

Shattering the “Macabre Mirror”: Towards a Non-Decisional Critical Animal Studies

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And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work ‘em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Rime of
the Ancient Mariner”

Illustrating the vehement alienation of humans and nonhumans, an alienation which enables countless acts of senseless violence by the former against the latter, Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s words summon an all-too-familiar sight: a nonhuman animal, maltreated and senselessly murdered by human hands.¹ It is from just such a vision that Critical Animal Studies takes its métier. A relatively fledgling field of research, Critical Animal Studies is generally impelled by three interrelated questions: 1) How can humans engage with nonhuman animals without, in the process, subjugating, circumventing, speaking for, dictating to, essentializing, or idealizing them? 2) What manner of thought, form of philosophy, or practice of critique could ever hope to approach animals non-anthropocentrically—which is to say, without instrumentalization, without domination, and without violence? 3) How to do justice to non-human life, while thinking and acting in ways commensurate with the axiom “injustice is irreducible to inhumanity?”² Prompted by these queries, which at their heart concern the extent of the responsibility we owe to nonhuman animals, I consider in this paper the problematic of animal witnessing—both the witnessing by humans of nonhuman suffering and that of nonhuman animals themselves acting as witnesses—through an analysis of two of Chris Jordan’s horrifying photographs of dead albatross chicks, whose small, broken bodies are overflowing with jagged fragments of plastic, metal, and other detritus from the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. To the important query recently raised by David L. Clark, “under what conditions could it be said that the nonhuman animal bear witness?”³ I add the following questions: 1) What are the consequences of taking animal testimony absolutely seriously—i.e. neither as an inferior form of communication, nor a pathetic emotional response existing only in the human psyche, but as a genuine crisis for the anthropocentric subject? 2) In what manner must thought itself change in the presence of this testimony?

Jacques Derrida’s late work on animals and animality, which treats the extent of the dilemma posed by nonhuman life to human thought more gravely and rigorously than perhaps any other corpus, serves as the point of departure for this inquiry. Urging us to ponder the ethical and ontological implications of “the question of the animal”—i.e., as Matthew Calarco explains, “an interruption deriving from a singular animal...who calls my mode of existence into question”⁴—Derrida leads us to consider carefully what takes place when our gaze falls upon a creature like the birds in Jordan’s photographs, and what occurs when we admit that their gazes spy us in return. In the first and second sections of this paper, I use

Derrida, among other thinkers, to think through the ethical claims that this being makes upon us, the challenges that it poses to anthropocentric ontologies, and how both are effectuated by and through nonhuman witnessing. In Derrida's hands, animals—or, as he calls them, *animot*⁵, a neologism meant to evoke, through its homophony with the French word *animaux*, the multiplicity of singular entities that are forcefully called by the word, by the *mot*, “animal”—become living expressions of the absolute, de-centering alterity immanent within, even as it remains transcendental to, all unitary, carno-phallogocentric discourses, which is elsewhere in his work called “the trace,” “the supplement,” “*differance*,” “*arche-writing*,” etc. In order to alleviate the worst kind of violence committed against nonhuman animals—i.e. the compulsion to *become* animals, beings defined by their very evacuation from human ethics and ontology, and inveterate exposure to exploitation, aggression, and murder at the hands of humans—the French philosopher implores us to attend to *animot* in their absolute singularity and difference, to take seriously the abyss that they carve into human accounts of ourselves and of beings other than ourselves. For Derrida, Critical Animal Studies is thus not some parochial or unserious matter, it is rather an inquiry at the very heart of humanistic scholarship, which should concern all those interested in the cause of justice: in short, it is another name for deconstruction.

The third section of this essay is a provocation, a lure to thought. Here, I question whether a Derridean approach to Critical Animal Studies adequately lays the groundwork for a solution to the questions I raised at the outset of this paper—i.e. whether Derrida permits a non-violent, non-anthropocentric disposition towards nonhuman animals. Drawing upon François Laruelle's critique of “philosophical Decision”—a phantasmatic structure of ideation that he contends underpins the theories of thinkers like Derrida—and the “principle of sufficient philosophy”—a presumption, symptomatic of Decision, that all things are thinkable by philosophy, “that all use of language is ultimately philosophical, sooner or later”⁶—I argue that a rigorous encounter with animal witnessing compels us to go beyond, *although certainly not to abandon*, the post-Levinasian ethics and post-humanist ontology advanced by Derrida's work on animality. We are to regard the gaze of the animal not as an encounter with some transcendental, infinite alterity—an alterity which conjoins the opposition of human and nonhuman via the syntax of difference—but instead as an opportunity for recognizing an always already existing, radically immanent identity between nonhuman animal others and ourselves. I claim that acknowledgement of this identity-in-the-last-instance—which is to say, an identity based not on sameness, but on mutual *non-relation* and *co-determination* by the Real—irrevocably alters not only how we practice Critical Animal Studies, but also how we are obliged to think about thought. The only way to suspend our destructive, anthropocentric attitude towards *animots*, and to avoid repeating our philosophically sanctioned abuse and murder of them, is to acknowledge, in a single paradoxical gesture, both that we never actually access the being-in-itself—which, following Laruelle, we should more accurately call the being-in-One—of any nonhuman animal, and that this inaccessible being is fundamentally imbricated with our own.

Nonhuman Ethics—Shall We Bear Witness to the Nonhuman?

