoming.” By rejecting “his role as butcher’s accomplice, Berganza refuses to participate in the bullfight, perhaps the most renowned Spanish anthropocentric tradition of animal design. Berganza no longer acts as an appendage to the human body in overcoming the forces of wild animal fury” (Beusterien 46). In fact, never in *The Dialogue of the Dogs* does Berganza show carnal desire. His self-control over lustful actions stands in stark contrast to the libido of his syphilitic master, who lasciviously exchanges sexual favors with women for meat.

Confronted with the brutality and immorality of man exhibited in the slaughterhouse, Berganza escapes, seeking to locate order and morality in pacific, pastoral service as a sheepdog. With the shepherds, Berganza, now named Barcino, believes his true calling to be in pastoral life. Berganza, contented in his new station, remarks, in keeping with his bestiary character, that “it’s the proper and natural chore of dogs to guard livestock—a duty that bespeaks great virtue, because it shelters and protects the meek and defenseless from the high and mighty” (30). But, although diligent in his duties, Berganza finds himself unable to outpace the wolves (like the parvenu Ape and dog of “Mother Hubbard’s Tale”) that are ravaging the flock. Returning in the mornings to find dead sheep, the shepherds scold the dogs “for negligence, then order the

dogs punished for laziness” (36). Berganza declares that, “Blows rained down” upon the dogs, “and recriminations on top of them” (36). Morally indignant that he was being unjustly punished, and that his “care, sure-footedness, and bravery were proving useless” (36), Berganza waits for shepherds to call the alarm, only to see it is the shepherds themselves killing sheep for pelt and meat. The shepherds are the true rapacious animals, displacing again, for a second time, man as Berganza’s moral exemplar. Berganza, confused and offended by his misplaced trust, declares to himself, “who can defeat this evil? Who has the power enough to proclaim that the defenders are doing the attacking, that the sentinels sleep, the trusted plunder, and those who watch over [dogs and sheep] are killers?” (37). Berganza flees to escape the now-common beatings and feelings of useless powerlessness, and finds employment in Sevilla in the household of a merchant.

The slaughterhouse and pasture stand as the only two exempla vignettes in the tale. John Beusterien observes that, on the one hand, Cervantes refrains from using “inhuman” and “inhumane” to describe both the butchers and the shepherds. On the other hand, Cervantes “jumbles up the relationship between the animal and the human in the tradition of the animal exempla” (51). In the first two biographical episodes, Berganza does in fact model the conventional animal exemplum of incorruptible virtue. In subsequent experiences, however, Cervantes shapes Berganza into a more rounded character by contrasting his earlier ethical behavior concerning his masters of slaughterhouse and pasture with his succeeding “human” behavior, revealing an equal and unsettling displacement of man and animal alike.

Berganza utilizes a manipulative tactic to gain entrance into his next station by distorting truth, feigning his character, and artfully deceiving with body language. Scipio

and Berganza agree in their approach to finding new masters: adopting the posture of humility. Berganza reveals his embracing of duplicity when he describes his strategy of humble posturing:

I pretended humility whenever I wanted to enter the service of a household, having first cased the place... Then I parked myself by the door and, when an apparent stranger came up, I barked at him. The lord of the house would come out and I'd lower by head, wag my tail, go up to him, and lick his brogans [a work boot] with my tongue. If he hit me, I took it and, with the same modesty, I'd come back to whimper at his feet. Seeing my resolve and noble bearing, they never pulled that again. In this way, after a couple of tries, I usually found myself staying in the house. (39)

With the merchant-master, Berganza “played grateful and jumped shamelessly,” and “made such a show” of appreciation and affection for his master, all the while remembering, “the fable of Aesop about the donkey who was such an ass that he wanted to nuzzle his master the same way a puppy does, and earned a pulverizing pounding” (40). Taking on the airs of others, Berganza explains, sometimes backfires, but those who are at the top of a social class should not stoop to deceive:

“The moral of the story is that the graces and airs of some aren't always becoming in others. The fool may caper, the jester strike poses and leap, the rakehell bray or imitate the song of the birds. The lowly man who cares can ape the gestures and actions of animals, but the highborn man, to whom none of these hijinks can do credit, should refrain.” (40)

The merchant generously rewards Berganza as a watchdog with food and autonomy. When he becomes the merchant's sons' companion, Berganza experiences his greatest contentment. Berganza carries the merchant's sons' bag to school and appreciates both the innocence of the school children who treat him lovingly and his time learning from the children's school lessons taught by the Jesuits. Finally ordered home when the children play with him instead of reviewing their lessons, Berganza finds that

the merchant forgets the generosity he once offered him. The merchant chains him and feeds him small rations. Persuaded to be silent by a slave girl's offers of meat and cheese so that she may nightly meet with her lover, Berganza finds that his conscience pains him for accepting bribes to neglect his duties. Berganza laments his predicament—with a medieval habit of mind—stating that he “wanted to do right” by his master, since he was “accepting his hospitality and eating his bread. This is always the right thing to do, not just for [dogs’] famously loyal kind, but for all who serve” (50). But once he “saw the insolence, thievery, and dishonesty of those slaves,” he resolved, “like any good servant, to hinder them” (53) as best he could. Berganza finally refuses the slave girl's bribes, and twice they silently tangle, him biting and scratching her to prevent her leaving her position as slave. After she stops feeding him altogether, Berganza resolves that, although he may starve, he would not stop barking. Once completely starved, the slave girl tries to feed him a sponge fried in lard to kill him, and again he flees.

The reader is encouraged by Berganza's honorable efforts and sympathizes with his plights until the tangle with the slave girl. Here he departs from an emerging class consciousness that would unite him with her in slavery and servitude. When he attacks the slave girl, Berganza makes animal of human, through his diction, unintentionally likening his violence to the slave with his earlier bullbaiting at the slaughterhouse. The problem of his “moral” drive to attack her raises the larger question of Berganza's need to enforce the stable social categories of the medieval world. His vengeful attack on the slave stems from his feelings of vulnerability in a world of arbitrary and corruptible boundaries.

Berganza, confident that laws represent moral boundaries, is renamed Gavilan by the constable who recognizes him from the slaughterhouse; he becomes a deputy at the side of a constable, finally in a position to enforce his moral code. Berganza's convictions in the law begin to wane when unexpectedly finds himself part of a scam of shaking down patrons of loose women, one "strumpet" (57) being the constable's paramour. Along with the constable and his loose lady are a notary and two henchmen, each taking a cut of the mark's "fine." When Berganza steals off with one patron's ham-heavy pants, the group determines to arrest the landlady. The landlady's shouting about their legal fraud and her family's nobility catches the ear of a magistrate, who arrests them all.

Even though he knows his master to be less than honorable, Berganza respects bravery, loyalty, and righteous punishment. In another instance, to the amazement of a muzzled Berganza who "stood marveling" at his master's "daring, his brio and courage" (62), the constable apprehends six infamous thugs singlehandedly: "It was a marvelous thing to see how deftly [the constable] lunged—the thrusts, the parries, the calculation, and his eye ever alert for anyone sneaking up behind him" (62). That night the constable and Berganza visit a house where they meet the ruffians from the fight. Berganza discovers that the fight had been a rehearsed performance paid for by the constable: "the fencing moves they demonstrated—halfway through the meal, they even hoisted themselves up and started dueling with their hands, illustrating various feints, employing fine swordsman's jargon—and, last but not least," the ruffians acknowledged "the august personage of their host, whom they all respected as lord and master" (63), the constable.

Berganza, crestfallen to find his brave master truly a cowardly impostor, finds some solace that his “master’s avarice had finally proven his undoing” (66) when duped by two horse thieves. Later that day, the magistrate takes Berganza to round up thieves, and when ordered to ““get the thief!”” (66), Berganza, spent from his moral complacency, ““complied with the magistrate’s orders to the letter and lunged” (66) for his own master. The magistrate orders Berganza to be unharmed: ““Nobody touches him. The dog only did as he was told”” (66). With his interpretation of the command deemed fitting by the magistrate, Berganza escapes to find yet another a new master.

As an entertainer, Berganza realizes that humans will use him as an agent of social control, lobbing ridiculing statements at the crowd under the guise of amusement. Through his work, though, meets a woman, Canizares, who defies boundaries and who grants him the gift to do the same. Berganza’s new master, the drum major, renames him Gavilan and teaches him to dance in time, “to do other tricks so difficult that no other dog could ever learn them” (67). Berganza considers rolling over “for applause, instead of rolling drunks for a crooked constable” (68) a more noble pursuit worthy of his intelligence. Berganza becomes known as “The Learned Dog,” and although he completes the tricks on cue, he feels sorry for the marks of his master’s sarcasm:

“Come, friend, Gavilan, jump for that randy old man you know who dyes his beard black. If you’d prefer not to, jump for the pomp and circumstance of Doña Pimpinela de Plafagonia, who used to run around with that Galician waitress in Valdeastillas. Don’t you like magic, Gavilan my boy? Then jump for the scholar Pasillas, who calls himself doctor even though he never graduated.” (70)

One mark, though, berates the drummer for his derision of the town’s alleged witches. The crowd, angry at Canizares, the objecting old hospital matron, for spoiling their entertainment, “left cursing the old woman, calling her not just a witch but a sorceress,

and not just old but hairy, too” (72). At night Canizares finds Berganza alone. She believes Berganza to be Montiel, the son of a fellow witch who was turned into a dog by Camacha, the most powerful witch in the town (a point I return to in Chapter V). After her confession, Canizares strips and anoints herself, asking Berganza (now called Montiel) to guard her body while she inquires of the Devil how to retransform him to his rightful human form. Berganza believes she has died while communing with the Devil and, while examining her body, remarks on her hairy, leathery, skeletal, animalistic form. Here, as with the slave girl, Berganza animalizes by differencing them from humans, both characters used and referred to animalistically. Notably, only with these two women does he degrade a human being to the status of Other. Berganza drags Canizares’ body to the courtyard where some comment on her death, others feel for a pulse, and yet others begin to stick pins in her, ridiculing and violating her. She finally awakens and rightly believes Berganza, who stood guard over her all night, to be the cause of her dishonor. Canizares begins choking and yelling at him, leading onlookers to believe him to be rabid or a demon, and he flees without an answer about how to return to his human form.

In his final vignettes, the normally unreserved Berganza, concerned that the coming morning will purge them of their ability to talk, limits his meditations on his masters. He speaks to each master’s moral failings. When held for ransom by gypsies for twenty days, Berganza spends his time, “observing their great craftiness, their conniving and deceit, the talent for thievery among men and women both, almost from the moment they forsake their security blankets and learn to walk” (88-9). To disguise their slothfulness, the gypsies “work as tinkers, meantime fabricating picklocks” (89), but are always thoughtful about how they can deceive and thief. The gypsies marry among

themselves because “they don’t want their evil customs discovered” (89) and deliver their own babies without help, washing the newborns in cold water so “they can take anything an outdoor life dishes out” (89).

Moving through multiple masters allows Berganza to witness the various failings of humans and strengthen his moral resolve. Escaping from the gypsies, Berganza stays a month with a Moor on his orchard to learn the ways of the Moorish “gangsters” who “steal” by “selling the fruits of ... patrimony” (92), acquiring and never expending money. The Moors work without much sustenance and require Berganza to do the same. Nor do they know chastity or take religious orders, and the Moors “don’t waste their sons on studies, because their sole science is how to rob” (93). In this orchard, Berganza meets an enchanted youth in an old baize suit writing poetry, poetry this boy believes to be “as elegant as can be imagined” (94) and that his play “will be one of the greatest spectacles ever seen on a stage” (95). The kind young poet shares his soup-kitchen bread and affection with Berganza and the two travel to the impresario’s house. Here actors gather to hear the work of the poet. All slowly leave except the manager and Berganza, and sadly Berganza describes the play “as if Satan had written it to ensure the total rout and ruin of the poet” (97). The actors return and harass the poet who leaves with “his great dignity intact” (97). Berganza stays with the actors and becomes “a talented physical comedian and farceur” (98). In one skit, though, he suffers an almost fatal wound but is not able to avenge himself then due to being muzzled, “and afterward, in cold blood,” Berganza didn’t wish to. He moralizes that “premeditated vengeance smacks of cruelty and a nasty temperament” (99). Berganza grows weary of the stage life as it “cried out for both attention and punishment” (99) and seeks refuge in a church

hospital, committing himself to the service of others and continuing his chosen life of humility and charity.

The reader can sense Berganza's exasperation and exhaustion at being unable to sustain an inclusive partnership with a worthy master, although he tries once more to reform the corrupted humans. In his work with an alms collector, Berganza finds himself in the city mayor's home. Wishing to offer his thoughts on the need for social reform, Berganza is paid with a beating. Likewise, while visiting a noblewoman's home, he is attacked by her lapdog, a creature "so small, [the noblewoman] could have hidden it in her bosom" (104). Berganza, yet again, must silence his righteous anger and suffer unjust dishonor. With each moral defeat, Berganza and Scipio meditate on the world and humanity's demoralizing disorder. Scipio reflects upon the mayor's ordered beating of Berganza, stating that "no matter how good, the advice of the poor is never taken... The wisdom of the poor is hard to make out—the shadows of need and misery obscure it" (104). Reflecting back upon being attacked by a lapdog, Berganza notes that "even lily-livered cowards are brave and reckless while in favor, and they have no scruples about offending their betters" (105). The dogs, powerless against the forces of modernity, wax nostalgic for moral stability and social location.