Witnessing enters, one might say infiltrates, the work of many continentally-inflected Critical Animal Studies theorists—including Akira Lippit, Matthew Calarco, Carey Wolf, David L. Clark, and Derrida—because it offers a framework for conceptualizing what it means to enter into contact with, and to respond ethically to, a “mortal existence,” which confronts us, arrests us, cries out to us, but which, by virtue of its resistance to human-made

epistemological categories, “refuses to be conceptualized.”⁷ We are led to witness nonhuman animals by the dilemma to which Derrida, speaking from and through Jeremy Bentham’s *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, has so powerfully given voice—not “can animals think?” or “can they speak?” but, far more upsettingly, “can they suffer?”⁸ The capacity to suffer is not some positive trait or faculty, which can be definitively observed or deduced from an entity’s behavior. Rather, it is a condition of passivity, of openness and exposure to external conditions, “a not-being-able,”⁹ which may be intuited, but never proven. One who asks whether nonhuman beings can suffer must ask this question, or feel it well up, over and over again. For what do we ever recognize as suffering apart from the tendency to offer no resistance to repeated visitations or violations? It is difficult to imagine what might settle the question of the existence nonhuman suffering once and for all. What quantity of flashing eyes, thrashing limbs, or desperate cries could ever convince a skeptical observer that something more than a physiological reaction was taking place behind the visage of a creature dealt injury? And yet, at the same time, how can it be denied that nonhumans are capable of experiencing suffering, just as humans are? As Derrida notes, “the question ‘Can they suffer?’ leaves no room for doubt...the experience that we have of it is not even indubitable; it precedes the indubitable, it is older than it.”¹⁰ Susceptibility to distress, decline, decay, and negation is part and parcel of existence as a mortal being: this susceptibility to and propensity for suffering and negation exists before there is a particular entity that suffers or perishes. Nevertheless, in spite of the anteriority of the capacity to suffer, the question must remain open, and be asked endlessly—at least for as long as the ability to deny the suffering and to denigrate the mortality of others is a deep-seated characteristic of those creatures who call themselves “human” and name others “animal.” Under the aegis of this continual quandary, therefore, to bear witness to nonhuman animals means to recognize that the status of these beings, who have endured so much at the hands and in the vocabularies of humans, is a recurrent problem—at once ethical and ontological—which warrants intense deliberation.

Jordan’s photographs—which accost us with horrifying images of young albatrosses whose insides have been shredded by the harmful debris inadvertently fed to it by their otherwise nurturing parents—visualize the incalculable depths of this problem, functioning as a synecdoche for the vast dilemma posed to us by nonhuman animals. Taken on Midway Atoll, an island in the Pacific equidistant from both North America and Asia, as part of the collection entitled “Midway: Message from the Gyre,” Jordan’s photographs are captionless and untitled, illustrating unambiguously the vulnerability of nonhuman animals to human-caused injury, even on an island devoted to their protection.¹¹ No stranger to trauma at the hands of human aggression,¹² Midway Atoll is home to seventy-one percent of the world’s population of Laysan Albatrosses,¹³ the species to which the birds in the photographs belong, and to three million birds in total.¹⁴ According to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, these albatrosses are particularly susceptible to injury from human activity—even if no human beings are actually in their presence—because they skim their food off the surface of the ocean in an area colloquially known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. First discovered in 1988, the Patch is an ocean gyre in which hundreds of millions of tons of trash, particularly plastic, are concentrated.¹⁵ As a result of feeding in this region, adult birds unintentionally ingest vast quantities of marine debris, including “an estimated 5 tons of plastic...each year,”¹⁶ which are then fed to their young. What we see in Jordan’s photographs are juvenile birds in varying stages of decay, dead from causes unknown—it is possible that they expired from hypothermia, malnutrition, sickness, or a whole host of

world picture 9 (summer 2014)

various factors—whose abdomens are stuffed with a surfeit of garbage, such that even after the albatrosses’ internal organs have wasted away, the heaps of trash within their carcasses remain clearly visible. Their bodies decay, revealing the indestructible remains of industrialized human life lying within. Jordan gives us a view, to borrow Cary Wolfe’s phrase, of “what the world looks like when we’re not there,”¹⁷ displaying nonhuman animals as they are without us being present to them. The mechanization of the camera and of the technologies used to circulate these images disconnect us from propinquity with the birds who, by now, have almost certainly withered away to skeletons, if not dust. Through these photographs, we are compelled to bear witness to the fact that nonhuman animals are never free of our touch: wherever they live (or die), the effects and by-products of human activity accost them. What this means is that, in the contemporary conjuncture, the question of nonhuman suffering is not a temporary problem, at issue only when nonhumans are directly under our power (as in the case of pets, livestock, or lab animals), it is an ubiquitous question. We wear nonhumans like albatrosses around our necks, finding marks of our crimes towards them wherever we go: we can never be fully apart from them, or they from us. Part of bearing witness will mean understanding the ways in which the photographs and the indigestible human remains are in a kind of communication. The photos too are remains, more “garbage” issued into the world, indestructible, which, like the materials in the bellies of the dead birds, will survive us, and will have *already* survived us. Like the inorganic trash they depict, Jordan’s lifeless photographs of lifeless bodies are missive sent into an unknown future, epitaphs for and traces of deaths long past and deaths to come.





The appearance of the photographs emphasizes a state of tragic proximity, a sense that the birds we see are not just distant from us, on a sparsely populated island in the middle of the Pacific, but instead right in the middle of our neighborhoods. The dark grey and black background of the first photograph, which looks strikingly similar to an asphalt roadway, frames the bird as though it were a particularly gruesome specimen of road kill. With road kill, the cause of death is almost never in question: we know immediately when we see it that human beings are culpable—and perhaps even wince a bit ourselves in revulsion and shame at their sight, even if we were not directly responsible. The resemblance between the albatross in the photograph and the dead animals that we may see every day on the side of the highway reinforces that we must assume some measure of responsibility for the death of this creature that we never knew or saw in life. The objects inside its body cavity—the bottle caps, the lighter, the comb—are familiar to the point that they could have come from any of our homes. Wittingly or not, through our participation in a consumer society and membership in a species that manufactures a world of plastic things for itself, we have put the objects there. We are accomplices in this “hellish thing,” as Coleridge’s mariner laments. We have done a hellish thing. And in the hell we created, we have violently transformed living creatures into insentient things by filling their guts with things. After Descartes, we forever imagined them to be things. And as if to act on that violent impulse, that axiom, we created Pacific worlds in which they *became* things.

The questions erupt from the photographs, as soon as the horror they depict is set before my sight: Did these birds suffer? Had they experienced anguish in their short lives? Did the rubbish grinding within their stomachs cause them agony? The subjects of these photographs are dead and can offer no insight into these questions. We viewers are given to see only the aftermath and left alone with our thoughts. As “[literal]... emanation[s] of the referent,”¹⁸ to make use of Barthes’ expression, the photographs make manifest both the debased material body of these birds, which viewers are powerless to bring back from the dead, and the uncannily familiar pieces of garbage, which viewers are incapable of taking out

of circulation. We behold supremely passive beings—creatures passive unto death, accepting and internalizing human-made refuse that has rent them from within. The question of suffering and the impulse to imagine the feeling of trash sticking in our gut orbit around these resolution-less images of beings completely exposed to our powers. In both photographs, the monochromatic bodies of the birds contrast jarringly with the brightly colored pieces of plastic and metal exploding from their bellies. The sharp dissimilarity we can readily discern between the organic bodies and inorganic irritants makes plain our own blameworthiness: even if the human refuse we perceive did not directly cause the deaths of these albatrosses, it is undeniably to blame for desecrating their corpses. We have shoved our waste down their throats and filled them to the brim. In the second image, we see the body of the bird beginning to disintegrate and meld into its surroundings, and yet we cannot help but notice that the rubbish refuses to go away. It becomes all the more visible as the young albatross wastes away around it. In this, we can perceive that the effects of human activity on nonhuman animals persist even after the animals themselves have perished. In a way, our influence extends beyond the grave. If it can be said that nonhuman animals suffer, the suffering that we inflict—or that we may believe we inflict—continues into the hereafter. As such, the question of suffering remains open, even for these beings it is too late to save.

The fragments of garbage that Jordan's photographs allow us to see within the abdomens of the albatrosses—fragments which were there prior to Jordan's own intercession—make palpable an unsettling fact about nonhuman suffering: that nonhuman animals are violated by humans even before we directly encounter them; that from the perspective of humans, the capacity to be violated is constitutive of their very being. Merely to recognize an animal as an animal, to believe that there is such a thing as "animality," is to do violence to the multitude of variegated creatures who are called by that name, to crush them all into a single, unjustifiable category. What is it that unites those entities known as animals? Little more than a shared dissimilarity from human beings. "Confined within this catch-all concept, within this vast encampment of the animal, in this general singular, within the strict enclosure of this definite article ('the Animal' and not 'animals')," Derrida suggests, "are *all the living things* that man does not recognize as his fellows, his neighbors, or his brothers."¹⁹ "Animal" is an excuse for not caring, a reason to turn away, an internment camp in which to place all undesirable beings. At its core, Derrida explains, "[t]he animal is a word, it is an appellation that men have instituted, a name they have given themselves the right and the authority to give to the living other."²⁰ By classifying nonhumans as "animal"—a term often used as an insult, as an apology for unethical behavior towards another deemed lesser—humans stave off the unsettling possibility that "we" are perhaps not so dissimilar from they, that there may be some kernel of "animality" within the essence of humanness. Derrida's term *animot*—which highlights the plurality of beings compelled to fall under the rubric "animal," and which emphasizes the linguistic, as opposed to essential, root of the term—attempts to mitigate the violence of the word "animal," all the better to aid us in our attempt to take seriously the suffering of nonhumans, without rebuffing them from the outset.

Derrida suggests that asking the question of suffering—and recognizing this suffering in images of *animot*—is the first step towards forging an ethical relationship with nonhumans. Insofar as it is tantamount to an openness to erasure, or a vulnerability to negation, suffering constitutes a trace of *differance*—that state of mortality, situation in time and subjection to what Martin Hägglund calls "the destructive passage from one moment to another,"²¹ in which all entities, human and nonhuman, participate. As Derrida explains:

Mortality resides there [in suffering], as the most radical means of thinking the finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life, to the experience of compassion, to the possibility of sharing the possibility of this nonpower, the possibility of this impossibility, the anguish of this vulnerability, and the vulnerability of this anguish.²²

If we recognize the suffering of nonhuman others—a suffering that is not just a lesser version of human pain, but an effect of inhuman incompleteness, non-contemporaneity, and finitude which composes and decomposes all things—we can unfold the prospect for an ethical and political relationship with nonhumans. By acknowledging nonhuman suffering in images, Derrida argues, we can “open the immense question of pathos and the pathological, precisely that is, of suffering, pity, and compassion; and the place that has to be accorded to the interpretation of this compassion, to the sharing of this suffering among the living, to the law, ethics and politics that must be brought to bear upon this experience of compassion.”²³ When we bear witness to an animal in pain, and allow ourselves to feel compassion towards them, we grant that humans are not the only beings worthy of grief or pity, and that nonhumans too can make ethical claims upon us. We can never do enough to alleviate the anguish of these albatrosses or to meet the demands of their ethical appeal, as the suffering they experienced is not just the result of direct human activity—although it certainly is in part—it is also constitutive of their very being in the world.

Jordan’s visualization of nonhuman suffering enables us to posit a few theses about animal testimony and its implications for Critical Animal Studies: to bear witness to *animot* means to attest to the existence of their suffering, and to recognize its status for them as an ontological condition. It is furthermore to concede, horrifyingly, that no one is personally capable of erasing this suffering, brought about as it is by not just subjective human action, but also by a violent anthropocentric logic that renders animals into passive victims—imposing on them names, taxonomies, and positions of relative inferiority to all that is given the title “human.” Witnessing exposes this logic for what it is, thrusting its savagery into the light.

Nonhuman Ontology—Can We Bear the Witness of the *Animot*?

If our goal is the mitigation of this savage logic, it is not enough to consider only the manner in which we regard animals: we must further acknowledge that and how animals also gaze back *at us*. Staring out from a perspective which, from the human subject-position, is utterly unfathomable, animals consider us from what Derrida calls “[t]he point of view of the absolute other.”²⁴ By its very existence, the radical alterity of the *animot*’s gaze interrupts the sense of superiority over nonhuman life that Western humanist thought has—since Descartes’s famous classification of animals as automata—sought to maintain, puncturing the solipsistic exceptionalism that underwrites so much of human conjecture about that which is called “animal.” We can never know for sure what goes on behind the eyes of animals—including the animal that I am and that you are. They trouble us like ghosts, absent even while present to our vision, defying our attempts to decode or impose meaning upon them, considering us from a vantage that cannot be anthropomorphized, emanating a testimony that refuses to be reduced to a statement.