Berganza ultimately realizes the futility in his crusade to find and loyally serve an honorable master. He retreats into the sanctuary of the hospital, finding the same corruption within the hospital as in the larger world. At the hospital Berganza discovers that, "for the most part, it's a certain kind of person who dies in a hospital, and similar people come to similar ends" (103). Berganza tells Scipio of four particular patients complaining about their misfortunes: an alchemist, a poet, a geometer, and an economist.

The poet, following the Horacian rule of not publishing a work until it has spent ten years in a drawer, has retained his poems for twenty years, editing to perfection. He complains that he cannot find a prince to whom to dedicate his work and longs for an earlier, more worthy era: ““A prince I say, intelligent, liberal, and generous. What a miserable and depraved age ours is!”” (100). The alchemist similarly laments his failure to find a backer: ““If only I had the proper instruments, or a prince to support me with the necessities required by alchemy, I’d be lousy with gold, with more riches than Midas, than Crassus or Croesus”” (101). The alchemist declares that, with the proper equipment, within two months he could have the philosopher’s stone and produce gold and silver. The alchemist fails, though, to state that the philosopher’s stone was thought not only to transmute metals but also to rejuvenate and restore health as an elixir of life, even perhaps granting immortality. The geometer has spent twenty-two years trying to square a circle and searching for the Aleph, ““the fixed point”” (101), his futility likening Tantalus or Sisyphus. “Aleph” (א) is the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet and in geometry represents transfinite cardinal numbers.<sup>4</sup> As the numerical value of Aleph is one, it also represents the oneness of God and the unity of God and Man, and as Aleph is a silent letter, it also refers to the humility of silence. To find the Aleph, according to Robert M. Haralick’s *Inner Meaning of the Hebrew Letters*, one must offer oneself by refining the animal within:

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<sup>4</sup> This differs from mathematical infinity as Aleph: a search for the size of infinity within a number set.

Now the animal desires and passions within us resist their own refinement. They resist because it is they who resist recognizing the line of Godly light. Therefore, it is these animal desires and passions that are the source of our insatiableness, anger, pride, lust, envy, sloth, and avarice. They represent the inflated  $\pi$  within us. (16)

The economist finally bursts into the conversation, noting that they are in this hospital due to their poverty, and stating ““to hell with our trades, which neither feed nor amuse their practitioners”” (102). The economist’s latest counsel concerns the erasing of the national debt by asking His Majesty to decree that once a month, all vassals between fourteen and sixty eat only bread and water for one day and donate to the king what would have been spent on other food, thereby erasing the national debt in twenty years.

All four men—poet, chemist, mathematician, and economist—yearn for an earlier era that would honor their systemized medieval scholastics of art, medicine, theology, and law. These four displaced medieval scholars live in an early modern world. They challenge reality with misguided amendments and superannuated scholarship, and modernity refuses to pay them heed. These four anachronistic intellectuals waste away in a hospital due to their venereal diseases, manifesting the untamed passions which threatened the social order that now marginalizes them. Berganza observes the connection between physical and moral corruption in many masters such as the butcher and the gypsies. Although he notes the same moral misguidedness and physical corruption in the four scholars, Berganza (perhaps Montiel) fails to recognize his own parallel plight. Berganza, too, suffers from a nostalgia for a former world, which sentences him to a secluded hospital life on the periphery. Berganza’s wistfulness evidences his equal vulnerability in the modern shift of social disorder.

The greatest moral failing for Cervantes is that of hypocrisy, of passing oneself for that which he is not. In *The Deceitful Marriage* as in *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, the protagonists are both hypocritical themselves as well as critical of the hypocrisy committed against them. Berganza rails against the deceit committed by the fair-handed woman at the slaughterhouse, the shepherds as wolves, the constable. Only one of his masters did he even lash out against and to bite. Berganza's other two victims, women are enduring situations they cannot seem to leave.

Canizares, the witch who works as a hospital matron, is conscious of her hypocrisy. She, aware of her duplicity, tries to control her behavior, not "nature":

"I am a witch, and I cover my many failings with the cloak of hypocrisy. How true that if some esteem me and honor me as good, then plenty more, not two fingers' width from my ear, call me by a shameful name...I can't think noble thoughts, because I'm partial to gossip. I can't act nobly without first thinking nobly, which I can never do. Still, I believe God is good and compassionate and knows what's in store for me, and that's enough." (82)

She speaks of the grace of God while working for the Devil, stating that though she knows better, vice has become habitual. But Berganza, for all his disillusioned morality, is a hypocrite, too. He chides gossiping and sermonizing, but he himself commits both; he feigns humility to gain entrance to homes; and, most importantly, he subjugates two humans to the status of animal, of Agamben's "bare life." Scipio calls Berganza on his duplicity, stating that if Berganza were a man he would be a hypocrite: Everything Berganza does "would be for show, feigned, false, put on only to puff" himself "up like all the hypocrites do" (52). Notably, Scipio stipulates that as a man Berganza would be a hypocrite, implying that dogs' morals are not the same as humans' morals. But the

reader finds that, in fact, Berganza behaves too similarly to human to ignore. His vulnerability to being duped while committing hypocrisy himself is most human.

Crossing boundaries of identity and morality leads not only to socio-political instability, but also to the complexities of exclusion. If one is able to “pass” for a higher station, including that station’s supposed “correctness,” how are impostors and their true natures known? The border and identity crossing of Berganza’s masters is a thinly veiled metaphor of their subversive morality. Although all the masters affect the manners of and pass for membership in higher political and social stations, status itself is performative. The grandest of these roles is when Berganza serves as a police dog. Within this station, three times he witnesses his master and his accomplices’ failure at passing. The first time is when Berganza helps fleece a prostitute’s customer of his money. and the innkeeper, who is also the madam, futilely declares her blood purity as a protection against indictment. The next instance of failure at passing takes place when Berganza finds himself at a banquet of underworld villains and discovers his master’s corrupt pacts, marking his master as the grandest villain. The third failure occurs when Berganza’s master arrests a naked sleeping outlaw to strengthen his reputation. When he discovers such duplicitousness, as was the case with the constable, Berganza feels it to be his duty to exact consequences for behavior transgressive of the social order. But unmasking falsehood does not always belong in the public eye. In the case of the slave girl, Berganza could have easily revealed to their master her late night exercises but chooses to manage the penalties and delegate justice himself. Berganza’s powerlessness to restore social stability manifests in these attacks on slave and witch. However, his outdated moral code leaves him blind to self-awareness.

Cervantes, authorially twice-removed, tells the tale of two marginalized beings meditating on a world that condemns and censures them, not realizing it to be their own. Berganza and Scipio discuss the human world's immorality and how Berganza's partnerships with them have led to adverse outcomes for him. Berganza feels he remains unsullied in these transactions and associations, remaining true to his "nature," hypocritically ignoring his own displacement from his medieval moral code for virtuous behavior. Fully aware of the insincere performative roles he plays to win security and affection from each master, as well as earn a livelihood, Berganza remains mindful of the choices he makes and his freedom to reject both decisions about the nature of man and masters. Berganza's loyalty not to his master but to his own moral code forces him to renounce each master. What he fails to perceive is his own movement from the stable, unquestioning loyal servant of the bestiary dog into the realm of a franchised subject, moving and choosing in a modern world. His "natural" duty is to serve in honorable life, as a medieval bestiary dog. But the Berganza who punishes those he deems guilty of moral transgression is a "dog" of a very different world. In giving correction, he is forced to try to find yet another new, more worthy master whom he can serve with complete loyalty but he is actually forming serial commercial relations. Berganza is portrayed not as morally stable and virtuous but as resourceful and reasonable: quick to sniff out and condemn—even attack—the moral inconsistencies of others, although he is not unblemished himself. Berganza conducts himself through the conditions of modernity with medieval decorum in a world of man-as-beast. Neither he nor the humans he partners with are above nor below their own natures, much less one another's.

The children and Jesuits in the tale remain the sole examples of genuine virtue in humans and their episode provides a moral ground otherwise lacking in the picaresque novella. The pastoral perfection absent among the shepherds is found in the Seville Jesuit school, with the priests, “like mirrors that reflect purity, piety, great sagacity and, finally, profound humility” (45). Berganza notes how the priests tend their flock of children with the upmost virtue:

I still cherished seeing the love, the tenderness, the care and dedication [the priest] brought to the education of those boys, nurturing the fragile shoots of their youth so as not to bend or divert them from the road of virtue, which they studied along with their letters. I saw how gently the teachers reprov'd their charges, and how merciful were their punishments, how apt their examples. They motivated with rewards, and uplifted with wisdom. In short, the teachers painted the ugliness and horror of vice and the beauty of virtue so that, abhorring one and loving the other, their students might realize the destinies for which they'd been born. (44)

The humble efforts of the Jesuits contrast starkly with the profit-driven motives of his masters. The Jesuits are the only true shepherds, who do not labor under arrogance and deceptions, driven by ruthless bestial instincts. Berganza honors them as examples of rightful leadership that confirm his stable bestial moral sense of wisdom and virtue. Even as a dog, he, too, is treated briefly to what he felt to be the ideal life of a scholar, and he enjoys the companionship of the students, their joy, kindness, and humanity to him:

I lived the life of a king—and even better, because I was carefree. The students liked to play with me, and I was so loving with them that they could put a hand in my mouth, and the littlest ones would ride on my back. They'd throw their caps or hats, and I would fetch them cleanly with a great show of rejoicing. They'd give me all I could eat, and they loved to see that, when they brought me walnuts or filberts, I'd crack them like a monkey, leaving the shells and eating just the meat. Just for fun, one of them brought me a huge salad in a napkin once, which I ate just as if I were human. It was winter, when buttered rolls are all the rage in Seville, and more than one Latin textbook was sold to spoil me with pastry. ... Among scholars, virtue and fun keep company, and they while away their youth in learning and fun. (45)

The priests and children accept Berganza, not for duped duplicity nor in fear of his fangs, but as a fellow creature, and they, like he, emulate the humanist principles they learn and teach. The Jesuits and their students constitute the only human exempla in the complete novella.

The greatest limitation to his moral reformation remains his inability to speak to humans, or so he believes. When Berganza finds the shepherds guilty of fleecing the sheep owner, he states that he “wanted to blow the whistle,” but found himself “mute, filled with confusion and outrage” (37). Although the bribes of the slave girl made Berganza “mute for days on end” (54), he silently battled her on behalf of social stability. Like his poet master who, threatened by actors incensed at his horrible play, exits stating he shall not cast pearls before swine, Berganza, too, blames his failures on the characters of others, not on his own limitations. Specifically, moral reformation demands the ability to speak with humans. Not possessing human language leads to Berganza's imposed consequences to be perceived by their recipients as viscous attacks, and not so wrongly so. In certain instances, such as in the episodes involving the constable and the slave girl, Berganza's actions reek of vengeance. But Berganza is unable to see this in himself. His failure to recognize not only his own moral flaws but also that his disillusionment as a

reformer is not due to man's deep moral corruption, as he believes, but to his own lack of human language. Berganza resigns himself to his belief that he is a dog in a man's world, when, in fact, his greatest limitation is being a medieval bestiary dog in a modern world.

Berganza remains unconcerned about his origins or true nature. In fact, his main interest lies with his self-presentation to Scipio (overheard by Campuzano) rather than with the possibility that they are dogs transmuted from humans, and possibly twin brothers. Their sustained interest in the "passings" of Berganza's masters effects how the reader interprets the two dogs: they could be more than they outwardly appear. And yet Berganza and Scipio do not use their newly acquired human language with a human. They instead spend their time and gift of tongue discussing Berganza's efforts, wanderings, and laments. Although they know they could be of "human" status, they choose not to pursue passage nor recognition. By focusing on the morality they hold rather than the physical form within which it is contained or its origins, the two dogs are arbitrating their own identity creation. Although their agency is limited without human language, when opportunity makes cross-species discussion available, they choose not to form community this way. Because they choose not to speak with humans when language becomes possible, they unconsciously acknowledge the collapsed boundaries they wish to secure. Much like the sovereign cats in *Beware the Cat*, Berganza and Scipio consider sharing a language with humans akin to sharing an identity. They fall short of recognizing animal and human as true "creaturely" partners.

Throughout *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, the properties of the human and animal are inter-ascribed to one another, and with them an overshadowing impression of class disorder—of mutilated forms and mutated orders—manifests. Predominantly, humans'

cruelty is described through simile and metaphor as being animalistic, suggesting humans “creatureliness.” Inferring of human degradation by animal associations include the comical—tales of horse thievery with the constable, the gypsies’ mule hoax, and the poet withdrawing his pearls before swine—and the entertaining—the Aesop fable of the donkey behaving as a puppy to his master. But other, grander instances of man-to-beast metaphors show hierarchical collapse. Scipio likens the Moors living in Spain to snakes in their country, “breeding and sheltering all these morisco vipers” (93). Berganza describes his composing poet as being “surrendered to his woolgathering” (94). In the final biographical passage in the tale, Berganza compares those of high society to the lapdog who bites him, attacking the honest and honorable, and he wishes to tear those in high society to pieces.

Berganza’s reflection on high society here circles back to the initial biographical passage of animal and human flesh being torn in the slaughterhouse. Berganza begins his biography with a dreadful portrayal of the Seville slaughterhouse where he believes he was born. He describes the ungovernable people who work at the slaughterhouse as being ““like buzzards, supporting themselves and their mates on whatever they can steal”” (27). These people tear apart the carcasses at night, stealing the choicest cuts and organs: “But nothing amazed or disgusted [Berganza] more than how these butchers kill a man as easily as you would a cow. In an instant, two or three of them plunge their horn-handled dirks into someone’s belly as if they were goring a steer” (28). The violent gashing of humans mirrors the gouging of animal flesh. The butchers’ hungry accomplices would collect their take at dawn. When Berganza is given the task of taking his master’s mistress hers, a beautiful woman steals the meat and tells him to remind his

master “‘never to trust an animal’” (30). Before she steals from him, Berganza sees in her a shared sense of humanity, her pure essence represented by her beauty. However, in her duping declaration to never trust an animal, she reduces her own status, while also suggesting a difference between her morality and Berganza’s. Berganza biting the woman’s hand would be a gesture of defiance against savagery and hypocrisy, but it would also be cannibalistic within Cervantes’ complex allegory.

In the second section, Berganza discovers shepherd life to be not as pastorally romantic as he had heard in books. The shepherds sang not “with delicate and mellifluous voices ... but with cracked caterwauling” (34), and they spent their days scratching fleas. But more importantly, these “shepherds” are a pack of wolves, deceiving the trust given to them by both higher and lower stations, by both the sheep owner and animals. Berganza, astonished and bewildered at their social and moral disorder and betrayal of trust, explains that their actions flabbergasted him: he gasped when he realized “that the shepherds were the wolves, and were raiding the flock they were supposed to guard. They notified the master of the ‘wolf’s’ depredations right away, giving him the pelt and part of the meat, but they wolfed down most of it themselves” (37). As in his first station, Berganza, shocked by man’s “inhumanity” and disloyalty, recognizes man as a predatory, cannibalistic animal. This imagery becomes especially repugnant when highlighted by the allegorical Christ-like shepherd who nurtures and protects his flock. By taking on the role of the traditional adversary to the shepherd—the wolf—the perversion and disorder of the modern world is stressed through bestiality.

In subsequent sections, the metaphor of social and moral collapse in the human world is further expressed through animal comparisons. Berganza explains that his fight to subsist required him to take food bribes from the slave girl, but his honor finally got the better of his stomach, compelling him to commit an exercise in faith against “the bitch” (54):

I went after her without barking, so as not to disturb the household, and in an instant I tore her shift to shreds and gouged her thigh. That little maneuver sufficed to keep her bedridden for more than a week, faking I don’t know what illness for her masters. She healed up, returned another night, and I tangled with the bitch again. Without biting her, I clawed her all over as if I were carding a fleece. (54)

He likens her to a sheep, a telling allusion directing Berganza to act not as protective shepherd but voracious wolf. Berganza’s position as the constable’s police dog obliges him to join in corrupt hunting schemes. Some of these schemes include a “peculiar variety of landlocked fishing” (56), seeking out customers to exploit by “legal eagles” (57). Furthermore, although the constable constructs himself a lion-like defender and guardian of law and order, Berganza declares that the constable “was really no braver than a rabbit” (64) in hunting his prey. In assigning human motives to animal behaviors, Cervantes collapses the boundary of separate identities for man and animal. Early modern Spain’s equation of lineage with respectability and loyalty tied blood purity to the caste system. The caste system in Spain was built on the knowledge that the qualities and characteristics of people varied greatly depending upon traits such as race, ethnicity, and color. Cervantes’ likening man’s actions to animal’s critiques this social interpretation of purity. Berganza associates humans from all caste levels—from slave to

nobility—with animals. Berganza both confirms the absent distinctions between humanity and animality and longs for their restoration.

Canizares the witch provides the most physically animalistic character in the *The Dialogue of the Dogs*—her life most “bare.” When she breaks up the crowd after being insulted by the drummer, the crowd leaves, calling her “hairy.” Later, excited finally to find Berganza, whom she believes to be Montiel, the transmuted child of her friend, she bends down and hugs him. Her disregard for propriety disgusts Berganza, and he states that ““She would’ve kissed me on the lips if I’d let her, but that was disgusting, and I wouldn’t stand for it”” (72). Berganza’s recoiling from her animality stands in stark contrast to the fair but thievish hand of the young woman from the slaughterhouse who he did not wish to sully by biting. Canizares tells Berganza of her black magic mentor, Camacha, who was known to turn men into animals, ““in particular for keeping a sacristan for six years in the form of a mule,”” noting that such women ““turned men into beasts...enslaved them until they seemed like beasts”” (74). Canizares pragmatically discusses the working interest in slaughtering infants, then explains that when she anoints herself and attends the witches’ Sabbath, the witches ““turn into chickens, or owls or crows, and fly to the place”” (81-2) where their master awaits them. But Canizares’ “fearfully ugly” (84) animalistic form unsettles Berganza more than the tale told of his possible transmutation and by whom:

She was more than seven feet long, a bag of bones overgrown with black, hairy, leathery skin. Her belly, which looked like cowhide, covered her privates, and even hung halfway down her shanks. Her breasts looked like two dried and wrinkled udders, her lips were pallid, her teeth clenched, her nose pointy and crooked, eyes mismatched and staring, hair disarranged, cheeks sunken, neck ropy, chest concave, and finally, everything skeletal and demonic. (83-4)

With Canizares in her trance, Berganza wanted to bite the witch to resuscitate her, but he “couldn’t find any part of her that didn’t repulse” (84) him. Berganza bites her heel and drags her to the courtyard, and when awakes, she, so furious with him, attacks him with her “talons” (85) and in return he bites onto her slack midsection and drags her around the courtyard.

In his dialogue, Berganza compares many humans to animals, but only twice does he animalize humans in his actions as he recounts them, and notably, in both instances he degrades women. He violently attacks the slave girl as a “bitch,” and implies with the metaphor of clawing of her skin like “carding wool,” that she is a sheep. Given his previous station as a sheepdog and his outrage at sheep abuse, Berganza demonstrates that he is no better than the false shepherds. Although the witch treats Berganza with the utmost esteem, he describes her as a repulsive beast and cruelly subjects her to scorn and derision after violently dragging her naked body into public.

In both instances, Berganza reverses the animal-human hierarchy himself, an action that when humans commit he finds detestable. Using the representations of animals to dominate humans, calls into question his moral superiority as greater than that of man. Beusterien claims that “Berganza’s animal story itself is one in which the animal is compared to the human world rather than one in which the human is compared to the animal” (53). But Berganza critiques the butchers and shepherds as “killers,” slaughterers, murders, and notes how the butchers see little difference between animal and man. Berganza’s ethics are not those of an exemplary animal but of a displaced human. He, too, brings down bulls at the slaughterhouse, and he too attacks the slave girl in the same fashion in which he describes the butchers’ “gouging of carcasses” (28).

Berganza condemns the shepherds for their animalistic behavior, and due to his medieval bestiary ethics, places himself above man, morally superior to them. Berganza, a liminal animal-man himself, lives in the collapsed boundary between man and animal while criticizing men who cohabit with him in the same space.

Because of their lack of language production abilities, the dogs have maintained an internal monologue—a Christian symbol for a conscience. Scipio states that the ability to speak is a divine gift he has “wanted for so long” (25). He and Berganza “don’t just speak,” they talk, as if they “could even think. And yet the power of thought has always been so far beyond” them that “the main difference between men and animals is” (23) that men can think and animals cannot. Although Berganza and Scipio support bestial categorizing, any difference of cognitive functions between man and animal collapses under their own aptitudes. “Speaking” implies one-way communication while “talking” describes a dialogue. A conversational exchange of ideas implies intersubjectivity, precisely the gift they have been given. Berganza says that he too feels the same as Scipio: ever since he “could chase a bone” he has “longed to talk, to say all the things” he has “been saving up in memory for so long that either they were growing murky,” or he had “forgotten them completely” (25). Berganza describes this divine gift as “this windfall of speech, and the blessing of human faculties that goes with it” (88). But throughout the story, Berganza makes note of how, although he has always lacked the ability to express himself using language, he has always had language of a sort. Berganza states that through reviewing the Latin he learned at the Jesuit school, his comprehension improved as if he “already knew how to talk even then, to take advantage of this [language practice] exercise” (47) whenever possible. Berganza had always had

both intelligence and language but not the ability to speak or talk. Once, Berganza's urgency to pass along information trumped his capabilities of speech: he "raised" his "voice, thinking" he "already had one. But of course, instead of pronouncing some well-reasoned argument," Berganza "barked so fast and so loud that" (103) he annoyed the city mayor. Berganza demonstrates with his cognitive language faculties that no human exceptionalism exists. There is no human cognitive supremacy, no discontinuity between animal and man, no bestial ranking remaining in the modern world.

Although Scipio and Berganza remain unsure how they came to possess speech, its insignificance as a marker of "higher" nature further illustrates the invalidated boundaries between animal and man. Scipio muses on how they, suddenly, gain the ability to speak and talk: they have "never heard an elephant talk, or a dog, or a horse or a monkey." Their "talking ... qualifies as one of those omens that, whenever you see them, you know to expect disaster" (23). The dogs intentionally disregard that their having language and speech devastates hierarchical separatism, a prophetic revelation of the instability in the modern world. Instead, Scipio and Berganza note that their ability to speak could be associated with the Devil, debating using medieval logic similar to the storytellers discussing transmutation in *Beware the Cat*. The suggestion of the dogs' bewitchment and being transmuted humans, however, remains unresolved. Historically, "the existence of speaking dogs was a direct sign of the presence of the devil" (Beusterien 50), mouthpieces through which the Devil spoke. However, they choose not to speak with humans, thus negating the Devil's need for a mouthpiece. Instead, Berganza and Scipio use their new ability to tell each other stories, a function thought to

belong to humans alone. By sharing their stories, Berganza and Scipio become the authors of their own tales, the masters of their own fates.

Language becomes not only a tool for demarcation but for deception. Throughout the novella, the dogs display a humanist interest in words and wordplay. While philosophizing, Berganza questions Scipio on what the word “philosophy” truly means, leading into an etymological discussion: “the expression has two Greek roots, *philos* and *sophia*. *Philos* means love, and *sophia* means science, so that philosophy means “love of science,” and a philosopher, a lover of science” (51). Beusterien notes that humanists used the study of ancient languages as a quest to seek out divine truths:

One of the most basic ways the early modern humanism expressed human exceptionalism was through the assumption that only the human speaks and the closer the human could connect with true language, the closer it reached divine truths. One of the main projects of the humanist—based on this human-based linguistic premise—was the study of language and the recovery of classical sacred languages such as Latin, Aramaic and Greek. The humanist did not grant the animal the power to communicate truths. (38)

In other words, understanding language secures divine truths and reserves divinity for man and God only. Delving linguistically deeper than etymology, the interlocutors debate on the intentions behind language when they discuss the literal versus allegorical interpretation of Camancha’s prophecy given to Berganza by the witch. In the same way the two dogs wrestle with the truth behind the prophecy in *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, so too does Peralta struggle with believing Campuzano’s accounts of two hospital dogs exchanging stories in *The Deceitful Marriage*. Campuzano could have been in the feverish, hallucinatory throws of syphilis, having a dream, or purposefully duping Peralta. Cervantes’ Satan, as a speaker, is a lord of wordplay: Canizares tells Berganza that many times she has ““wanted to ask The Horned One”” about Berganza’s

predicament, but she had not “dared, because he never gives a straight answer to what we ask, only rejoinders vulnerable to different readings. There’s no point asking our dark lord and master anything, because he mixes truth in with a thousand lies” (77). And herein lies the sophistical problem with language: its use both in attaining truths and executing deception.

The relationship between language, dominance, and duplicity examined in *The Dialogue of the Dogs* underscores how all creatures—from Devil to human to witch to dog—corrupt the nature of language. The morality of language is discussed early in the novella by the dogs. Scipio warns Berganza to watch his “mouth, because that’s where the worst of man’s woes begin” (29). For humanity, the ability to speak carries the ability to subjugate, terrorize, and deceive others. Berganza notes that many obtuse people memorize Latin phrases to flaunt themselves as learned. Berganza criticizes the shallowly learned: Berganza wished that “somebody would put those people under a winepress and squeeze out the meager trickle of their erudition. That way they wouldn’t keep dazzling the world with the glitter of their broken Greek and false Latin” (51). The imprecise construct of language—the correlation between words and truth —drives Berganza to attack the constable. Berganza “complied with the magistrate’s orders to the letter and lunged” (66) at his master when instructed to get the thief. In the humanist tradition, true language moved man closer to divine truths. Instead of using language to move closer to the divine, as in Pico’s *Oration*, man has chosen to abuse language to transform into creature.