This testifying, alien gaze, which makes clear the limits of the human mind's capacity to render reality comprehensible, is discernible even in Jordan's photographs. Although the birds in the images are of course not literally present before viewers—their bodies separated from that of the spectator by potentially thousands of miles and years of time—they nevertheless appear to hold us in their sight, regarding us with dead, hollow eyes somehow still discernible, even after the eyeballs themselves have festered away into nothing. The albatross in Jordan's second photograph regards us with a discomforting skeletal gape, which leers menacingly, as if daring us to turn away. The tiny stone in the center of its left eye socket appears as a pupil, which focuses a gaze that pierces through the center of the frame, fixating upon viewers in a manner that seems accusatory. Looking at the photograph as I type these words in the middle of the night, I cannot help but shiver as my sight is drawn inexorably to the bird's dilapidated visage and gravelly stare. "Look well upon my remains—it is you who have done this," the albatross seems to say, and yet it speaks no words. It makes no claims. It tells us nothing. And yet, there is something wordless, ineffable, unsymbolizable—a testimony that offers no facts, that testifies only to an unnamable crisis—which seems to issue forth from its hollow gaze. Although the indeterminability, wordlessness, and ineffability that I perceive as radiating from the albatross' stare could be written off as the symptoms of attending to the alleged testimony of a dead bird—an entity that may be presumed to be testimony-less because of both its animality and deathliness—David L. Clark cautions us to interpret these predicates otherwise. "The obscurity of the address, the thoughtlessness and indeterminacy of its origin and destination, the uninsurable nature of its expression and arrival, are necessary because these are the indicia that distinguish witnessing from description, testimony from giving evidence, asking to be heard from transmitting information,"²⁵ he explains. It is precisely in circumstances like this, when we do not know what message is being sent, or if there is one at all, that testimony becomes possible. Nonhumans bear witness to us at the very moment that we become unsure of their capacity to express anything determinable at all. The essence of their testimony is not to be found in the definable content of any utterance they may be supposed to emit, but in the crisis occasioned by our encounter with their gaze. This crisis is not so much an affective event as the onset of a question about whether anything whatsoever has taken place. "What makes witnessing possible is also what renders it impossible. There is no escaping this crisis of witnessing because witnessing is that crisis,"²⁶ Clark avers. Before the haunting stare of this albatross, we cannot be otherwise than left adrift.

Jordan's first photograph confronts us with an instance of *animot* gaze that is perhaps even more haunting. Portraying a dead bird whose head is tilted down, as though in a position of resignation or grief, this image waylays us with an eye that is little more than a hole in the frame, a void in the visual. The bird here seems neither to condemn nor absolve viewers of their shame for watching over its cadaver, giving off a look that is remarkable precisely because it looks to be, at once, utterly quotidian and absolutely bottomless. "What does this bottomless gaze offer to my sight?" Derrida urges us to ask, when we find ourselves beheld by such an *animot* witness.

As with every bottomless gaze, as with the eyes of the other, the gaze called "animal" offers to my sight the abyssal limit of the human: the inhuman or ahuman, the ends of man, that is to say, the bordercrossing from which vantage man dares to announce himself to himself, thereby calling himself by the name that he believes he gives himself.²⁷

The gaze that transfixes us before this image originates from more than just a hole in a dead albatross's skull: it issues from the very otherness of this creature we perceive, from the unfathomable difference between the *animot* and ourselves, a difference which is simultaneously external and internal to our humanness. The horror that this albatross's empty stare invokes in us proceeds not just from the violence of its death and the repulsiveness of its ruptured corpse, but from the challenge that the creature poses to our ideas of humanity and animality. To recognize the gaze as a gaze is to admit that the being of this nonhuman other can neither be bracketed away nor stabilized into a stable, unthreatening, and consistent definition. It is to declare, along with Derrida, that "here is an existence that refuses to be conceptualized,"²⁸ an existence that troubles what we know, an existence from which we yearn to turn away.

In Derrida's view, the denial of the gaze of animals is part and parcel of the longstanding attempt by humans to construct a notion of "humanness" that is pure, self-present, and untainted by difference. To refuse to meet the eyes of an animal, to reject its address to us and denigrate the validity of its appeal is, ultimately, to "[institute] what is proper to man"²⁹ at the expense of that which is denied the privileges of humanity. By classifying an animal gaze or utterance either as an instinctive reaction, which is little more than automated feedback to stimuli, or as no gaze or no utterance at all, we safeguard our humanness from the infiltration of non-humanness. Wordless, unsymbolizable, these birds' stares implore us to respond to them, to behold ourselves to them, and to forfeit that very thing that urges us to look away: our humanity. "The animal looks at us, and we are naked before it," Derrida claims. "Thinking perhaps begins there."³⁰

For Derrida, and for many Derridean Critical Animal Studies scholars, the gaze of an animal functions as both a radicalized version of Levinas' face of the other, and as a living instance of the trace—that disjointedness of time and non-coincidence of presence—that causes all ontologies to be structured and unraveled through *differance*. By continuously affirming its own irreparable, infinite alterity, animal testimony issues an ethical injunction that "[casts] doubt on responsibility, on decision, on one's own being-ethical."³¹ Endlessly reiterating its appeal to us to do more, to ease a suffering which never ceases, the animal witness does not ever allow us the satisfaction of successfully fulfilling our obligation towards it and thereby transforming our ethical engagement into an annulable contract: before it, we remain in a state of perpetual responsibility. Under the atomic light of the *animot* witness, the "thingness" and "animality" that can never be fully banished from our idealized conceptions of humanity are brought abruptly to the surface, compelling the anthropocentric subject—that hallucinated dream of a complete humanity—to be put under erasure. It is for this reason that Derrida suggests that "thinking begins" before the gaze of an *animot*. Challenged by this witness to give an account of ourselves, confronted through their testimony by the limits of our very being, we are compelled to orbit our thoughts around the scissions that structure our certainties. In other words, we are forced to ponder the impossibility and negation that lies at the root of all the knowledge we claim to know about ourselves and others. We are thus left through our Derridean encounter with animal testimony with both an unrelenting ethical imperative to improve our treatment of nonhuman others—whose vulnerability and propensity for suffering underscores our own, even as they remain irreducibly foreign to us—and a revised, non-anthropocentric ontology of the subject, grounded—if such a term is still useable—in difference rather than identity. I unapologetically and unreservedly suggest that Derrida supplies Critical Animal Studies with

the most sophisticated, rigorous, and generous philosophical approach towards “the question of the animal,” one which goes a long way towards mitigating the brutal alienation of nonhumans from humans. The question that I suggest warrants further consideration, to which I will begin to outline a response for the remainder of this essay, is this: Can we go still further? What indeterminate path has Derrida’s act of bearing witness and of having bourn witness set us upon? After Derrida, regarding animals, regarded by animals, I find myself on the move. Where? Might the dilemma of animal witnessing compel us to step beyond the confines of philosophy—or, at the very least, philosophy of a certain sort—altogether?