Berganza believes that the language of morality is indistinct and inseparable from spoken language. Through his actions, Berganza shows that he speaks the same moral

language as man and, thus, holds the same position. The final words uttered by the dogs regarding their “great boon of speech” (105) concerns the mistrust of language and its abilities. Berganza states that he too, like the humans, is a blasphemer:

Even though I am an animal, I’ve only to put a few words together before they swarm and flutter to my lips like flies to wine, and all of them scurrilous. And so I come back to what I said before: wrongdoing and calumny are human nature. We drink them in with our mothers’ milk. A child barely out of his swaddling clouts will raise a vengeful hand against anyone who denies him, and almost the first word out of his mouth is to call his nanny or mother a whore. (42-3)

According to Berganza, it is in the nature of humans to use words as weapons. Even the nursing child will curse his caregiver to avenge himself of any affront. Language is permeated by and indivisible from morality. Berganza’s mistrust in language concerns his maturing disbelief in the power language commands.

*The Dialogue of the Dogs* begins and ends with the dogs musing over the power and miracle of language, but only once in the tale is language used for its proper purpose. In the beginning of their dialogue, the dogs claim that that the main distinction between man and animal lies in rational dialogue. In *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, no authentic communication occurs between the humans, only between the two canine protagonists. Berganza alludes to true colloquies between student and Jesuit teacher, but he does not impart such conversations to Scipio, save to say how the Jesuits’ dialogues are the ideal use of language and as a reminder that humanity is not too far gone to be saved. The assumed rank of man above animal is due to man being granted the gifts of speech and reason, according to the dogs, and thus conveying a divine likeness between man and God. If such gifts elevate man above animal, above the forms and conditions of beast, then by perverting their gift do humans displace themselves? Human’s abuse of speech

can be regarded in the repeated manifestation of violence, thievery, disease, and, above all, in allegorized acts of cannibalism: language of the flesh, the earth, not of the divine.

The dialogue between the dogs makes clear that language, as subject and medium, is a “divine gift” meant to be put to service. Cervantes never resolves the question of whether or not the dogs’ gift of speech fades at daybreak, if “that sundown will plunge” the dogs “back into darkness,” with their “tongues tied again” (53). On one level, Cervantes leaves his reader to question if language—and thus storytelling—uniquely belongs to humans. But on another level, the author troubles the overall exceptionality of humans. *The Dialogue of the Dogs* is not, as some critics have supposed, an exemplary tale. Nor is Berganza an Other who regains his voice through the telling of his own story. Nor does he depend on others for his identity formation. His first memories are of deciding to follow his own medieval moral code, and he holds to his bestiary convictions throughout the tale, never questioning his convictions or his being. He walks through early modern life being given names, but finally names himself. The tale ends without answering whether or not Berganza is truly animal or a transmuted human, although through his actions Berganza makes clear that he does not wish to be human. But Cervantes, in his authorial skill, makes the argument that being human or animal makes no difference in modernity.

Giorgio Agamben’s notion of the “anthropological machine” as prescribing the humanness to the human while fearing animality contains by-products—the humanization of the animal and the animalization of the human—that manifest in *The Dialogue of the Dogs*. However, Agamben declares that for relations between animals and humans to take on a new arrangement, for a reunification of animal and man to

occur, the machine must be disrupted. Cervantes' tale presents to his readers the modern world in which distinctions have collapsed, leading to radical vulnerabilities for both man and animal in their new "creaturely" partnership. Cervantes recognizes that the machine has led to forces that objectify, that has put life in jeopardy. Whether this life is animal or human does not matter. The question of the franchised, sovereign animal no longer needs to be pondered, nor the question of disenfranchisement of animal from human. Agamben never answers what lies beyond the machine, but the answer resides in displaced humans recognizing a moral partnership with animals based on being like creatures.

## CHAPTER IV

“You...Will Finally See Yourself as You Desire”:

Hybridity, Mutability, Liminality, Animal, and Human in the Early Modern Period

A staple of tales, fables, legends, and folklore, the shape-shifter troubles the boundaries between animal and human. In “Images of Bodily Transformation,” Sarah Bakewell explains that human metamorphic decline into animal form “is a reminder that fate can dispose of us as it wishes regardless of our civilized pretensions; the highest individuals in human society can be reduced to the lowest level of existence on a whim of the gods” (504). As a literary trope, shape-shifting examines the unstable paradigms of human identity found within the larger social construct. As an independent motif, shape-shifting calls into question what has been the fundamental, exceptional nature of human identity. By examining shape-shifting in the early modern period, the use of animal form and the idea of mutability expose human superiority and its hierarchical social structure as arbitrary.

Humans and animals who have the ability to shift their shapes and the shapes of others explore the unease felt during the early modern period concerning the changing concept of the human. In “Mother Hubberds Tale,” *Beware the Cat*, and *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, shape-shifting abilities are constructed both as a consequence of and a contribution to sixteen- and early seventeenth-century ideology and culture. Early modernists debated whether mutability occurred as a manipulation of perception or a physical manifestation. However, the four forces of mutability prominent in these works can be read as a collective commentary on early modern humanity’s experiencing its subjectivity being transformed to objectivity by the forces of modernity. Analyzing the

contemporary politics of perceptive and physical mutability expounds upon the idea of nature and man as mutually constituted.

The particular reflections of the use of language and exercise of agency by animals in “Mother Hubberds Tale,” *Beware the Cat*, and *The Dialogue of the Dogs* expands the beast fable genre in which they have been historically placed. The three works’ complex shapes as textual artifacts of print culture augment the themes of mutability with which they deal and further accentuate the performance of their bodies as those of a satyre-hybrid beast. Within traditional beast fable, the boundary “between narrative and ‘moralitas’ corresponds to a separation between animal and human” (Natarajan 117-8). Both story and moral belong to man, not animal. Metamorphosis underscores this “true beast” omission of the beast fable. The boundary separations ensured by the allegorical nature of the beast fable become liminal when presented with hybrid creatures. In such fables, the moralizing stories of the animal character perform as figurative representations of human ethical systems, not portrayals of an animal’s own subjectivity. The unique properties of metamorphosis disassemble the boundaries between human and animal when one shifts into the other.

The anthropomorphic bias of the beast fable is blurred and refracted when texts portray a collapsing of boundaries between human and animal through transformation of one into the other. This involves two entities: the body (the entity that undergoes transformation) and language (the medium which inscribes the metamorphosis). (Natarajan 118)

This study has already examined the use of language as an instrument in agency and the construction of identity. The power to describe, explain, and reason through language seems not enough, though, for most humans to grant animals the benefit of consideration as equals. Although many scientists agree that animals do, in fact, describe, explain, and

reason using “language,” the definition of language frequently changes so as continually to exclude, not include “animals.” Excluding animals by redefining language eliminates the need to reexamine our own moral philosophies pertaining to the boundary between animal and man and what is at stake in maintaining it. Having the ability to describe, explain, and reason in the language of power—in human language—grants animals agency in the three works examined. Metamorphosis remains the final technology—linguistic as well as ontological—of boundary collapse yet to be addressed in this study. Mutability reveals the capacity of most things to change, willing or not, and historically stresses man’s powerless to control the forces of change.

Transmutation embodies humans’ anxieties concerning whether their sovereignty is granted based on their human form or an essence. The debates circulating in the contemporary public concerning genres of transformation—werewolves, witches—and forces of transformation—alchemy, and astrology—reflect the helplessness concerning the collapse of the categories which organized early modern life. The different presentations of metamorphosis explored in these the works by Spenser, Baldwin, and Cervantes highlight the distressing vulnerability of human superiority as a conceptual category.

The werewolf or human-to-wolf transformation found in both ancient and medieval literature differs from those of the sixteenth and seventeenth century. No alliance of werewolf and Devil exists. In ancient tales such as the Greek myth of Lycaon, transformed into wolf by Zeus; Ovid’s treatment of Lycaon’s transformation by Jupiter in *Metamorphoses*; a shepherd turned to wolf by Ishtar in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (which the early modern world would not have known at the time); and Petronius’ shape-shifting

Orcus in *Satyricon* (Veenstra 138-47). Such a linkage arises in the early modern period. Likewise, many twelfth-century romances portray virtuous men transformed into beast through wicked witchcraft, what Caroline Walker Bynum calls “the werewolf renaissance of the twelfth century” (94). Only later does the werewolf become both evil and aligned with witches, sorcery, and the Devil. Works written earlier than the sixteenth century condemn those who believe in lycanthropy, as werewolves had moved from romantic tragedy to having an alignment with witchcraft and sorcery. Most of the works written in the sixteenth century concerning sorcery and lycanthropy condemn those who do not believe in the existence of witches and their ability to metamorphose. Nicole Jacques-Lefèvre explains that witches, like werewolves, are most commonly ascribed to belonging in the Middle Ages and as being part of peasantry folklore. Jacques-Lefèvre maintains, however, that such ideals and theories concerning werewolves were actually, instead, refined and fostered by intellectuals during the Renaissance (181). In this sense, then, witchcraft and magic are currently considered by most to be premodern. But, in fact, they were associated with the natural world and sciences of pre-Enlightenment, early modern Europe. In *Witchcraft and Society in England and America, 1550-1750*, Marion Gibson claims that “Demonologists studied witchcraft because they believed that in and alongside a proper understanding of the devil and the supernatural lay a proper understanding of God and the natural world” (xi).

Written by Dominican inquisitor Heinrich Kramer in 1486, *Malleus Maleficarum* (*The Hammer of Witches*) describes in detail the capabilities of witches and daemons, including metamorphosis. Kramer’s work laid the foundation for heresy trials in the sixteenth century. The radical change between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, from

the romantic, literary werewolf doubted to truly exist to the monster burned at the stake for being witch or werewolf, was a shift from heresy in belief to heresy in disbelief.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the early modern period, the theory of witch and werewolf alignment or even being one-in-the-same reigned with both clergy and laity as both witches and werewolves were associated with the supernatural. Most agreed that shape-shifting came about through demonic assistance and pacts with the Devil. However, many theories circulated on the association of werewolves and witches and the achievement of metamorphosis. One such hypothesis proposed that witches could be werewolves (but those thought to be werewolves were not always condemned as also being witches). An alternative premise alleged that, through spells, belts, or pelts, witches could transmute themselves or others into werewolves. Another popular speculation suggested that unguents from the Devil transform (or create the illusion of transformation) into werewolf, the same unguents used by witches to fly (or give the illusion of flight). An additional belief claimed that the werewolf, other transmutations, and the witches' sabbat were hallucinatory creations of the Devil's trance. In "Wolves, Witches, and Werewolves: Lycanthropy and Witchcraft from 1423 to 1700," Jane P. Davidson discusses how the depraved deeds ascribed to werewolves and witches mirror violent, dangerous behavior displayed by the criminally insane.

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<sup>1</sup> For an academic study tracing the werewolf from antiquity to the sixteenth century, see Leslie A. Sconduto, *Metamorphoses of the Werewolf: A Literary Study From Antiquity Through the Renaissance* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2008).

Werewolves in traditional European witchcraft literature were often cannibals. They raped, murdered, and ate human victims. Their behavior formed a perfect example of what we might today term acts of the criminally insane. These acts were also attributed to witches. When done by werewolves, however, these deeds seem to have been made more awful due to the transmutation of the individuals into animals. (47)

Davidson's study of werewolf images in books concerning witches illustrates that "almost all sixteenth-century witchcraft literature discusses lycanthropy. The theme was as prevalent as the better known themes of witches' flight, cannibalism, and the sabbat" (52). The understanding that delusions and hallucinations could be brought about by sickness or disease began to evolve at the time, naming "lycanthopia" or "wolf madness" as a pathological explanation for werewolves.<sup>2</sup> Many people still believed, however, that such shape-shifting and metamorphosis of humans into animals could only come from demonic agencies. Europe executed a large number of people for shape-shifting in the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries. Leslie Sconduto notes the difficulty finding the "Renaissance werewolf recounted in the pages of courtly literature" as it had been in the twelfth century. Instead, the Renaissance werewolf can be found "reported in court trials" (127). Such court trials, numerous enough to be fascinating, are not the scope of

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<sup>2</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* records the first usage of "lycanthopia" in 1584 in R. Scot's *Discouerie Witchcraft*, and describes the disease as one of insanity, not transformation, although the inflicted would have the instincts and proclivities of a wolf. "Wolf-madness," first noted in 1663, refers to a type of mania in which a person believed himself to be a wolf.

the present study, but are mentioned alongside theoretical treatises to acknowledge that, in the early modern period, werewolves, like witches, were believed to truly exist.<sup>3</sup>

The medieval werewolf was one of romance, of discovering the metaphorical and moral significance of the beast. The Renaissance werewolf, conversely, was literal—a historical reality. The nature of the Renaissance werewolf became again the violent and cruel werewolf of antiquity (Sconduto 127). At the time of Baldwin’s penning *Beware the Cat*, the shape-shifting abilities of werewolves stimulated the discussions of form over essence. The unstable form of the werewolf embodied the fear of mutability within society. Fears of social mutability emerge in the representational in “Mother Hubberds Tale,” and of “passing” addressed as a type of hypocrisy” in *The Dialogue of the Dogs*. In *Beware the Cat* this border animal rises from a narrative on the reasoning of animals (including of the Irish as animals) and the capacity to shape-shift. Streamer notes the problematic werewolf curse:

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<sup>3</sup> For the court witchcraft trials that included charges of werewolfery and lycanthropy, see W. M. S. Russell and Claire Russell, “The Social Biology of Werewolves,” *Animals in Folklore*, ed. J. R. Porter and W. M. S. Russell. (Ipswich: D. S. Brewer, 1978); Leslie A. Sconduto, *Metamorphoses of the Werewolf: A Literary Study From Antiquity Through the Renaissance* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2008); and Homayun Sidky, *Witchcraft, Lycanthropy, Drugs, and Disease: An Anthropological Study of the European Witch-Hunts* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997).