Non-Decisional Animal Studies—We Bear Witness According to the *Animot*

Let us consider the following quandary: What exactly is it that enables us to respond to nonhuman beings that we have just established are characterized by their alterity—i.e. by their radical, destabilizing difference to and alienation from whatever it is that we are? What is the mechanism that allows us to be affected at all—let alone touched by ethical imperatives—by these images and entities that, Derrida himself acknowledges, are separated from us by an “abyssal”³² gap? We could, of course, following Derrida’s discussions of forgiveness, hospitality, and the gift, describe our relationship with *animot* as, *strictu sensu*, impossible—albeit at the same time considering “im-possibility” otherwise, as the non-auto-affective trace of a deferred presence which functions generatively. Notwithstanding this difficult—although certainly not unproductive—move, I contend that there is a more obvious and, ultimately, more satisfactory answer to the question I have just raised. What is it that, in Derrida’s hands, bridges the seemingly unbridgeable gap between human and nonhuman animals? Why, what else could it be but *philosophy itself*, that most humanistic, exceptionalistic, and all-consuming of disciplines? I suggest that Derrida’s account of the relation *qua* non-relation between human and nonhuman animals is an exemplary instance of what François Laruelle refers to as the “philosophical Decision,” a formal structure of idealization that, in his view, defines philosophy as such. “The philosophical Decision,” Laruelle explains, “is an operation of transcendence which believes (in a naïve and hallucinatory way) in the possibility of a unitary discourse on Reality.”³³ In effect, it is a division of the world into two parts—the empirical and the metaphysical, the conditioned and the unconditional—which are then presumed to be joined back together through a transcendental operation of philosophy itself. What a Decision posits is “the totality, the unity of the co-belonging and co-penetration of a syntax and an experience of what it calls the real.”³⁴ In other words, Decision effectuates a correlation between empirical sensations and metaphysical categories, and between the transcendental structures that are presumed to unify the former pair and reality. Laruelle charges that all decisional philosophy harbors within itself a kernel of idealism, composed of the belief that that its ideas and systems not only represent, but in a way, *actually constitute* reality. Decision more or less amounts to the fantasy that philosophers can not only read the Book of Nature, but write it too.

In the case of Derrida’s discussion of animals, the radical alterity of the nonhuman—which, in our analysis, surfaces through the appeal emanating from the dead eyes of the birds in Jordan’s photographs, through the testimony proceeding from the nonhuman witnesses—functions as the syntax, the unconditional which conditions our impressions; and humans’ phenomenological apprehension of *animot*—which for us can be recognized as the manner in which Jordan’s photographs appears to us when we consider them, and as the witnessing we bear towards the nonhumans we perceive therein—serves the role of the conditioned

empirical experience. As Ray Brassier explains, decision is characterized by the presumption of an “identity-in-difference” between these two things, underwritten by belief in a reciprocal, transcendental correlation between “*logos* and *phusis*, thought and being.”³⁵ It is negation itself—that non-conceptual event called by many names (the trace, *differance*, etc.), but here realized as the absolutely anterior capacity of both humans and nonhumans to suffer, to be situated in time, to make claims upon ethical subjects, to destabilize hierarchical, carno-phallogocentric ontologies etc.—which forms the correlation that conjoins the otherness of the *animot* together with humans. By blending through this negation—in an extremely sophisticated and productive fashion, it must be acknowledged—the empirical experiences we have of nonhuman animals with rigorous conceptual idealizations about them, and the ideas we have about nonhuman animals with their actual being—whatever it may be—Derrida elucidates a theory about *animot* and animality that is structured by Decision.

Why do I claim that the decisional structure of Derridean philosophy renders it problematic for a Critical Animal Studies that wishes to encounter nonhuman animals in a non-violent, non-instrumentalizing, non-anthropocentric way? Let me quickly sketch out three reasons:

1) Because it does not engage with nonhuman animals immanently, on their own terms. As difficult as it is to imagine what this “ownness” could mean, I think it can be demonstrated that Derrida’s approach falls short. Even as it aims to limit the violence done by our vocabularies and to take seriously the address of nonhumans, Derrida’s Critical Animal Studies speaks for them, retaining philosophy—and not the nonhuman animals themselves—as the organon of thought, blending the Real existence of nonhumans with human-made concepts like “alterity,” “suffering,” “vulnerability,” “*animot*” etc. Just as “animal” is, at its core, nothing more than a word invented by people—as Derrida rightly points out—so all of Derrida’s phrases are essentially human terms, which do not have a real existence outside of their formalization in language. This does not mean that they are not valuable, or that they do not make tangible something that may be extra-linguistic or extra-textual, but rather that we must recognize that they invariably force something upon a nonhuman animal, which was not there before. While it may seem impossible to envision a Critical Animal Studies that does not speak in nonhumans’ place, and that does not impose human terms or concepts upon them, such is our task. If nothing else, Derrida can help us to imagine *this* impossibility otherwise.

2) Because it instrumentalizes them. In a Critical Animal Studies inflected by Derrida, animals are made to serve a function: they become both emblem and experience of that otherness, which for Derrida, always accompanies, pervades, and displaces sameness; for that heterogeneity which inexorably infiltrates the unitary; and for that heteronymity which circumscribes the univocal. Alas, even Derrida, that most generous of the great twentieth-century philosophers, cannot inoculate himself against the inherent violence of philosophy, which cannot help but act as a discourse of mastery, and treat its own terms as if they were somehow prior to their use by individual philosophers. While Derrida admirably works to maintain the singularity of the *animot* he discusses, he cannot help but use them in much the same way that he used Plato’s *Phaedrus* to articulate a philosophical argument. What is needed is an

Critical Animal Studies that, in some way, *is employed by nonhuman animals themselves*, even if its ideas and theories are circulated by, through, and among human beings.