“There is also, in Ireland, one nation whereof some one man and woman are at every seven years’ end turned into wolves, and so continue in the woods the space of seven years. And if they hap to live out the time, they return to their own form again, and other twain are turned for the like time into the same shape—which is penance (as they say) enjoined that stock by Saint Patrick for some wickedness of their ancestors.” (18)<sup>4</sup>

A werewolf’s curse could be transmitted from the sins of our fathers, calling into question blood lineage versus sovereignty. The ability to transform, from wolf to human and back again, blurs the boundaries between human and animal. Transmutation between animal and human breaks the simple social divisions of a formal, stabilized hierarchy.

Transmutation troubles the social class divide between further by engendering unsettling philosophical debates. The discussion of how distorted one’s identity and “person” become during transformation considers whether humanity ceases once shaped as a wolf. If so, the human cannot be held accountable for the bestial actions of the wolf doppelganger. But if not, man is consciously guilty of any evil committed as a wolf. If the bestial actions committed while transformed are of a wolfish nature, then the question

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<sup>4</sup> This story is almost an exact telling of one of the most famous legal cases brought against a lycanthrope: “In this way sometimes the excluded person, who is not himself guilty, takes collective guilt onto himself. Thus, in the example given by Girard de Barri, some couples take turns every seven years living in the forest in the form of wolves to expiate the curse which a saint placed on their village” (Jacques-Lefevre 192). The case itself, however, reaches back to much earlier written and oral tales of Irish werewolves as having been victims of St. Patrick’s curse (Sconduto 34-5).

becomes whether human consciousness has been lost, for a soul in a Cartesian animal is absurd. Does the conscience stay within the transformed being or become abandoned along with the human form? These and many other questions concerning form and essence during transmutation concerned an already distressed social order.

The Cartesian notion of animal does not seem to engage the idea of a human being without a consciousness, even when undergoing a bestial transformation. This would mean that a soul could reside in the body of a wolf, but, as Fudge claims, “in the logic of the discourse of reason, when humans become beasts they actually become not other but self: the beastly human is actually a true human, displaying properties that only a human can display, properties that require the possession of a rational soul” (*Brutal Reasoning* 67). Thanks to the werewolf, conciseness can no longer be held as the demarcation between animal and human.

The werewolf raises questions of whether the body actually changes into a wolf, or if the human takes on the appearance of the wolf, assertions much debated in the sixteenth century. In *Beware the Cat*, Streamer tells the story of a man whose sympathetic injuries prove him to be the town’s werewolf.

“This man told to many men, whose cattle he had worried and whose bodies he had assailed while he was a wolf, so plain and evident tokens and showed such scars of wounds which other men had given him, both in his man’s shape before he was a wolf and in his wolf’s shape since, which all appeared upon his skin, that it was evident to all men ... that the matter was undoubtedly past all peradventure.” (18)

A sympathetic injury or wound allows for the identification of the werewolf but also confirms continuity between human and werewolf. This, however, does not answer the question of whether the change is physical or perceptual. The qualities of a werewolf, of

a “border-creature powerful and violent in a problematically inward, recursive, cannibalistic, infanticidal, and ultimately civic” (Wiseman 62) society, tells about the tragedies and crises of early modern English civilization: the irrepressible beastliness of humanity.

Lycanthropy advances questions concerning the extent to which form reflects essence. If the nature of man could be corrupted and mutate, to what limit, if any, could the rest of God’s creation? If nature evidences God’s law, a reflection of His values and ideals, then where do perversions such as werewolves fit in the natural order? Kathryn A. Edward maintains that “while the perception of and standards behind truth could vary enormously in early modern Europe, agreement on the source of all truth—God—remained constant. Yet these variations in perception and assessment suggest profound shifts in worldviews” (xviii). Transformations from man to beast can be understood as the work of God. During her oration to cat court in *Beware the Cat*, Mouse-slayer tells of her dame who uses Mouse-slayer to trick a naïve young woman into committing whoredom. This dame tells the young woman that Mouse-slayer is the dame’s daughter transformed into cat due to her refusing the adulterous advances of a young man. Although her daughter was happily married, the dame said, the young man was distraught and died cursing her. Having been fed pudding with mustard and had pepper blown in her face, Mouse-slayer looked to have been crying for her sad state, a ruse which moved the young woman to commit adultery so as not to find herself in the same state. The young woman truly believes that Mouse-slayer’s transmutation occurs as God’s punishment for transgression.

In *Beware the Cat*, lycanthropy is also discussed as the consequence of sins of the fathers. In one Irish nation, as contrition “for some wickedness of their ancestors” (18), persons would turn into wolves and live out their seven years’ penance in the woods. If they survive the seven years, then they regain their human form and another takes his or her place as wolf. Streamer, in his scientific prowess, supposes that witches create an ointment ““which seven years’ space might be in force against all other clearness to represent unto men’s eyes the shape of a wolf”” (19). This witch, in the form of a mare, would at night anoint the bodies of a couple she detested. This tradition, according to Streamer, would be handed down as task through generations.

In *Beware the Cat* metamorphosis not only involves werewolves but also witches turning into cats, turning hay into swine, and transubstantiating bread into the body of Christ:

“where you spake of intrusion of a woman’s body into a cat’s, you either play Nichodem or the stubborn Popish conjurer: whereof one would creep into his mother’s belly again, the other would bring Christ out of Heaven to thrust him into a piece of bread (but as the one of them is gross and the other perverse, so in this point I must place you with one of them). For although witches may take upon them cats’ bodies, or alter the shape of their or other bodies, yet this is not done by putting their own bodies thereinto, but either by bringing their souls for the time out of their bodies and putting them in the other, or by deluding the sight and fantasies of the seers.” (17)

The characters consider if the transformation results from a physical metamorphosis of the body or a transmigration of souls. Metamorphosis could also occur through manipulations of the senses by the witches, they supposed, as light and shadow can ““deceiveth the right conception of the eye (which, through the false light, receiveth a like form””) (17), and ““some ointment whose clearness deceived men’s sights”” (18). If the body actually changes, humans physically transform into being animal. If humans can

“descend” into animal form, the theory of human uniqueness becomes moot, and the stability of the species lost for want of a singular form. Streamer claims that “the Pythonesses could cause their spirits to take upon them dead men’s bodies, and the airy spirits which we call demons ... could at their pleasure take upon them any other sorts” (16). But, he declares, the suggestion that a woman straining herself into the body of a cat defies logic. A listener rebuts, insisting that, “For although witches may take upon them cats’ bodies, or alter the shape of their or other bodies” (17), witches place their souls within the body of the cat or deceive the senses of the witness. A listener of Streamer’s tale criticizes Pythagoras’ theory regarding souls, a transmigratory concept supposing that “after death men’s souls went into beasts and beasts’ souls into men, and every one according to his desert in his former body” (21). The same unguents that could make men appear as wolves and witches fly may also, according to the listener, make swine seem hay. A law passed in Ireland that forbade the purchase of red swine because witches used this form to swindle men of their money:

“The witches used to send to the markets many red swine, fair and fat to see unto as any might be, and would in that form continue long; but if it chanced the buyers of them to bring them to any water, immediately they found them returned either into wisps of hay, straw, old rotten boards, or such trumpery, by means whereof they lost their money or such other cattle as they gave in exchange for them.” (18)

Streamer states that he knows enchanted demons moved the bodies of the illusory swine, that witches had not actually transformed hay to swine. The addressees disagree. One listener cites a story which may account for a similar ointment being used to turn witch into cat:

“I heard it told ... by a credible clerk of Oxford, how that in the days when he was a child an old woman was brought before the official and accused for a witch, which (in the likeness of a cat) would go into her neighbors’ houses and steal thence what she listed. Which complaint was proved true by a place of the woman’s skin, which her accusers (with a firebrand that they hurled at her) had singed while she went a-thieving in her cat’s likeness.” (20)

The nature by which witches and werewolves transform generates many theories.

However, the character of the witch herself contributes to an understanding of how culture shapes a body to meet the conditions the culture requires of it.

The victims of early modern heresy trials, those accused of practicing magic and worshiping the Devil, tended to be poor, elderly women in rural areas. The nature of these victims highlights the position of women within the social structure of early modern Europe. These “witches” embodied the nascent sovereignty of women and the peasantry. Their deaths represented the fantasy of controlling growing uncertainties of what it meant to be human. The minor debates concerning witchcraft in *Beware the Cat* can be more clearly examined through the witches of Cervantes’ *The Dialogue of the Dogs*. In *The Untold Story: Women and Theory in Golden Age Texts*, Mary S. Gossy claims that all the female characters in *The Dialogue of the Dogs* save the witch Canizares “are intimately and explicitly attached to men and controlled by them either sexually or financially (or both)” (77). Part of Canizares’ power and, thus, others’ fear of her, stems from her being without male domination. Similar to the sovereign cats of *Beware the Cat*, Canizares’ autonomy places social command and order in danger. Her magical abilities simply compound this danger.

Cervantes’ witch, Camancha, embodies the malefactor feared in early modern society, while the judgments which befell another of Cervantes’ witches, Canizares, was

modeled from the trial of the historical “Camancha.” Canizares tells Berganza her autobiography, explaining that she and her friend Montiel were students of the coven’s mistress, the great witch Camacha de Montilla. Camacha was a witch whose powers outshined those of mythology, a witch ““so unique in her black arts that all the Circes, Ericthos, and Medeas... couldn’t touch her”” (73). Cervantes bases his literary Camacha on the historical figure Leonor Rodriguez. Nicknamed “La Camacha,” Leonor Rodriguez was convicted of witchcraft in the sixteenth century. In *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, Canizares claims that the judge in her witchcraft trial ““delegated his fury to the hands of a torturer who, his palm ungreased, applied his full, unstinting power to our backs”” (82), corresponding to what occurred historically to Leonor Rodriguez. In *The Animals of Spain: An Introduction to Imperial Perceptions and Human Interaction with other Animals, 1492-1826*, Abel Alves explains that “In 1572, the Cordoban Inquisition sentenced the notorious Leonor Rodriguez, ‘La Camacha’, to one hundred lashes in Cordoba, another hundred in her home town of Montilla, including the first two in service in a Cordoban hospital” (140). Although the Spanish Inquisition did not engage in witch hunts, in “humiliation and degradation, witches, like recalcitrant beasts of burden, were forced to submit” to lashings and exile, because in “the fantasies of a frightened and violent Spanish elite, witches were dangerous animals” (141).

Although Cervantes’ Camacha exemplifies the formulaic “witch” of early modernity, an evil woman in possession of supernatural powers, the author’s other two witches trouble early modern presuppositions. Instead of purely practicing harmful magic, Montiel and Canizares also practice therapeutic magic, a service Canizares continues when she survives the other two. Montiel and Canizares exemplify

maternity, a nature dissenting from the traditional infanticidal witch figure. Canizares also blurs the lines between magic and religion, practicing both witchcraft and Christianity. And she remains the only person to see the humanity in Berganza. With the witches' conflicted natures, especially Canizares', arise the problem of controlling the categories that organized society. Cervantes' Canizares, a character whose self-willed nature makes her worthy of close inspection, comments on the conflation of reality and appearance and the illusion of social control in modernity.

In Cervantes' witch's tale, Camacha's dying declaration of how she turned Montiel's sons into dogs prophesizes a coming revolution between oppressors and oppressed. Out of jealousy, Camacha cursed Berganza's human mother. From this curse, Canizares states, Berganza's mother bore twin puppies. According to Canizares, Berganza's ability to reason as a human is due to his being a transmuted human. One could argue that Canizares' reasoning dog's intellect as being due to a transmutation highlights the efforts to which logic would be stretched concerning separating the cognitive distinctions of dog and man. Such difficulty teasing out characteristics to separate human from the realm of animal became principal for many contemporary philosophers including Michel de Montaigne along with, later, René Decartes. Canizares tells Berganza that she knows he is a "“rational person in the semblance of a dog, unless Camacha has contrived this illusion with the black art called *tropelia*, which makes one thing look like another”" (74). Camacha's deathbed confession of spiteful bewitchment suggests that Berganza and Scipio can be retransformed into humans, but only after they behold a recasting of social stations.

Berganza, unable to accept Canizares' profound character of a witch who is also a tender human, finds himself offended by her complexity. When she firsts meets Berganza alone, Canizares graces him with humanity by calling him "my boy" and engaging a dog in discourse. Although unsure if Berganza is in fact Montiel, Montiel's son, Canizares sees and considers beyond the external appearance, something Berganza fails to do in return. She tries to kiss him as if he were human, and at this he recoils. Scipio supports Berganza in this action: "Who wants to kiss an old crone, or be kissed by one?" (72). Berganza's actions establish a significant contrast between his behavior toward her and the witch's behavior toward Berganza. Canizares confesses that she worships and trains with the Devil, which indicates her evil nature to the reader, but yet this witch can look past the exterior of a dog to see the potential human within, a capacity to see beyond the physical. Berganza lacks the capacity to see humanity in a corporeally and morally inconsistent figure.

The ability to advantageously alter humans assaults the already vulnerable categories coming unfixed in modernity. Witches could not only transform themselves but other people as well. They could change themselves into animals such as cats and dogs, even into wolves, although witches oftentimes chose the forms of asses and swine for those they truly despise. Unlike the beauty of some witches to enchant and make beast of man, Canizares, quite tellingly, wears the body of a beast. Canizares remarks on the beauty of Camacha and the power such physical beauty commands.

“She was famous for turning men into animals, in particular for keeping a sacristan for six years in the form of a mule. Really and truly, how she did it I’ve never been able to grasp. They say of those old mages that they turned men into beasts, but the wisest say it was nothing of the kind, that with their great beauty and blandishments they attracted men in the ways those men liked best, and before long enslaved them until they seemed like beasts.” (74)

Camacha used her beauty to subjugate and dehumanize men, their lust reducing them to beast. Although the reader assumes she holds similar powers to transform her appearance, Canizares chooses not to alter her “bestial” physical form. Instead, she relies on good works to amend others’ judgment, including Berganza’s. Berganza sees Canizares’ physical form when she lies down naked to commune with the Devil, her willing nudity an external demonstration of her loyalty both to him and to exposing shrouded truths. Her marginalization as a rumored witch grants her the freedom to be “naked,” to be candid and morally unrestricted and to show her animalistic form, with Berganza. She strips naked to hold conference with the Devil and try to gain answers to Camacha’s deathbed prophesy. Canizares’ composed willingness to be “naked” to gain insight into transforming the dogs back into their rightful human form stands in contrast to Berganza’s anxious exposition of her social transgression. Canizares, with the appearance of a beast, endeavors to humanize dog.

In Cervantes’ trinity of witches, Canizares stands as the oppositional figure to early modern opinions of witchery. Dissimilar to Camacha’s evil-driven agenda, Canizares commits malevolence due to habit: “the habit of vice becomes second nature, and witchcraft like a muscle ... I see and understand everything, but because decadence has manacled my will, I have always been, and will always be, wicked” (81). Canizares, self-aware of her evilness, refers to herself as “the old whore” (81) when speaking to

Berganza. Calling herself a whore is reminiscent of Berganza's tirade about human nature: "wrongdoing and calumny are human nature. We drink them in with our mothers' milk. A child barely out of his swaddling clouts will raise a vengeful hand against anyone who denies him, and almost the first word out of his mouth is to call his nanny or mother a whore" (43). When he describes Canizares' naked form, Berganza carefully notes her sagging breasts and stretched stomach, two not-so-subtle physical indications of motherhood. Canizares quite obviously represents a human surrogate mother for Berganza. She repetitively refers to him as "son," "my boy," and "my child." According to Tobias Gittes' "Canizares's Textual *Auto-Da-Fe*," "Within this trinity of witches, Canizares and la Camacha stand at opposite poles with la Montiel in the center" (367). La Camacha, Gittes claims, is exactly vengeful. Godmother to Montiel's twins and midwives for their birth, Camacha bewitches the newborns to pups out of spite for their mother. La Montiel is "a maternal, nurturing dimension with respect to her sons ... to the day of her death" (367), and is rumored to unrelentingly walk cemeteries and crossroads in multiple forms. Her essence still exists without physical form, and her maternal devotion survives death. Mary Gossy examines the exceptional maternal features of the three witches:

The witch is a powerful emblem of sexuality in the Western consciousness, but never one of reproduction. She is accused of making men impotent, of procuring abortions, and of killing infants. These fantasies are undermined in *Coloquio* by the fact that one witch, Camacha, (historically, like many women persecuted for witchcraft) is a midwife, and the other, Montiel, is a mother who may not be married. (80)

In other words, the fears engendered by female sexuality are embraced by the witch, although the act of reproduction is strangely absent from the witches' carnal activities.

Canizares, however, exemplifies both the cumulative concept of the witch and motherhood. Canizares awakens to find herself naked and the subject of public humiliation and molestation and rightfully confronts Berganza. Berganza latches on to her sagging stomach, and “taking hold of the loose flesh around [Canizares’] midsection,” he “shook ... and dragged her all over the courtyard.” She screams, “pleading with somebody to free her from the jaws of that evil spirit” (85). Berganza distresses over her multidimensional, seemingly contradictory, identity and responds by rejecting her humanity altogether.

Canizares, aware of her potential to be greater than witch, suffers for her self-restriction and desires Berganza to embrace his agency. Canizares strips all pretense concerning the depravities of sabbaths and unguents, stating that the unguent “‘is made from the juices of herbs, which are very cold, and not, as some vulgarly say, from the blood of children we smother’” (79). Along with describing the cold, numbing unguent, Canizares makes the point of telling Berganza that vice “‘carries a chill that freezes and numbs the soul as it burns’” (81). The food served at the Sabbaths, she remarks, is “‘insipid’” (77). Canizares observes that “‘a sin of flesh and appetite, inevitably ... deadens the senses’” (81), and that witches “‘only go to these sabbaths in a trance, and there the Devil merely clouds’” (78) their minds with illusory dreams. Canizares illustrates the sense of deprivation felt working for the Devil. Her descriptions are symbolic of the sinful death of the soul.

To Berganza and contemporary readers, Canizares represents the ugliness of sin. Multiple times Canizares declares herself a sinner, and how moral corruption numbs the ability to choose destiny:

“It leads to a kind of oblivion, until you don’t recognize either the threat of God’s hell or the glory of His heaven. As a sin of flesh and appetite, inevitably it deadens the senses, warping and beguiling them and keeping them from working as they should ... they refuse to reach up to God’s outstretched hand, extended in His mercy to lift us up.” (81)

Her cadaverous and foul-smelling body repulses him as he questions if her moral decay has led to her physical decay. Some critics of Cervantes’ witch emphasize her suffering from a spiritual disease, of her vice steering ““to a kind of oblivion”” until unable to ““recognize either the threat of God’s hell or the glory of His heaven”” (81). These critics overlook the fact that, although Canizares calls herself wicked and a hypocrite, she is also one of the most honest and laudable characters in *The Dialogue of the Dogs*. Instead of functioning as a symbol of moral corrosion, Canizares’ decay represents stagnated human potential. Canizares is the only character to possess full self-awareness:

“I’m not so old that I can’t live another year, though I’m seventy-five. I can’t fast because of my age, nor kneel because of dropsy, nor walk in the fiesta because of my weak legs, nor give alms because I’m poor myself. I can’t think noble thoughts, because I’m partial to gossip. I can’t act nobly without first thinking nobly, which I can never do. Still, I believe God is good and compassionate and knows what’s in store for me, and that’s enough.” (82)

In other words, Canizares acknowledges her possession of Pico’s “distinctive dignity” but also recognizes her physical and spiritual limitations in her late hour. She appreciates the potential she possessed and regrets her unfulfillment but finds peace in her humble station.

Canizares exemplifies a greater capacity, telling Berganza that she has wanted to leave her sinful ways behind, to become Pico’s supreme being. Canizares states that she takes ““solace”” in her ““work as a matron and nurse to the poor, and some who die keep”” her ““alive with what they bequeath, or what”” she finds ““among their rags,””

which she has “the responsibility of delousing.” She prays “rarely, and in public.” She gossips “often, and in private.” Canizares would “rather be a hypocrite than a confessed sinner. The sight” of her “good works is starting to erase” her “past crimes from the memories of those who know” her. “In short, feigned sanctity doesn’t hurt anybody but the one who feigns.” She tells Berganza to “be as good as you can, and if you’re going to be wicked, hide it as well as you can” (78). Her self-referential knowledge of her vices and virtues stands in contrast to Berganza’s moral blindness concerning his vindictive actions. Of evils at sabbaths Camancha tells Berganza that she “dare not tell, so filthy are they,” and she does not “want to offend” Berganza’s “chaste ears” (78), demonstrating her decency and the good she sees in Berganza.

Canizares’ dualistic religious nature troubles the understood form of an early modern witch. While acutely aware of the nature of evil, Canizares remains the only character in *The Dialogue of the Dogs* to reverently refer of God.

“When you grow up to be a man, you’ll understand that all the woes bedeviling people, kings, cities, and towns—the sudden deaths, shipwrecks, comeuppances, in a word all the evils they call catastrophes—come from the hand of the Almighty, according to His will, and that all the cursed calamities and banes originate and proceed from ourselves alone. God is literally impeccable, without sin, from which we can only conclude that we are the authors of our own evildoing, and we conceive it in our own intentions, words, and deeds.” (80)

Her faithful testimony in God and moral autonomy, along with her decency and benevolence toward Berganza, reveals Canizares to be the most morally superior character in *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, standing in stark contrast to early seventeenth-century readers’ biases of the qualities of witches.

Canizares’ knowledge of God undoubtedly aggravated the fears of Cervantes’ readers concerning witches’ assumed rejection of Christian faith. Witches, many

believed, conspiratorially undermined Christian faith and society, but Canizares, a Christian witch, troubles these categories. Canizares claims that atrocities such as infanticide are sanctioned by God: ““God permits all this as punishment for ... sins, since without his permission ... the Devil can’t even distract an ant”” (80). Canizares explains to Berganza that the contiguity of good and evil, and the paradox of torment with omnipotence will be understood when he becomes human again. Until then, Berganza is left to question the coexistence of good and evil in Canizares: “Who made this evil woman so wise and yet so wicked? How does she know which sufferings are senseless and which tragic? How can she understand and speak so much of God, yet work so much for the Devil? How can she sin so deliberately without even ignorance for an excuse?” (84). God’s conflated omnipotence and malevolence was recognized, however, at the time. In *Malleus Maleficarum*, Kramer argues that the Devil can do nothing without the permission of God. This begs the question, then, of the appropriateness of punishing Canizares, a woman doing God’s will, who has God’s blessing, who is even, perhaps, an agent of God.

While being the supposed source of her magic, Canizares does not venerate the Devil as an apostate would. The Devil stands less as an opponent to Christianity—a dualist heresy—than a creator of illusions, a deceiver. Canizares knows the Devil ““never gives a straight answer”” but ““only rejoinders vulnerable to different readings,”” that he ““mixes truth with a thousand lies”” (77). Such “different readings” shows how certain realities, such as what it means to be human, cannot be dualistically partitioned but linger in the liminal space between contrasts. Canizares willingly sacrifices of herself so that Berganza may learn how to transmute back to human form. In return,

Berganza's repulsion of her naked figure makes him want "to leap at her and sink my fangs into her flesh" (79), although he cannot find an area of her body which does not disgust him. Gittes points out that just "as God assumes carnal form to elevate mankind, Canizares assumes Berganza's bestial condition so that he may be returned to his human form; just as Christ endures the crucifixion, Canizares allows her flesh to be mortified in order to redeem Berganza's lost humanity" (370). Although she forsakes her integrity, Canizares never renounces her faith. She devotes herself to free Berganza of his repressed state, redeeming him of his curse by becoming accursed herself. In this respect, Canizares becomes a Christ-like figure.

By facilitating Berganza's restoration of a human identity, Canizares compels the practice of upward mobility on behalf of Berganza. According to Camancha's prophesy, the dogs must be witness to a social conversion, a displacement of both humble and powerful:

They'll revert to their rightful guise  
When they descry with their own eyes  
The high and mighty dunked in suet  
And the humble lifted to the skies  
By a hand with strength enough to do it. (76)

Although Canizares wishes his transformation could be as easily achieved as Apuleius' eating a rose in *The Golden Ass*, Berganza's "transformation depends on other people's actions" (77), not his own. When this social conversion occurs, Berganza will see himself in his true form. Canizares tells Berganza that he and his brother, "if he's alive, will finally see" themselves as they "desire" (77). Berganza's actions following Canizares' awakening and his commentary to Scipio reveal how the dogs desire to see themselves: as medieval bestiary dogs—stable, secure in their social positionality—not as

humans. Canizares awakens to find herself humiliated and molested, and roars that Berganza is a “wretched ingrate, disgraced, ignorant, malicious!” She asks him if she is deserving of his ill treatment: “Is this the thanks I get for the good turns I did your mother, and that I was thinking of doing for you?” (85). Calling her “a viscous harpy”—an allusion not only to her anger but, more mythically, to her duality as human and animal—Berganza takes “hold of the loose flesh around” Canizares’ “midsection,” and shakes and drags her “all over the courtyard” (85). By perpetrating such deeds on the witch who holds the answers to his transfiguration and who has shown him nothing but kindness and goodwill, Berganza completely refuses his human self. Along with denying his “greater” nature, he rejects his human surrogate mother. Their fight becomes a metaphoric struggle between medieval and early modern dogmatisms. Berganza’s attack on Canizares underscores his attempt to control change. However, Camancha’s prophesy states that the occurrence of Berganza’s transformation back to human form is unrelated to his actions. Berganza, fight as he may, remains incapable of controlling the forces of modernity, including the stability of his form and the multivalent Canizares.