3) Perhaps most problematically, because it leaves intact one last shred of anthropocentrism: *the conceit that the problem of nonhuman animals is given to, and philosophizable by, the human mind*. Derrida's work on animals performatively suggests—even if it explicitly argues the contrary—that humans are those privileged beings capable of obtaining, through philosophy, a transcendental view of knowledge and its limits. Even if the completion of this view is perpetually deferred, even if this knowledge is overdetermined by history and language, Derrida still presumes that nonhuman animals are thinkable, philosophizable—even if only as the unthinkable, the different, the problematic, or the stranger. It is this presumption of the philosophizability of all things that Laruelle terms the “principle of sufficient philosophy,”³⁶ a principle which makes clear decisional philosophy's inherent correlationism—i.e. a belief common to post-Kantian philosophy, first named by Quentin Meillassoux, which holds there is a necessarily reciprocal relationship between thought and being, between the mind and the world, such that one cannot be articulated or discussed without the other.³⁷ The principle of sufficient philosophy “expresses philosophy's absolute autonomy, its essence as *self*-positing/donating/naming/deciding/grounding, etc. It ensures philosophy's domination of all regional disciplines and sciences [and] articulates philosophy's idealist pretension as that which is able to at least co-determine the most radical real.”³⁸ It is this belief that I suggest most significantly constrains the efficacy of Derrida's otherwise immensely valuable contributions to the theorization of animality. By supposing that human-made philosophical concepts—even if they are meant to refer to extra-human, extra-philosophical conditions—can bring humans and nonhumans together, the disalienation of the former and the latter that Derrida advocates comes at the expense of a permanent inscription of humanity's—or, at least, human knowledge's—superiority over nonhuman beings. To treat the *animot* as a philosophizable being—and, it must be noted, that even to regard a nonhuman as an absolute other or limit to thought, before which philosophy can do little more than throw up its hands, is still to consider it philosophizable—is accord philosophy a transcendental vantage and autonomy over its subject matter: in this case, the opposition of human and nonhuman. Derrida's adherence to the principle of sufficient philosophy prevents him and his theories from fully relinquishing their sovereignty over nonhumans.

The temptation to distill an encounter with a nonhuman witness into a lesson or moral for human beings, and human beings alone, should not be underestimated. I cannot say that I do not fall prey to this pedagogical impulse myself. Chris Jordan, the photographer of the images under consideration, who, perhaps more than any of us, has endured the crisis of coming face-to-face with these birds, succumbs to it. “For me, kneeling over the corpses is like looking into a macabre mirror,” he writes on his website. “These birds reflect back an appallingly emblematic result of the collective trance of our consumerism and runaway industrial growth.”³⁹ In Jordan's stated view, the efficacy of witnessing and receiving the testimony of the nonhuman animals in these photographs predominantly concerns what it can tell humans about ourselves—specifically, about our inability to recognize the growing toxicity of the world created by consumerism and industrialization. To gaze upon these creatures is ultimately, in Jordan's eyes, to reflect upon our own living conditions, to learn what they can teach us about how we are to make our way in the world. While this may

certainly be valuable—humans, of all living creatures on earth, need as much help and input as we can get into how we ought to live our lives and organize our societies—this immediate move to *humanize* the effects of nonhuman testimony seems to me to run exactly contrary to the project of opening ourselves to these others. Using nonhuman witnesses as a “mirror,” however macabre, which more than anything reflects our own situation back to us, perpetuates the original violence committed against those beings called “animal”: i.e. the refusal to believe that they have any worth in themselves, that they are only worthy of consideration insofar as they can be made useful. While inquiries that aim to learn what they can about humans from engagements with and studies of nonhumans are likely to be with us for a long time—and the insights obtained through these inquiries may well be beneficial and worth pursuing—I do not believe that this is or ought to be the mission of Critical Animal Studies. If the latter is to remain faithful to its mandate to do as little violence as possible to nonhuman animals, and to combat anthropocentrism in as comprehensive a manner feasible, I suggest that it is necessary to shatter the “macabre mirror” and to ponder what a non-decisional Critical Animal Studies, which goes beyond how animals *appear* to humans, might look like. What would it mean to practice an Animal Studies that refuses to idealize nonhuman animals in any manner, whatsoever—including an idealization that resorts to the phantasm of total alterity, perfect otherness, or incommensurable difference? How can we exercise a scholarship that is *occasioned* by encounters with nonhuman others, and *unilaterally* determined by their testimony, but which does not purport to be in a reciprocal relation with them? In other words, what would it take to think *according* to nonhuman animals, not *about* them?

What I am advocating is not a refusal to acknowledge that our actions have an effect on nonhuman animals, nor is it a claim that we should avoid any attempts to formulate practical policies concerning our relations with them—quite the contrary, I fully admit that humanity has all too much effect on the nonhuman world. The non-reciprocity that I am arguing for concerns the experience of the Real and the organon of thinking—what Laruelle calls “force-(of)-thought”⁴⁰—that determines how we apprehend, engage with, and deliberate about the problem of nonhuman animals. Perhaps quixotically, what I am arguing for is to think about what it would entail to regard the confrontation with a nonhuman animal witness not as an encounter with some alien, incommensurable creature, defined by its sheer and radical otherness, which invariably leads reciprocally back to a reflection upon ourselves, and upon our own alienness to ourselves; but rather as an occasion to recognize an identity of sorts between ourselves and the nonhuman other. The identity that I refer to here is neither of the solipsistic, Berkeleyan variety, nor of the “Gaia hypothesis” sort advanced by deep ecologists, but rather “in-the-last-instance.”⁴¹ Identity in-the-last-instance is not a sameness of essence, form, or matter. Rather, it is shared state of being-given by the Real, which inheres in all things that are, even as it itself remains irreducible to and foreclosed from the totality of beings. In other words, what we share with these apparently alien others is that we are all contingent manifestations of the radically immanent, non-interpretible Real⁴²—what Laruelle refers to as the “secret” or the “One-in-One”⁴³—which is itself in excess of, even as it determines, the reasonings and operations of philosophy—albeit only unilaterally and only in-the-last-instance. The One-in-One is radical immanence itself—which is to say, an immanence that is “not thinkable on the terrain of transcendence (ecstasy, scission, nothingness, objectivation, alterity, alienation, *meta* or *epekeina*),” and that is not immanent to anything except itself.⁴⁴ It is a non-consistent, infinitely effable Real “without essence, without donation, and without form,”⁴⁵ which non-reciprocally gives philosophy

and everything else we encounter on earth, but which is never equivalent to that which it gives. What this means is that it can only ever be posited axiomatically, not deduced or induced.