In a way similar to the authorial choices to employ a satire-hybrid mode, by transforming Camancha’s prophesy into the lesser genre of an old wives’ tale, Scipio tries to diffuse the prophecy’s speaking truth to power. Scipio informs Berganza that Camacha’s ability to turn men to beasts is a lie and the Devil’s doing. Their transformation, Scipio declares, is figurative, not literal, as the dogs only feel like they “can think and understand now because” they can talk, even though they “still look like dogs” (87). To this, Scipio tells Berganza to consider “what stupid pointless conditions Camacha said” their “restoration depended on” (87), and to reflect on having previously

witnessed actions matching those in Camancha's prophecy without the dogs having resumed their human form. Scipio also discusses the possibility of Montiel as their human mother, although he wants no part of such a matrilineage. He asks Berganza's pardon for speaking against Montiel, "just in case" she is their biological mother—or Berganza's anyway, since Scipio doesn't want to own her as his mother (88). However, after this account Berganza begins to refer to his friend as "brother Scipio." Scipio argues for the prophecy's allegorical nature, as a game of ninepins, as "'just old wives' tales'" (87).

Camancha's prophecy of the dogs returning to "their rightful guise" (87) reveals not only the dogs' true natures but also the natures of Cervantes' readers. Berganza takes the prophecy to heart, trying fretfully to solve the riddle.

Just as the formal enigma reveals this fundamental difference in perspectives between the two dogs, such equally dense nodes of semantic ambiguity as Canizares (witch or saint?) and the philosophizing dogs (social reformers or backbiting miscreants?) function as a sort of litmus test that reveals the reader. Readers who cast their lot with Berganza by standing by complacently—or, worse yet, looking on approvingly—as he buries his teeth in Canizares's belly and drags her about the courtyard are ... no better than the "señores inquisidores" ... The failure to recognize the saint (Augustine, to be precise) in the witch and the inquisitor in the dog is to collaborate in the *auto-da-fe*. (Gittes 376)

In other words, the ambiguity of form, specifically that of the dogs, reveals less about the novella and the characters' forms than how Cervantes' readers themselves wish to read and be read. Forms remain unchanged, but the readers' perceptivity changes to meet the conditions necessary at the time. Through satire or prophecy, speaking truth to power remains a partnership between author and reader, speaker and recipient to reflect upon the multilayered complexity of existence.

Understanding—and misunderstanding—mutable orders repeatedly figure in the referenced works of Spenser, Baldwin, and Cervantes as a response to agency and subjectivity. *The Dialogue of the Dogs* illustrates contemporary theories concerning “low magic,” such as whether witches’ deeds occur through physical transformations or sensory scrambling. Concerning sabbaths, Canizares states that ““after anointing ... it feels as if”” their ““shapes shift, and ... turn into chickens, or owls or crows, and fly to the place where”” their ““master awaits us.”” There they resume their ““original form”” (81-2). Even the witch herself remains unsure of the transformations occurring, although she embraces the change. In *Malleus Maleficarum*, Kramer assuredly declares that witches can only make it seem as though a human has transformed into an animal, but that a human can truly be transformed by nothing other than God. Such authoritative declarations rejecting ontological change voice a fantasy of control where none exists.

Within Camacha, great natural powers reside:

“She’d freeze the clouds whenever she felt like it, covering the face of the sun with them, and she could calm the most turbid sky with just a look. She’d whisk men in an instant to distant lands, and she’d miraculously repair young ladies who had proven careless in protecting their virtue. She chaperoned widows, so as to safeguard at least the illusion of their bereavement. She annulled and arranged marriages as she pleased. In December she had fresh roses in her garden, and she reaped wheat in January. Making watercress grow in a cistern was hardly the greatest of her exploits, nor was making an image of the living or the dead appear, on request, in a mirror, or on the fingernail of a child.” (73-4)

On one hand, the power to control the weather and vegetation speaks to a larger influence over nature and, more specifically, life. Such skills in “low magic” possessed by an unlettered, lowly positioned woman upsets social order. The “high magic” of alchemy and astrology, on the other hand, transmutative tools of the patriarchally humanistic

learned upper-class, constructs, reproduces, and preserves social orders, although on the surface they may seem subversive in certain cases.

Although perhaps treated satirically, references to planets and their influences in *Beware the Cat*, along with processes of alchemy in *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, nonetheless mirror contemporary beliefs in the “high magic” of natural sciences.<sup>5</sup> First published in 1543, Copernican theory took nearly a century to win its place in England. Kathrine Maynard claims that Copernicus’ revolutionary heliocentric theory upset many, most notably, and especially, theologians (“Science” 103). Pseudo-sciences, however, flourished at the time, including those of astrology and alchemy. In *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, the hospital patients include a geometer trying to square a circle, and an alchemist searching for the philosopher’s stone. Cervantes employs in his story’s frame two of the three chief mathematical and scientific pursuits of the day, not including the task of successfully doubling a cube. Alchemy, although widely performed and royally supported during the early modern era, was illegal in England during the times of the three texts’ publications, and, according to Maynard, “therefore no serious treatises on the subject in English are to be found” (“Science” 113). In methods similar to those many claimed that witches used, Streamer uses unguents to alter his ears and brain to accept and understand animal language. His pre-morphological study sought to discover

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<sup>5</sup> The methods which began in alchemy and astrology would later become the study of morphology in the mid-nineteenth century. Sarah Bakewell notes that morphology “concentrated not on the ‘substance’ of life itself, but on the principles of its development and growth” (511).

the “laws which governed life’s eternal flux” (Bakewell 511). Streamer wishes not to bring about change within the world as witches do but to understand the hidden structure that establishes the nature of all things.

The relationship of the parts to the whole and form to an inherent structure are most cleverly illustrated in *Beware the Cat* by Streamer’s use of alchemy and astrology. To be able to understand animal languages, Streamer uses a recipe found in Albertus Magnus’ book *On the Virtue of Animals* (*De Virtutibus Animalium*) (1507), a historically existent book of practical magic recipes using animal parts, considering ““the nature and power of everything therein and how and upon what it wrought.”” Streamer uses a scientific approach to make useful animals’ bodies, grounded in the medieval belief of man’s dominion over the earth and its creatures, and creatures’ value found in their usefulness to man. He ““devised thereby how, with part of those things and additions of other of like virtue and operation, to make a philter”” to serve his purpose (24). His understanding of medical and magical functions of animal parts includes the use of a hedgehog in his concoction because its flesh ““by nature full of natural heat—and therefore, the principal parts being eaten, must needs expulse gross matters and subtile the brain (as by the like power it engendreth fine blood and helpeth much both against the gout and the cramp)”” (25-6). The glossing notes further down the page that “*Albertus [Magnus] saith if a man when he prepareth any medicine tell aloud why he maketh it, it will be of more force*” (26). Such magical reasoning supports Streamer’s Latin declarations when killing an animal for his potion. Streamer dissects the animals, washes the flesh, flavors with white wine and spices, and makes a broth. He takes note of the planetary motions to coincide favorably with his alchemic project: ““Then, because it

was about the *solstitium estivale*, and that in confections the hours of the planets must for the better operation be observed,” he “tarried till ten o’clock before dinner, what time Mercury began his lucky reign” (27). The related and often companion arts of astrology and alchemy were rarely viewed as compositionally familiar or “as celestial and tellurian twins,” and, surprisingly, most literature scarcely discusses their associations (Newman and Grafton 14).

Those who studied astrology and alchemy in early modernity sought to understand principles of universal order, highlighting a contemporary philosophical shifts towards a proto-empiricism. Commonplaces concerning astrology in early modernity can be shown: “few works were written against it, and belief in the efficacy of hidden forces for both good and evil was the principal answer of the times to the stupendous mysteries of nature” (Maynard 106-7). Astrology and alchemy held a position of social regard, especially in court and higher social orders. In “The Argument” section of *Beware the Cat*, one of the listeners to Master Streamer’s orations was Master Willot, the King’s Astronomer. Astrology was not only the study of celestial movements but an objective understanding of subjective (particular) agencies and individuality. Astrology was seen as a scientific “art” (*technê*) that explained the relationships and interactions of one to others, to one’s society and to one’s historical movement and time more generally. The compound network of guides, pressures, and changes brought about by the planets and stars, were tracked and mapped in genitures.

Genitures normally laid out the positions of the planets at the moment of the client's birth. They explained what consequences these would have for his health, his wealth, his travels, his marriage, his fortune, and his death. And they often included "revolutions": analyses of the positions of the planets at the anniversary of his birth, year by year for fifty or sixty years. Genitures in effect amounted to graphical representations of the client's future bodily and mental health, travels, and career. The client could compare them, detail by detail, to his subjective sense of his own experiences. (Newman and Grafton 11)

During early modernity, astrology, in part, forecasted the future, to anticipate and, thus, have control over the outcomes in one's life. In this way, both alchemy and astrology are encrypted formulas. In ways similar to the prophesy of Berganza and Scipio's inverse transformation in *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, astrology and alchemy as self-transformative arts lead one to understand his potential and higher states: to turn lead into gold, or dog into man. The divinations of astrology and the formulations of alchemy share much with the art of witchcraft, so much that Streamer creates what he calls a "philter," as a potion with what seems to be "magical" powers.

Streamer tries to unlock hidden truths of nature and existence encoded in the body. After creating the broth and philter, Streamer painfully details every empirical step of his potion-making. Although perhaps farcical to twenty-first-century readers and certainly satirical even in Baldwin's time, Streamer's absurd specificity nevertheless represents contemporary beliefs—such as using animal parts as bynames for herbs—in alchemy. Streamer's alchemic decoction mirrors what present-day readers may regard as a witches' brew similar to the potion Shakespeare's witches concoct in *Macbeth*. In *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, Canizares the witch uses, not blood procured from infanticide, but herbs for her unguents. In *Beware the Cat*, however, Streamer uses an intimidating list of animal parts. Many have noted that the ingredients used by Shakespeare's witches in the

1606 play—the “eye or newt” or “toe of frog”—actually refer to traditional herbicides. Streamer, however, takes the ingredient bynames from *De Virtutibus Animalium* literally, and for lack of understanding animals’ languages misunderstands his own language and commits a beastly massacre.

The human body was regarded as a microcosmic reflection of universal order. Streamer’s rebalancing his humors in order to understand the language of cats exhibits man’s desire to acquire control both of his own nature and over the larger world. At twelve o’clock, Streamer eats the animal galls and drinks the hedgehog broth, which purges ““exceedingly such yellow, white, and tawny matters .... When a pint of this gear was come forth”” his ““rheum ceased,”” and his head and ““body was in exceeding good temper”” (28). Streamer seems to have corrected his humor imbalance through the potion’s purge. This suggests that the inability to understand animals’ languages remains an imbalance within man, even a “humoral” problem.

Perceptual alterations, one of the ways witch and werewolf shape-shifting is accounted for, is brought to fruition by Streamer through both astrology and alchemy. He discards the carcasses of the fox and kite saves their tongues and ears, which he prepares as “hot medicine” pouches to place on his ears.

“I took all the ears and scalded off the hair; then stamped I them in a mortar; and when they were all a dry jelly, I put to them rue, fennel, lowache, and leek blades, of each an handful, and pounded them afresh. Then divided I all the matter into two equal parts, and made two little pillows and stuffed them therewith. And when Saturn’s dry hour of dominion approached, I fried these pillows in good oil olive and laid them hot to mine ears, to each ear one, and kept them thereto till nine o’clock at night.” (29)

To enhance the effectiveness of his ear pillows, he prepares lozenges and trochisks, all the while mindful of the planetary movements at play.

“I took the cat’s, the fox’s, and the kite’s tongue and sod them in wine well near to jelly. Then I took them out of the wine and put them in a mortar and added to them of new cat’s dung an ounce; of mustard seed, garlic, and pepper as much ... And when Mercury’s reign approached, which was within two hours after, I drank a great draught of my stilled water, and anointed all my head over with the wine and oil before described, and with the water came out of the galls I washed mine eyes. And because no humors should ascend into my head by evaporation of my reins through the chine bone, I took an ounce of Alkakengi in powder.” (29)

He refries and ties the pillows to his head and places the lozenges under his tongue. Once he realizes that he hears the back-and-forth mewing of cats, he retires to his chambers.

Because “the hour of Saturnus’ cold dominion approached” (30), Streamer put in his “two nostrils two trochisks” and into his “mouth two lozenges, one above” his tongue and “the other under; and put off” his left shoe, “because of Jupiter’s appropinquation; and laid the fox tail” beneath his foot (31). Streamer finds himself purged of misbalancing humors and, aided by his pillows and potions, understands the language of cats. He then augments his alchemic Rosetta Stone with yet more applications. The boundary, or, as the purged humors suggest, the perception of boundary between human and animal language has been removed. By using brews, lozenges, and knowledge of planetary powers, Streamer enables his mind not only to translate animal language but to transgress into a world whose boundaries shape human culture. Through such transformations, even perceptual, boundaries break down.

Despite the fear of human displacement in these three tales, not once do animals transmute “upward” into human form through alchemy, natural magic, demonology, or witchcraft. A greater fear, it seems, lies in the possibility of animals already possessing reasoning, thus not requiring human form to be granted agency. Erica Fudge argues in *Brutal Reasoning* that “If an animal (even by magic) can gain access to that which is

human—namely, reason—then surely the boundary that separates man from beast has already collapsed” (130). Although all three stories in this study contain reasoning and speaking animals—which in itself signals boundary collapse—only in “Mother Hubberds Tale” do the animal protagonists try to masquerade as something other than their animal “selves.” In the three tales, “Mother Hubberds Tale,” *Beware the Cat*, and *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, the animals can speak a human language and try at times to communicate with humans. In “Mother Hubberds Tale,” Ape and Fox rise through Elizabethan social classes by deceiving humans into believing them to be also human. In *Beware the Cat*, cats only speak to humans if necessary to procure information concerning cat society, such as concerning the death of Grimalkin, although werewolves will speak to humans to procure food. In *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, Berganza tries to advise the mayor concerning the rise of disease transmitted by prostitution, forgetting that he could not (yet) speak in a human language. When severely beaten, Berganza no longer wishes to communicate with humans when the opportunity presents itself in the gift of human language. Berganza attempts communication agency with the expectation that his valid position would be heard. Speech as authority is gendered male; therefore, silence—a sign of subordination—is engendered as female through its power relation to speech. The meaningless barking heard by the mayor reads as similarly relegated to women’s prattle in *Beware the Cat* and the genre of old wives’ tales in all three examined works.

In *Homo Sacer*, Giorgio Agamben discusses the character of *homo sacer*, the “sacred man” who, according to Roman law, is condemned by the people and could be killed without his death being ruled a homicide. Such a person was thusly termed “wolf man,” not human nor animal but a figure in between. Agamben explains that the

character of *homo sacer* is similar to that of the werewolf in that they are both without peace due to their exclusion from the community. Both possess a body recognizably human but not valued as “human”: “the life of the bandit is the life of the *loup garou*, the werewolf, who is precisely *neither man nor beast*, and who dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither” (105). Agamben maintains that the “lupization of man and humanization of the wolf” is “a zone of indistinction between the human and the animal, the werewolf, a man who is transformed into a wolf and a wolf who is transformed into a man” (106). The liminal nature of the werewolf “as the threshold of passage between nature and politics, animal world and human world, and the werewolf’s close tie to sovereign power” (107) collapses the ordered categories of animal and man to form a hybridized grade. In the ephemeral nature during metamorphosis, a zone of indistinction, the werewolf corresponds to the state of exception.

Men enter into a zone in which they are no longer distinct from beasts. The story [in *Bisclavret*] also shows the necessity of particular formalities marking the entry into—or the exit from—the zone of indistinction between the animal and the human which corresponds to the clear proclamation of the state of exception as formally distinct from the rule). (107)

One of Agamben’s larger speculations within *Homo Sacer* questions whether “sovereignty” is a political concept. Using the werewolf metaphor, Agamben asks whether during metamorphosis the half-man, half-wolf is excluded from “society.” Is the werewolf a subject of, or excluded from, the sovereign state? Is a werewolf *zoe*, the bare life granted to all animals, man, and gods, or does it command the value of *bios*?

In *The Open: Man and Animal*, Agamben deliberates into a discussion the “wolf man” of early law and politics to discuss the eighteenth-century scientific interest of “manlike animals” such as the *enfants sauvages*—the feral wolf children—a case in

which the divisions of man and animal become blurred. Early modern fears of social perviousness manifest in all four forms of mutability discussed in this study. While Reformation theology and philosophy maintained that the feature distinguishing animal from human was a “conscience,” the werewolf, Fudge asserts, is a logical metaphoric extension of form verses essence, troubling the separation of this merge:

In [a werewolf’s] acts of violence it likewise reveals two dangerous possibilities for a decent from the human into the animal: either of the loss of conscience, with the implications that the human can slip into the animal; or of violence—wildness—as a part of the human conscience, a possibility which once again questions the status of human. (*Perceiving Animals* 34-35)

The agency and subjectivity granted through the changing boundaries further facilitated an increasingly disordering early modern society. As a collective commentary, these four highlighted forms of mutability gave metaphoric representation to modernity’s shifting placement of the human.

## CONCLUSION

### A Misshapen View of Animal and Human: Experiential Perceptivity and Subjectivity

In his famous 1974 work, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?” Thomas Nagel discusses what he calls the subjective character of experience. He claims that with consciousness comes a restricted understanding beheld through one’s own experiential references, and posits if humans can truly understand the subjective experience of other species. Various philosophers, such as Jacques Derrida in his work *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, suggest that the commonalities of experiences permit human and “that which we call animal” communication. So although there remains a myriad of phenomenological variances between animals such as bats or cats or humans, these variations do not necessarily preclude cross-species communication or intelligent, interactive relationships. From Montagne’s questioning who is amusing whom with cat-human play interaction to Derrida’s questioning what his cat thinks when witnessing him naked, kinship remains a promising question for the modern age.

Kinship, as Drew Leder argues in “Embodying Otherness,” is not identity (134), a point even among one’s own species. Without first-hand, subjective experience, Leder maintains, can a person truly understand what it means to be deaf, or to be part of a tribe of arctic nomads? But even having had differing experiences, humans would have many similarities, such as the ability to feel emotions and sensations, and our ability to employ language. From these similarities kinship arises. While we may not be able to totally identify with Derrida’s “that which we call animal,” we do share similar approaches to the world, and we can communicate.

Most people would not challenge the statement that animals transmit information, or communicate, both within and between species. Multiple recent studies across species—from parrots to apes, dolphins to gorillas, prairie dogs to elephants—have shown that animal communication transfers consequential information, influences the environment and others' behavior, and may even possess a rule-governed grammar. These three criteria regulating human language as suppositionally unique are being challenged. One recent study has shown that prairie dogs possess nouns, verbs, and adjectives, use transformational rules when “talking,” and that, because they pass information in differing dialects based on location, their calls are taught, not instinctive (Slobodchikoff). Another current study has shown that elephants react to threats by vocally communicating predator-specific alarms, one of which specifically indicates not only humans but dangerous humans (Soltis et al). Quite literally, scientists have found that animals warn each other to “beware the humans.” Men have defined their own communication as “language,” however, and that sacrosanct language remains solely the property of humans and superior to other modes of communication. While there remains no one definition for “language,” most linguists agree that to be a language, a mode of communication must have meaning, productivity (use “words” in multiple ways to create new exchanges of ideas), and displacement (the ability to “talk” about an absent thing or being). As research on animal communication progresses, humanity is finding the language paradigm expanding to include more creatures than just human. And even though humans continue to change the boundaries, animal “language” continues to underscore its inclusion. African grey parrots, for example, can understand recursive language, one of Chomsky's supplementary restrictions to augment the

language paradigm as solely belonging to humans (Pepperberg). Language, we are finally verifying, no longer remains a retention between human and animal but appeals for human-animal kinship.

Although humans and animals communicate, not sharing a language makes it difficult to understand how animals reason. Ludwig Wittgenstein's often-cited dictum demonstrates this inaccessibility: "If a lion could talk, we could not understand him" (190). Erica Fudge furthers Wittgenstein's statement by noting that if a lion could talk, humans might not wish to hear what was said (*Animals*). Coupling this inaccessibility with human perceptions of animality—social constructions such as medieval bestiaries or anthromorphized beast fable characters—promotes the dissimilarity between the "ideal" animal versus real. The revering of the ideal animal—ideal being the most humanlike animal—objectifies animals and disempowers the inherent kinship shared between man and animal. This fetishizing remains one way man attempts to retain control. Restraining animals' true natures reestablishes the divide between human and animal by demonstrating man's inability to conceptualize another creature possessing, or even being worthy of having, agency.

The power inversion in these tales creates a comic effect whereby the intellectual and moral superiority of humans is called into question by the animals. However, this transposition leads to a reexamination of views once determined to be fact. Destabilizing the human relinquishes man of his control. What marks "Mother Hubbard's Tale," *Beware the Cat*, and *The Dialogue of the Dogs* as unique is the animal discussions of their similarities to and differences from humans when commanding their own autonomy. Understanding our kinship with animals balances the man-animal power distribution by

restructuring the hierarchical “humanity” above “animality” to reflect a more equitable relationship.

Speaking for others, a form of discourse widely explored in feminist and postcolonial criticism, contains by its nature performative misrepresentation. Even worse, this mode may subtract dissimilarities to remake others into same. The question of whether humans can adequately represent animal minds remains a moot point. Human language, as Derrida maintains, remains insufficient to represent the translations of human minds, let alone the minds of another species.

Humans desire communication with animals through human speech, and wish to hear statements reaffirming and valuing our superiority. The power differential inherent in humanity’s relations to animals leads to writings which either silence animals by disregarding their speech or interpret for animals through human frames, both options employed in the works in this study. This discrepancy in authority also resides in the framing of narratives. The superior first-frame narrator of the works translate the language of their second-frame narrators, who are themselves translating into human language the reasoning and speech of animals.

The animals in these works embody the authors’ metaphorical displacement of humans. In early modern society, talking animals persevered as mouthpieces for social critique, granting them a satirical “outsiders” vantage for assessment. One major theme in these works features the uncentered human in a tale told from the vantage of a shifted center. By reframing narratives, the customarily marginalized voices of the animal Other are brought into dialogue, if only to remind humans that others are watching.

Even though these anthropomorphic works were written to highlight the social structuring principles in flux during the early modern period, they also function to remind humans of our intimate relationship with animals. Anthropomorphism unobtrusively reminds readers of self other than human. Spenser's Ape and Fox learn to read humans and translate "humanness" into their social shifting. The talking of Baldwin's cats and Cervantes' dogs are detected by man and, to differing degrees, examines selves as distinct from humans. These animals both metaphorically and, in Spenser's tale, literally dethrone humans of their superiority. While used as satire in the studied works, the conception of animals possessing reason, subjectivity, and even autonomy, has finally found a foothold in scientific study, academia, and modern society.

In *The Open: Man and Animal*, Agamben states that man grants himself sovereignty, he becomes human, by elevating himself above animal. By doing so, man abandons *zoe* to reach *bios*. But to deconstruct the divide between human and animal, to disrupt the anthropological machine, Agamben claims we must be willing to risk what is human to reclaim *zoe*. However, Agamben speaks of *zoe* as bare life, remaining surprisingly focused on the binaries of human and animal remaining when speaking of human reform. Dismantling the machine still excludes animals from sovereignty, as he keeps them in the bare life binary state in which he first placed them. He seemingly overlooks the idea that beings other than human could have their own political life. Other theorists, though, implore negating the boundary between animal and man by absencing binary thought.

This slowly fading modernist boundary, what Derrida terms "limitrophy," allows humans to embrace the posthumanist notion of "becoming-animal." First to use

the term “becoming animal,” Deleuze and Guattari seek what they designate as an “involution,” a transformation of human into animal whereby “there is no longer man or the animal as each deterritorializes the other” (22). In this way, Spenser, Baldwin, and Cervantes authority direct their readers to become animal, to understand that human subjectivity is not as extraordinary as we have lead ourselves to believe. “Mother Hubberds Tale,” *Beware the Cat*, and *The Dialogue of the Dogs* pose the early modern question still being asked today: as put to Derrida, “Who comes after the subject?” (Cadava, Connor, and Nancy 100). Although Deleuze’s and Guattari’s theory of “becoming-animal” delves deeper than this simple term, it is this tenet, when added to Agamben’s machine dismantling that leads to kinship. To become animal does not mean relinquishing the self but reinforces our membership in an interdependent community of beings larger than the human, and an understanding of animals as sovereign beings.

To understand our placement as humans, we must relinquish our false exceptionalism. In “Mother Hubberds Tale,” *Beware the Cat*, and *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, the inquiry of species superiority remains subjective. The rhetorical effect of satirical power inversion parodies anthropocentrism. Dethroning the human will require dismantling deeply-rooted premises of otherness. We must figure out how to hear the animals speak without unguents like Baldwin’s Master Streamer or divine miracle like Cervantes’ Campuzano. Learning to listen will rebalance the placement of animal and man. Such relationships will refine our truths.

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