By axiomatically positing the existence of the One-in-One, we are able to conceptualize nonhuman animals otherwise than in an antagonistic duality with humans, and, for the very first time, reckon with animals, as much as possible, on their own terms. The One-in-One allows us to articulate a non-conceptual symbol not of *animot* “in-themselves”—for this would still be a decisional projection of an otherness defined by its negation of human apprehensions and by its perfect alterity, which still falls under the purview of transcendental philosophy—but “in-One.” If we take this step, it becomes possible to imagine a binary between the *animot*-in-One and humans that is unidirectional rather than oppositional—in other words, a one-sided, unsynthesized pair, in which the nonhuman relates to the human only via non-relation. Laruelle calls the effectuation in thought of this non-relation or foreclosure “cloning.”⁴⁶ Cloning allows us to register the effects of an *animot*-in-One’s “separatedness-without-separation”⁴⁷ from our ideas of them—which is to say, its non-reciprocal, non-correlational, unidirectional causation of our thoughts. Through cloning, we position the *animot*-in-One as relatively transcendental to our philosophical deliberations about animals—although the One is not transcendent, transcendence is the form that radical immanence takes when it is brought to bear upon decisional philosophy. The *animot*-in-One is not the fusion of our thoughts about animals and their actual being, or a reconciliation between us and nonhuman others, but instead the real cause of both, which prevents the two from ever blending together. In this way, nonhumans are at last liberated from their colonization by human knowledges. The *animot*-in-One shatters the mirror of decisional Animal Studies, freeing that which was once maligned as only a reflection to go where it will.⁴⁸

The subject who undertakes cloning within a non-decisional Animal Studies no longer believes that he or she is actually speaking or writing *about* nonhuman animals, but rather *from* them, *according* to them. What this means is that the nonhuman animals—the albatrosses—that we have been discussing throughout the entirety of this essay *are not actually the nonhuman animals themselves* (“in-One”). Yet at the same time, I suggest that they are not mere phenomena—i.e. exclusive products of a correlation between human thought and being—either. Rather, they are effectuations of the albatrosses’ foreclosure to us, corollaries of the radical immanence of the *animot*-in-One—which, within theory, realizes itself as a transcendental signifier, a clone. The testimony of these beings impresses itself upon us, producing all of the words that you read in this piece and all of the responses that you have when regarding the photographs or responding to my claims. This does not, however, mean that anything we have said here is actually *about* them—which is to say, that whatever ideas I have recorded here exist in a reciprocal, correlational relationship with the albatrosses. The subject matter of this essay presides over and determines the content; the content does not represent or speak for the subject. At best, I hope that my words here adequate the determining force that the birds in the photographs unilaterally exert upon me. A non-decisional Animal Studies does not determine, but is determined by its subject—non-human *animot*-in-One.

This subtle, but critical, reframing of Critical Animal Studies texts is the principle consequence of the act of cloning in this context. *Animot*-in-One remain effectively removed from our discourses, but the clones we make of them permit us a new vantage, a

new way of seeing all of the representations and idealizations that humans have made (of) them. Laruelle explains that this new kind of vision enables a “transformation of the subject in such a way as to allow it to break the spell of its bewitchment by the world and enable it to constitute itself through a certain struggle with the latter.”⁴⁹ In other words, it effects a possible disalienation of humans from nonhumans, a disalienation which does not involve distilling a humanistic lesson from nonhuman testimony, claiming that nonhumans are the same as us or that the human/nonhuman distinction itself should simply be done away with (as Calarco advocates in *Zoographies*),⁵⁰ but which instead realizes the already-existing radically immanent identity between the two. It remains to be seen if and how this identity will exert its influence upon Critical Animal Studies scholarship. We can now return to Coleridge’s poem and Jordan’s photographs, sadder and wiser, less secure in our knowledge of what animals and humans are, but perhaps more certain that the broken, violated birds in both works, which horrify and sadden us, compel us to respond and to reflect, are not the destiny of all nonhuman beings, and that the alienation of nonhuman from human life is not permanent. Advancing the cause of disalienation is a task that remains to be done.

Disalienation obliges a confession: I am not the origin of this work. These words are the medium for something I look not *at*, but *with*. I have called it “*Animot-in-One*,” but it does not have a name. The darkness behind my eyes is filled with many things. I dare not presume that I am all that looks through them. The nonhuman creatures of Jordan’s photographs and Coleridge’s poem are there—they have impressed themselves within me. How can my vision align with their eyes? What do we see when we look together?

Jordan set his camera before a crime scene. Feathers and fishing line, bones and bottle caps, nuts and bolts. The photographs do not look at the world. They take it in. They regurgitate our transgressions and nourish us with garbage. They are this garbage. Such is the sustenance that must foster more than compassion.

Coleridge writes because he must. The *Rime* is not a source. It is a vessel. Words that course with albatross blood. Like the mariner, we are compelled to speak our crimes without cessation. Our utterances must stink of corpse. These vocal cords rattled by hollow bones. These fingers stained with rotten feathers.

Three dead albatrosses bear down on my flesh. I am, with them, swollen. They are not this swelling, but they are its cause. The agonizing bloat pushes against my insides, forcing me to speak.

Of animals, we have made words and images, concepts and categories, theories and things. They are none of these. And yet, each contains their residue. *Animot-in-One* bespeak us to renounce the arrogance that led us to claim our inventions as superior to them, and to register their transcendence of our discourses. We do so when we experience their real proximity to us, when we feel them in our bones. Out of this experience—which compels us, without empathy, to bear the agony of their worldly condition—we may take steps towards reconciliation, an undertaking that will marshal all of humanity’s aesthetic, philosophical, scientific and technological resources. Lest this reconciliatory labor lead us to hallucinate, once again, that humans are the wardens of the living, that all of existence reflects us and our deeds, we are obliged to recall that it is not ourselves, but the *Animot-in-*

world picture 9 (summer 2014)

One, that is the true origin of the endeavor. We do not choose this enterprise; we are driven to it by an anguish that wells from an identity and equality with nonhumans which all of our world leads us to forget. Coleridge's words eerily recall this anguish, giving voice to a task that is more compulsion than obligation.

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrench'd
With a woeful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told.
This heart within me burns.

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Notes

¹ That the creature Coleridge's mariner needlessly slays, and whose death he comes to see latterly as a homicide, is an albatross, will be important to this essay.

² David L. Clark, "Who was 'the Last Kantian in Nazi Germany'? Towards a Prehistory of the Postanimal," (paper presented at a seminar Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, 7-8 December 2010), 51.

³ David L. Clark, "Not ours, this death, to take into our bones," *World Picture*, 7.1. (2012): Accessed September 18, 2013, url: http://www.worldpicturejournal.com/WP_7/Clark.html.

⁴ Matthew Calarco, *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 5.

⁵ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I am*, Trans. David Willis, Ed. Marie-Louis Mallet, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 11.

⁶ François Laruelle, "Controversy Over the Possibility of a Science of Philosophy." *The Non-Philosophy Project*. Trans. Brassier and Robin Mackay, (New York: Telos Press, 2012), 81.

⁷ Derrida, 9.

⁸ Derrida, 9.

⁹ Derrida, 27.

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¹⁰ Derrida, 28.

¹¹ While Midway Atoll long functioned as a U.S. naval base, since 1988 it has been recognized as a National Wildlife Refuge. Source: “About Us” *Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge*, last modified April 30, 2012, accessed September 18, 2013: <http://www.fws.gov/midway/aboutus.html>

¹² Midway Atoll was the site of the Battle of Midway, one of the most important naval battles in the Pacific Campaign of World War II, in which the United States Navy inflicted a decisive defeat upon the fleet of Imperial Japan.

¹³ “Bird of Midway Atoll,” *Midway Atoll Wildlife Refuge*, last modified March 22, 2010, accessed September 18, 2013, url: <http://www.fws.gov/midway/laal.html>

¹⁴ “Wildlife and Habitat,” *Midway Atoll Wildlife Refuge*, last modified April 6, 2011, accessed September 18, 2013, url: <http://www.fws.gov/midway/wildlife.html>

¹⁵ Day, Robert H.; Shaw, David G.; Ignell, Steven E., “Quantitative distribution and characteristics of neustonic plastic in the North Pacific Ocean.” (Final Report to U.S. Department of Commerce, National Marine Fisheries Service, Auke Bay Laboratory, Auke Bay, AK. 1988), 247-266.

¹⁶ “Bird of Midway Atoll,” *Midway Atoll Wildlife Refuge*, last modified March 22, 2010, accessed September 18, 2013, url: <http://www.fws.gov/midway/laal.html> <http://www.fws.gov/midway/laal.html>

¹⁷ Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 170.

¹⁸ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Trans. Richard Howard, (New York: FSG Adult, 2010), 80.

¹⁹ Derrida, 34.

²⁰ Derrida, 23.

²¹ Martin Hägglund, “Radical Atheist Materialism: A Critique of Meillassoux,” *The Speculative Turn*, Ed. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman, (Melbourne: re.press, 2011), 125.

²² Derrida, 28.

²³ Derrida, 26.

²⁴ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 11.

²⁵ Clark, “Not Ours, This Death”.

²⁶ Clark, “Not Ours, This Death”.

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²⁷ Derrida, 12.

²⁸ Derrida, 9.

²⁹ Derrida, 14.

³⁰ Derrida, 29.

³¹ Derrida, 126.

³² Derrida, 31.

³³ François Laruelle, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, Trans. Taylor Adkins, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 56.

³⁴ François Laruelle, *Philosophies of Difference*. Trans. Rocco Gangle. (New York: Continuum, 2011), 5.

³⁵ Ray Brassier, “Alien Theory: The Decline of Materialism in the Name of Matter,” (PhD diss., University of Warwick, 2001), 170.

³⁶ Laruelle, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, 31.

³⁷ Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, Trans. Ray Brassier, (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 5.

³⁸ François Laruelle, “A Summary of Non-Philosophy,” *The Non-Philosophy Project*, Trans. Ray Brassier, (New York: Telos Press, 2012), 25.

³⁹ Chris Jordan, “Midway: Message from the Gyre,” last modified February, 2011, accessed September 18, 2013, url: <http://www.chrisjordan.com/gallery/midway/#about>

⁴⁰ Laruelle, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, 19.

⁴¹ Laruelle, “Determination-in-the-Last-Instance.” *The Non-Philosophy Project*. Trans. Taylor Adkins, (New York: Telos Press, 2012), 170.

⁴² Claire Colebrook’s remarks on the Anthropocene—the epoch of geological history in which human activity is a prime motor of environmental change—make clear the necessity of adopting an immanent, rather than transcendental, perspective of humanity’s place in the universe. As she notes, “the systems that have allowed man to sense the ravages of man, to witness and detach himself from his own malevolence—are the same systems that enable man to distance himself from his own destruction by imagining himself as a being of the cosmos” (207). The notion that, through our technologies and philosophies, we are able to step outside of existence and view it as if from above, aids and abets our crimes against, and devastation of, the earth and its denizens.

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⁴³ Laruelle, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, 61.

⁴⁴ Laruelle, “A Summary of Non-Philosophy,” 28.

⁴⁵ Laruelle, “Identity and Event,” Trans. Ray Brassier, *The Non-Philosophy Project*, (New York: Telos Press, 2012), 146.

⁴⁶ Laruelle, “Summary of Non-Philosophy,” 34.

⁴⁷ François Laruelle, *Future Christ*, Trans. Anthony Paul Smith. (New York: Continuum, 2011), 46.

⁴⁸ In this way, it is possible to construct something like a “Critical Animal Studies without animals,” which is roughly analogous to Timothy Morton’s “ecology without nature”—i.e. an ecologically oriented theory and practice, which does not fantasize that there is some unitary object or totality called “nature” underwriting its undertakings. See, Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP), 1.

⁴⁹ François Laruelle, *Struggle, Utopia and the End-times of Philosophy*, Trans. Anthony Paul Smith and Drew S. Burk, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 210-211.

⁵⁰ See Calarco, *Zoographies*, 149.